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Across the Board

Hold's Oswald Part of Conspiracy

By Frederick M. Winship

United Press International

A California educator has charged that an analysis of the entire Warren Commission report and two new books on the Kennedy assassination provide "compelling" substantiation of the theory that Lee Harvey Oswald was part of a conspiracy.

Writing in the New York Review of Books, Prof. Richard H. Popkin contended the commission's conclusion that Oswald was a loner is not consistent with much of the material in its 26-volume report on the late President's assassination in Dallas, Tex., on Nov. 22, 1963. The chairman of the philosophy department at the University of California, San Diego, demanded that the investigation be reopened.

Popkin's own theory is that a man who looked like Oswald and often posed as Oswald was the actual assassin, while Oswald was used to create the illusion that a lonely, alienated man with pro-Castro leanings was the sole perpetrator of the crime. He also marshals evidence purporting to indicate another assassin was on the scene in Dallas plus one or two other conspirators who drove getaway cars.

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The educator used a review of Edward J. Epstein's "Inquest" and Harold Weisberg's "Whitewash," both of which take issue with the Warren Report, as a forum for his own speculation, based on two readings of the voluminous report, material he says was overlooked by the commission, and what he describes as new evidence gathered by independent investigators.

"Whatever information might emerge from a renewed investigation, a reading of the 24 volumes forces one to the conclusion that the commission did a poor job," he said. "It served the American and the world public badly . . . we cannot hide from the fact that some of our most serious and well-meaning citizens have catered to our childish needs for security."

Americans have been lulled by the commission's confirmation that a "lonely nut" killed their President, when in fact the "official" theory was "in many ways implausible from the beginning," Popkin says. For one thing, he claimed, Oswald was known to be a poor shot and his rifle was inaccurate, whereas the assassin was "extraordinarily accurate" if he made three hits in three shots at a moving target in a space of time that could not be duplicated by FBI experts.

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Furthermore, Popkin said, too many witnesses reported a shot from a knoll overlooking the assassination scene for the commission to have concluded that all the shots came from the depository building where Oswald worked. He theorizes that an assassin on the knoll got into the trunk of a station wagon and was driven from the scene, on the basis of a recently disclosed eye witness account.

Popkin presents much material in an effort to bolster his belief that bullet 399, which was found at Parkland Hospital, never passed through the bodies of either Kennedy or Gov. Mark Connally and was a plant to link Oswald to the slaying. The bullet had been in the gun found in the depository at some time but no evidence was presented in the Warren Report that the gun was fired on Nov. 22 or even handled by Oswald that day, he says.

The professor claims that all evidence points to the presence of both Oswald and his lookalike in the depository and quotes eyewitnesses who saw both leave the building. Scores of witnesses gave the commission evidence on the "other" Oswald, who Popkin maintains was a good shot and drove a car—which the real Oswald did not, but the commission wrote this off to mistaken identity.

(Clyde Leib, whose articles usually occupy this space on Wednesday, is on vacation.)