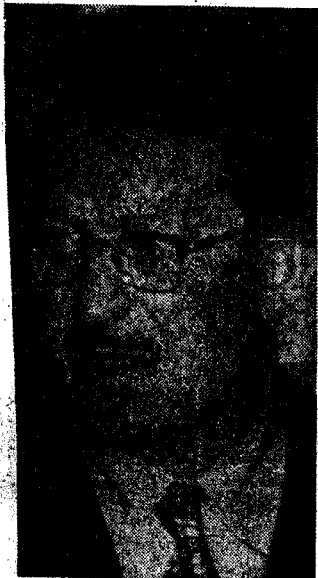


DATE MAY 23 1966



## Inside The Arts

with RICHARD LEBHERZ



Harold Weisberg

**WHITEWASH** — The Report on the Warren Report by Harold Weisberg, \$4.95

Did Lee Harvey Oswald assassinate President Kennedy single handedly, or were there other assassins involved?

What facts did the FBI and the CIA withhold about the murder in Dallas?

Why did the Warren Commission cover up evidence that did not fit in with the accepted FBI report of the assassination?

When a brutal murder of a well-liked and admired President occurs, and an emotional nation such as ours is plunged overnight into sadness and shock, quite a long period has to pass before that nation and its citizens can afford a backward glance at that dreadful November day in 1963. Even now, we do so reluctantly.

When, a little short of a month after the assassination, President Johnson set up the Warren Commission to investigate and report on their findings to him and the American people of the murder, we all breathed a sigh

of relief. A certain worried burden had been lifted from our individual shoulders. The truth would make us whole again.

A little over nine months after the Warren Commission began its tedious work, the Report was delivered to the President, on Sept. 24th, 1964. The dreadful events were presented in a 900 page report with 26 printed volumes to document the conclusions reached by the Commission.

The report was read nationally. All the facts that we already knew about, either first hand from having seen them happening on our television screen, or

second hand through the newspaper coverage, were verified. All the loose ends tucked away. All the bows neatly tied. The tremendous work was done. The assassination of President Kennedy by Lee Harvey Oswald was over. Rest in Peace.

Possibly the first misgivings that I felt about the validity of the Warren Report came when it was reported by the Washington Post that Chief Justice Warren announced...."that because of security reasons, some of the testimony might not be released to the public within their lifetime...." We had been told that the Warren Report would be complete and final yet here we are being informed that certain facts and testimony would be withheld. In fact, right now, this withheld information is in the National Archives in Washington not to be brought to light until seventy-five years from now. As Hamlet would say, "There is something rotten in Denmark." Harold Weisberg is out to find exactly what that rottenness is in his book, WHITEWASH — The report on the Warren Report.

Even though Weisberg has not exactly found out where that rottenness lies, he definitely seems to be sniffing in the

right direction. Using only the information gleaned from the 26 volumes, he has conservatively and imaginatively reconstructed the series of events enough to make the reader stop to think that perhaps, after all, the entire structure of the report has been created not investigated by the commission.

Since there is no name of a publisher listed on the jacket, I assumed that Weisberg has brought this book out all on his own. There are quotes on the inside of the jacket with glowing excerpts from unnamed publishers about the value of the book yet none of them would touch it. On the front it says—"The Book That Couldn't be Printed!" implying either that the material was too flammable or that there was some sort of mysterious governmental suppression of this flammable material.

There is a great deal of unsavory flesh in this book but it is my contention that it is missing a firm skeleton to hang the flesh on. Weisberg has been able to point out discrepancies in testimony, unreliable witnesses, suppressed film, withheld or destroyed or doctored autopsy reports on the President from the Bethesda Naval Hospital, none at all on Officer Tippit, but he very carefully avoids

giving us in its place a theory of his own on exactly what did happen that day in November. Perhaps this omission has been deliberate.

When you begin to read WHITEWASH you get the feeling that Weisberg is really on to something. He sets out to prove, as indeed he does, that there is a good possibility that Oswald could not have shot the President alone. Or rather, he doesn't quite prove it as much as he manages to shake that firm, respected picture of events which we have been led to believe nothing could shake. What Weisberg never quite tells us, however, is if Lee Harvey Oswald didn't do it alone, who else helped? He even goes so far as to suggest that Oswald was a patsy or a fall guy, that his rifle was planted in the Texas School Book Depository.

So his next step is to imply that if it wasn't murder, then it must have been a conspiracy. He whittles away at the three bullet theory which Sylvan Fox, a Pulitzer prize winner, already wacked away at in his "The Unanswered Questions about President Kennedy's Assassination." Between these two men, they have managed to raise questions about how so much damage and destruction could have been perpetuated on the two victims riding in the motorcade with only three bullets. The Warren Commission stubbornly insists that there were only three bullets, two in President Kennedy's body and one found on Governor Connolly's stretcher. All three came from the Texas School Book Depository by one rifle alone

and that rifle belonged to Lee Harvey Oswald the assassin.

If there were more than three bullets, then the Warren Commission is in trouble and so is the neat, beautifully tied package the Commission gave the American people in its Report. If there were more than three bullets than there were more than just one man, because the FBI found only three empty shells in the Depository. If there was more than one man, there was a conspiracy, and you can see where this would lead to in the reconstruction of the entire theory that the FBI put forth as the one and only explanation of how the assassination occurred.

There is no doubt about it, Weisberg makes a very good case against the three bullet theory, for fragments were found in the car and on the street. One is still in the Governor's body. He is also able to shift the actual series of events back a few frames. Most of us have gotten the impression that Kennedy was shot from behind as the car turned into Elm Street, and that the first bullet went through the back of his neck. But Weisberg contradicts this theory. He says that the shot came from the front. Weisberg claims that the Warren Commission used rewritten and doctored autopsy reports on the President to substantiate the claims of the FBI that the neck wound came from the back.

The most important question that Weisberg never does answer for us is this. If the FBI report is false and the Warren Report simply adapted itself to this report, what is it exactly that the FBI is hiding from or behind? What happened in Dallas that the FBI had to jump in immediately to circumvent? Was it indeed a conspiracy? From a foreign government? Cuban inspired perhaps, a lead that Weisberg firmly believes is a strong possibility. On the other hand, if Oswald was a cover agent, and the FBI didn't want the CIA embarrassed, that I could understand, but how an entire happening could have been distorted to fit a preconceived plan, I haven't been able to figure out. Weisberg leaves us with a bitter and suspicious taste in our mouth about our government and its direct or indirect part in the assassination.

However, there is no doubt

that WHITEWASH—a report on the Warren Report definitely destroys any idea that the Report was a definitive answer to Nov. 22nd, 1963 in Dallas. If anything, the book tells us that this is only the beginning. If there are resolute reporters and investigators like Weisberg behind the scenes, then seventy-five years from now when the National Archives divulges its security secrets, it won't matter very much because we will have found out the truth in the meantime.

I suspect that there will be a lot of individual, personal resistance to this book because we, as Americans, are prone to shove unpleasant facts aside and hold onto the dream. In this case, which will make resistance much stronger, it isn't a dream we're repressing, but a nightmare. And who wants to uncover that nightmare again? I think this is one of the essential reasons the author met with such resistance against having it published.

We, as a nation hold onto dreams, but we also hold onto something else which we call truth. If the Warren Commission and the FBI and the CIA have buried a dummy in their report, we, as American citizens, who have lost a fine and young President, have the right, even the duty to replace that dummy with the truth. Weisberg has taken a first and firm step towards it, and as we all know, its the first step that's the hardest but the most important.