

HEADLINERS

Did Oswald Act Alone?

Three investigators say Washington better take a new look at the assassination of President Kennedy

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✦ In the last several weeks, three books have been published, severely criticizing different aspects of the Warren Commission's Report on the assassination of President Kennedy. Their assertions have caused one of the late President's advisers, Richard Goodwin, to call for the convening of a new fact-finding body to examine the Commission's evidence. Here, in their own words, are the claims of the three leading critics.

LEO SAUVAGE, author of "The Oswald Affair" (World) and U.S. correspondent for "Le Figaro" newspaper.



"I am not anti-American. I have no political axe to grind. But speaking as a foreigner, and therefore with some extra claim to objectivity, I can only say that from the very first day, the Commission showed they were not looking for the truth but simply trying to prove what they had already decided — that Lee Harvey Oswald was guilty.

"They spent the entire first month of the hearings interrogating members of the Oswald family, who could shed no light whatsoever on the actual assassination as it happened, while the Dallas police officer, who was the first person into the warehouse from which the fatal bullets were supposedly fired, was not called as a witness for seven weeks.

"But the great and unforgivable flaw in the report is the refusal to permit cross-examination, essential to determining the truth in any judicial hearing. I, my secretary, any intelligent person could take the testimony of the incredible series of witnesses brought before the Commission and riddle it — and them — with the most glaring contradictions.

"Equally shocking are the gaps between what the Commission said and the report stated. For instance, the Commission went to great lengths to portray Oswald as a superb marksman. They summoned three masters

of the National Rifle Association to hit a moving target at the same distance, with the same inferior rifle — and gave the impression they had thus proved a point. But read the report — you discover these three master marksmen could not duplicate Oswald's supposed feat! The Commission relied on the regrettable fact that the public was not going to read the report. They indulged in what can only be called brainwashing." ■

MARK LANE, author of "Rush to Judgement" (Holt, Rinehart & Winston).



"If one compares the one-volume Warren Commission report with the 26 volumes of evidence on which it is purportedly based, not one major conclusion reached by the Commission bears any relation to the facts. The evidence does not compel the conclusion that Oswald was involved in the killing of President Kennedy or of Officer Tippit, and the evidence is overwhelming that at least two persons were involved in the assassination.

"Absolute proof regarding the origin of the shots might well repose in the photographs and X-rays of the President's body made when the autopsy was performed at Bethesda Naval Hospital. The Commission never examined them, and their whereabouts remains a mystery. More than a third of the reports relied on by the Commission remain classified and inaccessible, including every document regarding Jack Ruby and his associates, and this material may not be seen until September, 2039. The bullets, pistol, rifle, the crucial radio tapes of the Dallas Police Radio on November 22, 1963, have been divided in secrecy among the various police agencies.

"If the Commission is right, if Oswald was the assassin, it is hard to

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imagine the reason for this suppressing of evidence and for the continuing mystery with which the government surrounds the case." ■

EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN

author of *"Inquest: the Warren Commission and the Establishment of Truth"*
(Viking Press, Bantam).



"I do not agree with Mr. Lane or Mr. Sauvage. The evidence of Lee Oswald's guilt is obvious and overwhelming. But did Oswald act alone? I found in my research a major contradiction between the FBI reports and the autopsy findings in regard to where the murder bullet entered the President's body. And the primary evidence, the only documents that could resolve the contradiction — the autopsy photos — are missing.

"In almost all its actions, the Commission was far too heavily oriented toward public relations. For instance, Chief Justice Warren journeyed to Dallas, with great fanfare, to interview Jack Ruby. But he failed to bring two lawyers who had spent weeks probing Ruby's case, so he had no significant questions to ask.

"A good part of the Commission's ten-month investigation was conducted by one lawyer. The junior lawyers who did the bulk of the staff work operated under terrific pressure to resolve matters as soon as possible. The staff's efforts were often crippled by their lack of trained private investigators working directly for them. They had to depend on the FBI and the CIA and the liaison was very poor.

"I found no indication that anyone distorted evidence or did anything dishonest. I think the Commission did its best within the very inadequate framework in which it was forced to work. Overall, they did a sloppy job, but this does not mean that their conclusion was wrong." ■