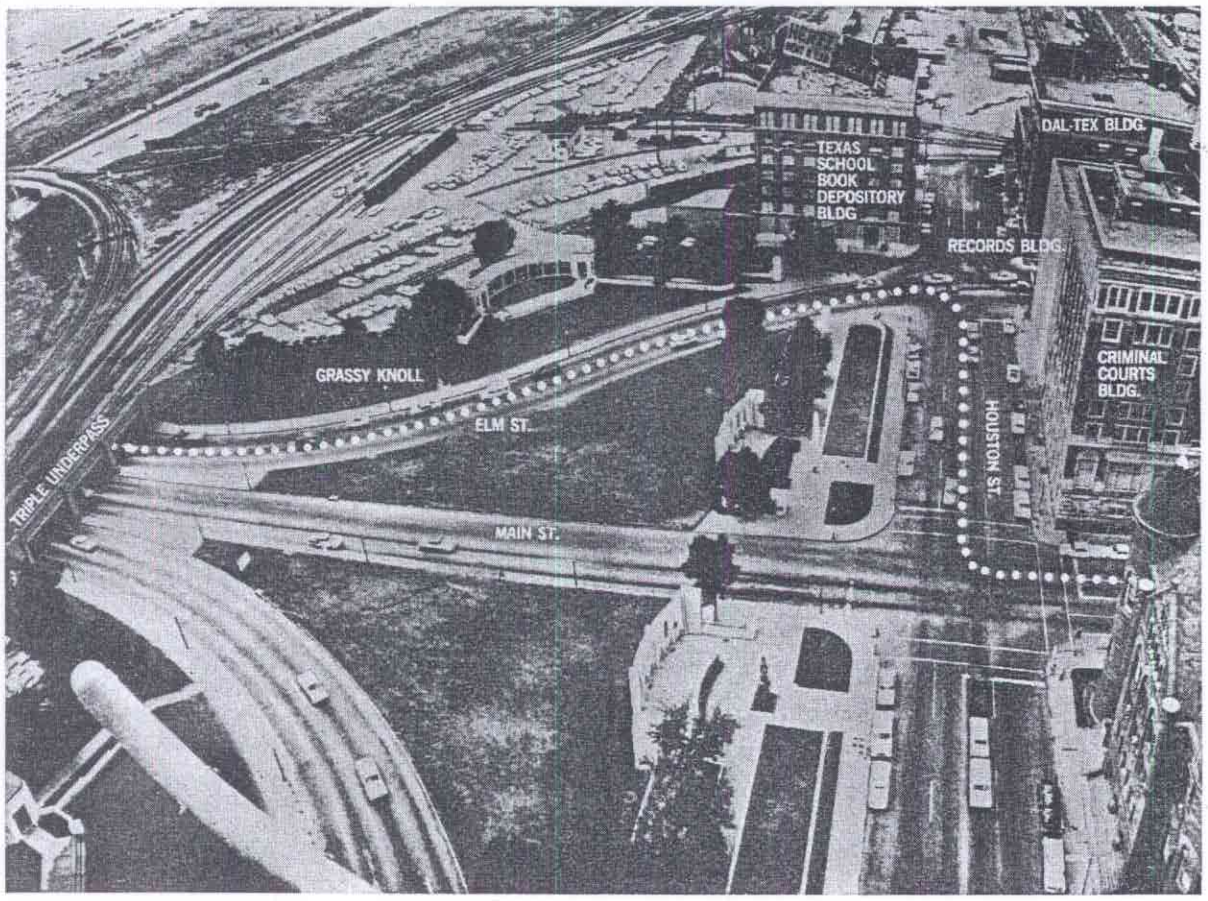


AFTER THE ASSASSINATION

By John Sparrow

TWO DAYS AFTER THE ASSASSINATION of President Kennedy millions of Americans saw Oswald murdered by Jack Ruby, and the proliferation of myth and mystery began. Was it coincidence or conspiracy? And, if there was a conspiracy, was it the Right Wing that engineered it, or the Left? The Dallas police, in a genuine effort to help the press reporters (who created and then exploited a chaos that the authorities were quite unable to control), made their full contribution, with the help of a blundering District Attorney, to the rank crop of rumour and suspicion.

The appointment, within a week, of a Presidential Commission of Inquiry damped down general speculation for the best part of a year; and when their *Report* was published in September, 1964, the public, at least in the United States, generally accepted its conclusions: the two murders were independent, insensate acts; there was no credible evidence of an association between Oswald and Ruby and no trace of any wider conspiracy.

These conclusions were succinctly stated in a volume of some 900 pages, the narrative that led up to them being clearly and vividly told and conveniently divided into chapters: "The Assassination"; "The Shots"; "The Assassin" (including an account of his murder of Patrolman Tippit and his attempt upon the life of General Walker); his "Detention and Death"; his "Background and Possible Motives". A separate chapter was devoted to "Investigation of Possible Conspiracy" and there were Appendices dealing with (*inter alia*) "Speculations and Rumours", and containing medical and autopsy reports, expert testimony about firearms and finger prints, and a fascinating account of Jack Ruby. The evidence taken by the Commission was published in twenty-six volumes, half of them consisting of photographs and other exhibits. It was undoubtedly an impressive achievement, and the American public was duly impressed.

Still, speculation continued on both sides of the Atlantic, especially in Europe (where, it seems, conspiracies are more readily suspected), and there was a good deal of debate in the press, on television, and on public platforms, in which criticism of the Report was expressed and theories of a conspiracy suggested; Mr. Mark Lane, the "itinerant demonologist", went round the world lecturing on the iniquities of the Commission, and sporadic articles and books by Mr. Vincent Salandria, Mr. Leo Sauvage, Mr. Joachim Joesten and others, gave some foretaste of what was to come. Still, more and more people came to believe in the trustworthiness of the Commission and the conclusiveness of its findings, and for a year or more it seemed that the demonologists were making no headway with the general public.

Then, half-way through 1966, the storm broke: there appeared a number of books that were intended to discredit completely Chief Justice Warren's Commission and their Report. All of them criticized the methods of the Commission, some insinuating, others asserting outright, that the assassination and the murder of Oswald were the result of a large-scale conspiracy—a conspiracy deliberately "covered up" by the Chief Justice and his colleagues. The gist of all these attacks upon the Warren Report can be summed up in the words of the most energetic of its critics: the report, says Mr. Mark Lane, "may be ranked with Teapot Dome and the Reichstag Fire trial as a synonym for political cover-up and cynical manipulation of the truth".

* * * *

The campaign was astonishingly successful. By the end of 1966, according to a poll taken during the closing months of that year, most Americans considered that the Report was not to be trusted, and two out of every hundred persons consulted believed that President Johnson was somehow implicated in the murder of his predecessor. These proportions are probably larger now, and larger still on this side of the Atlantic. The manufacture of conspiracy theories became a small-scale industry in the United States; and over here leading national newspapers have countenanced the cause, one of them giving pride of place to an article by a mid-Western editor suggesting wholesale murder of "awkward" witnesses by the Federal and State police. Nor is it only the ignorant and the uneducated that have been affected: intellectuals and academics in this country seem ready to entertain the wildest suspicions about conspiracies involving "Texas oil-men", the Dallas police, the F.B.I., the C.I.A., the Warren Commission, even President Johnson.

While the assassination itself has till now remained the focus of attention, future historians are likely to be more interested in its aftermath. As time goes by, it will become increasingly evident that the real mystery concerns not the doings of the protagonists in Dallas during the fatal week, but the subsequent performance of the mystery-makers themselves and the success of their campaign.

What was it, posterity will ask, that inspired this outbreak of "demonology", and how were its exponents able to cast their spells so widely and compel belief in their lurid denunciations?

"The real problem in *Hamlet*", said Oscar Wilde, "is Are the critics mad, or are they only pretending to be mad?" So here, confronted by such onslaughts on the Commission as those of Messrs. Joesten, Lane, and Weisberg, one is tempted to ask the very question that they themselves raise about the murders in Dallas: Are they to be explained as the result of some complex antecedent combination, or were they the work of obsessed, unbalanced men, each acting independently?

There is certainly evidence of association between those who have criticized the report: Joesten, the most outspoken of the "demonologists", dedicated *Oswald: Assassin or Fall Guy?* "To Mark Lane. The brilliant and courageous New York attorney whose 'Brief for Oswald' will go down in history as one of the great libertarian documents"; Edward Jay Epstein, the most incisive, and Lane himself, the most industrious of the critics, worked together for a time on their investigations; Harold Weisberg, the author of *Whitewash*, "the incendiary, world-wide sensation that strips the veil of secrecy from the Warren Commission", supplied material to Jim Garrison, the District Attorney who claims to have traced the assassination plot to New Orleans, and he went to New Orleans to assist in the investigation, as did the indefatigable Lane; Professor Richard Popkin has put in a plea for Garrison in *The New York Review of Books* (which printed the first version of his own "Second Oswald" theory) and Joesten has published a whole book in his support; there was close association between the English "Who Killed Kennedy Committee" (of which Bertrand Russell, Michael Foot, the Bishop of Southwark, and Professor Trevor-Roper were members) and the American "Citizens' Committee of Inquiry", of which Mark Lane was the founder; Professor Trevor-Roper, who published in *The Sunday Times* a violent criticism of the report as soon as it came out, has written a commendatory introduction to Lane's *Rush to Judgment;* while Lane praises Trevor-Roper's *Sunday Times* article as "a major attack" upon the Report. If the critics turned their scrutiny upon themselves they might well detect in their own activities evidence of a sinister combination.

In fact, there is no need to suppose any concerted plan of action on the part of the critics or to impute sinister motives to any of them; to do so would be to fall into their own besetting error. A complex and sensational story like this brings to the fore, along with serious and level-headed inquirers, a host of crack-pots and rabble-rousing publicists, of "patriots" with a self-appointed mission and Baconians with an *idée fixe*. Not all that such men say can be safely disregarded; it is the task of the dispassionate inquirer to see if there is a needle of truth hidden in their haystacks of denunciation.

* * * *

It is not difficult to trace the development of opinion among reasonable, critically-minded people. At the outset, it was only natural to suspect that a carefully organized plot must have lain behind the assassination: the coincidence of two unrelated murders seemed so improbable, and the atmosphere of Texas was so auspicious for conspiracy. But people soon perceived that a conspiracy involving not only the assassination of the President but also the murder of the assassin himself would have to be an extremely elaborate affair: apart from all else, such a story must make the Dallas police force principals in the murder of Oswald and at least accessaries to the murder of the President. It was hard, if Oswald was simply a tool in the hands of the real assassins, to account for his murder of Patrolman Tippit; and his attempted murder of the Right-Wing General Walker seemed inconsistent with his acting in concert with Texas oil plutocrats. If, then, first thoughts suggested a conspiratorial explanation, second thoughts made such an explanation difficult to sustain. It is not surprising that, when the Commission, after a lengthy investigation, announced that they could find no evidence of a conspiracy, many inquirers should have been

ready to accept the verdict contained in their Report.

Still, it was possible, while accepting that verdict, to feel dissatisfied with the way in which the Commission had to go about their work: they had an immense field to cover in a comparatively short space of time, and the Commissioners themselves necessarily delegated the examination of most of the witnesses to a staff which, though expert and without political or other bias, was working under pressure; even if the Chief Justice and his colleagues reached the right conclusions, it might be thought that they had done so without adequate exploration of possible alternatives, and that a number of unlikely but perhaps significant trails had not been followed up.

Moreover, the frame of mind in which they approached the case afforded grounds for misgiving. Mr. Dwight Macdonald wrote for *Esquire* a *Critique* which is the shrewdest, fairest, weightiest, and most entertaining of all the strictures on the Report that have been published. He did not pull his punches against the Commission, which he thought altogether too legalistic in its approach to the facts and in its presentation of them; the Commissioners, he said, suffered from *The Establishment Syndrome* and their Report was *The Prosecutor's Brief*. None the less, he did not believe that they intended to conceal anything, and he agreed with their conclusions; they may have been too easily impressed by the overwhelming *prima facie* case against Oswald as the sole assassin; but, after all, it was overwhelming. Professor Alexander M. Bickel, of Yale, in a searching article in *Commentary* for October, 1966, took a similar line: he would have liked to see a further inquiry instituted, but rather to set at rest possible doubts than to challenge the conclusions contained in the Report.

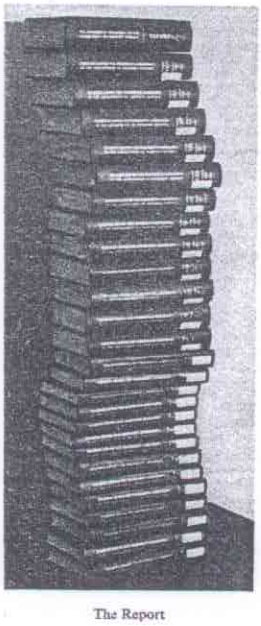
Again, it was possible, while accepting the *bona fides* of the Commission, and without supposing the existence of a widespread conspiracy, to conclude that something must have slipped through the meshes of their investigation and to believe that Oswald was assisted by a single accomplice—a theory that removes any difficulty that might be felt about the timing of the shots and the proportion of hits achieved, but runs into difficulties in other directions.

* * * *

The books that have most influenced opinion, however, go much farther than this, both in their criticism of the Report and in their conjectures about the assassination. They insinuate, or suggest, or actually allege, conspiracy of a sensational kind. The Commission, says Mr. Joesten,

deliberately suppressed material evidence of the highest importance; it deliberately ignored the testimony of scores of eye-witnesses; it accepted testimony false on its face and discarded testimony that bore the hallmark of truth. It connived at all the outrages committed against truth and justice by the Dallas Police, the Secret Service, and the F.B.I. It added quite a few of its own.

Mr. Lane—"willing to wound and yet afraid to strike"—is not so outspoken; but he does not shrink from accusing the Chief Justice of cynical manipulation of the truth, and a great part of his criticism only makes sense on the hypothesis that the murder of Oswald was the deliberate work of the Dallas police: Chief Curry and Captain Fritz (to mention no others) ought, if Mr. Lane is right, to be charged as accessories, if not as principals, both with the assassination of the President and with the murder of the President's assassin. Mr. Weisberg can be as outspoken as Mr. Joesten: "The staff of the Commission did not shun lying to the Commission itself", he writes, "and neither was deterred by perjury or its subornation"; as for the F.B.I., its report inculpating Oswald "is a tissue so thin and a polemic so undisguised that it would demean the labours of a hick police force investigating the purloining of a desiccated flounder".



The Report

* * * *

What is it that has inspired such rabid denunciations? Most of their authors have, in the words of Mr. Dwight Macdonald, "a large, left-handed political axe to grind". In the less picturesque language of Professor Bickel, "A portion of the Left, clinging stubbornly to a kind of abstract logic, [wishes] to believe that the shots that killed John F. Kennedy came from the organized Right". "If the Warren Commissioners are exposed as merely hapless dupes", says Mr. Andrew Kopkind in *The New Statesman*, "other doubts about American history during the last two decades become more pertinent. Was the Rosenberg case also a fraud? . . . Was the whole U.S. position on the origins of the cold war fraudulent?" If the critics could go further, and convict the Commission, with the F.B.I. and the C.I.A., of participation in a criminal conspiracy, the damage done to the Government and to the whole Right-Wing "Establishment" would be immeasurable, and the political consequences might be staggering.

And yet, though political ideology may go far to explain their animus, it would be wrong to write the "demonologists" off as insincere; their persistence (Mr. Joesten has written six books on the assassination, "five published and one as yet unpublishable"; Mr. Weisberg has published three; Mr. Lane has devoted the last four years of his life to an unflagging campaign against the Report); the stridency of their tone; even the extravagance of their charges—all this is surely evidence of some sort of genuine passion. Where such passion is at work, it is beside the point to speak of intellectual honesty or dishonesty; self-dedication, whether it be to a political ideology or to an *idée fixe*, is apt to induce an intellectual myopia that blinds its victims, when weighing one piece of evidence against another, to the criteria used by judges with cooler or clearer heads.

* * * *

It is the chief weakness of these critics that in dealing with evidence they run counter to a number of truths that are common knowledge among lawyers. (1) Every lawyer knows that no evidence is less dependable than that of witnesses present at a sudden and unexpected accident: a dozen honest observers will give a dozen different accounts of what occurred. (2) Every lawyer knows that a witness—called, say, to identify a suspect—while wrong on a number of points may yet be right on others, perhaps including the essential one. (3) Every lawyer knows that honest and truthful witnesses may contradict themselves, particularly on questions concerning their own and others' motives and states of mind, without thereby forfeiting credibility. (4) Every lawyer knows that in a sensational case, such as the assassination of a public figure, scores of people will turn up with impossible stories—sometimes sheer inventions, sometimes fantasies that they have somehow persuaded themselves are true. (5) Again, human beings, even trained officials, are liable to make mistakes in carrying out their tasks and in the accounts they afterwards give of how they did it—and the Dallas police in the chaos that followed the assassination were certainly no exception to that rule. But every lawyer knows that such blunders do not vitiate all the testimony that contains them; still less need they cast doubt upon the honesty of the witness. (6) Finally, every lawyer knows that in a big and complicated case there is always, at the end of the day, a residue of improbable, inexplicable fact. You do not invalidate a hypothesis by showing that the chances were against the occurrence of some of the events that it presupposes: many things that happen are actuarially improbable, but they happen. To make up its mind, if it can, what *must* have happened, despite incidental improbabilities—that is the task of a Commission of Inquiry.

Confronted by masses of conflicting testimony and flooded with a myriad statements ranging from the certainly true to the completely worthless, the Warren Commission naturally and necessarily based its conclusions on the testimony that it judged, in the light of the whole of the evidence, to be reliable; rightly disregarding much that was wild, much that was honest but mistaken, and much that was fantastic or simply irrelevant; and necessarily accepting as part of the texture of events a number of actuarial improbabilities. The Commission is blamed by its critics for "selecting" the evidence that "suits its case"—because in presenting its conclusions it draws attention to the evidence that supports them. What else should an investigator do? It is for the critics to show that they themselves have evaluated all the evidence, and can make a selection from it as reliable as that made by the Commission, and base upon that selection conclusions that compel acceptance as strongly as do the conclusions reached in the Report.

Very different from that is the procedure of

The Warren Commission in session

the demonologists. They seek to discredit the Commission's conclusions on vital points (e.g., the source of the shots) simply by calling attention to differences of opinion among the observers; they think that they have undermined a conclusion supported by overwhelming evidence (e.g., that Oswald murdered Tippit) if they have demonstrated the unreliability of some of the witnesses (e.g., Mrs. Markham) whose evidence confirms it—though in support of some of their own hypotheses they rely on evidence that lacks from beginning to end the stamp of credibility. They treat blunders on the part of officials as proofs of dishonesty (inferring, e.g., from a policeman's misidentification of the make of Oswald's rifle, an elaborate conspiracy that involves the "planting" of that rifle by the police). And they point to improbabilities (e.g., that "Bullet 399", which the Commission concludes passed through two human bodies, should have been so little affected in the process) as invalidating explanations given in the Report, when their own explanations of the same facts are, not merely on grounds of actuarial improbability, far more difficult to believe (in the example given, they suggest that Bullet 399 was specially prepared for the purpose by the conspirators and somehow planted by them in the Parkland Hospital).

Worst of all, the critics repeatedly fail to distinguish between a good point and a bad one and refuse to abandon arguments that have been shown to be without foundation. Three or four years of debate and discussion have cleared away a vast undergrowth of misconceptions: circumstances that seemed suspicious (e.g., the military rehearsal, shortly before the assassination, of the ceremonial for a Presidential funeral) have been shown to have an innocent explanation; significant mistakes (e.g., the story that the splintering of the windscreen of the Presidential car was on its front surface) have been corrected; vital calculations (e.g., the estimate of the time needed to fire three shots from Oswald's rifle) have been shown to be based on error; damaging allegations (e.g., that the Dallas police took notes of Oswald's interrogation and then destroyed them; and that they destroyed the bag in which he carried his rifle, and fabricated a substitute) have been explained as being due to false assumptions or a hasty misreading of the evidence. There remains a small hard core of real difficulties—most of them arising out of the reactions of the President and the Governor when hit and the reputed positions of the President's wounds—and it is on these that rational critics rely in challenging the conclusion that Oswald was the sole assassin. A case can indeed be based on this hard core of difficulties, and it can be stated effectively and with moderation; but that is not the way with Messrs. Joesten, Lane and Weisberg.

* * * *

They put forward good points and bad alike, mingle discredited assertions with valid evidence, and make up for weak links in their hypotheses by loud asseveration and virulent abuse of the Dallas police, the F.B.I., and the Commission. It is this that makes the reading of their books so painful an experience for anyone who is genuinely concerned to discover the truth. As he turns over page after page of exaggeration, distortion, and plain misstatement, the reader's indignation kindles, and the impulse to refute the authors' assertions one by one becomes almost irresistible; it seems intolerable that accusations of murder and treason against specified individuals, based on such a presentation of such evidence, should be allowed to go unanswered.

A moment's reflection, however, shows that to answer their charges individually would take up volumes at least as long as the books that contain them. And misrepresentation is too often like the hydra: cut off one of its heads and a score of others take its place; the task is never-ending. Worst of all, the controversialist becomes a bore, and his readers are inclined to say: "After all, there must be something in the charges if a man has to spend so much labour in an effort to refute them."

So there is a strong temptation to leave it all alone, relying on the assurance that such exaggerated accusations will answer themselves.

So, no doubt, they eventually will: when the Report and the attacks upon it have stood side by side on the shelves of libraries for long enough, a proper balance will assert itself, at least in the minds of thinking people. But in the short run the demonologists' methods are effective, and at present they are reaping a remarkable harvest, in credit and no doubt in cash. The passion of their attack convinces some people; its sheer volume impresses others. The Gallup polls prove their success with the mass of the public; the utterances of sages like Mr. Norman Mailer (who believes that the Dallas police killed Ruby by injecting him with cancer cells) and Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien (who finds Mr. Lane's arguments "devastating") show that the intellectual can be duped as completely as the man in the street. In the United States, leading publicists speak of "terrible unknowns" and their "appalling duty", evidently believing that if they cackle loud enough in commendation of the critics they will save the Capitol from dangers that exist only in their own imagination; in this country a distinguished dotard, Bertrand Russell, has hailed Mr. Lane's book as "a great historical document"; and on the Continent only a week or two ago another venerable figure attached himself to the ranks of the credulous in the person of General de Gaulle.

* * * *

What sort of stories are they that the public is prepared to accept as supplanting the answers given by the Commission, and by what sort of arguments are they supported?

First in the field was Mr. Joesten, in whose pages may be found at least the seed of most subsequent speculations. According to Mr. Joesten, there were two conspiracies: one against Governor Connally, the other against the President; Ruby, acting for an interstate crime racket, paid Crafard, an employee in his night-club (chosen for his physical resemblance to Oswald), to murder the Governor by shooting him from a building close to the Book Depository where Oswald worked: "the man who fired from the Dal-Tex Building was, I believe, Larry Crafard and he didn't know that Kennedy was being assassinated. He was just doing the job for which he had gotten $5,000 from Ruby. He was shooting at Governor Connally." (This is founded on a cock-and-bull story about a conversation overheard in a night-club, sworn to by a Dallas lawyer in an affidavit printed by the Commission, but rightly regarded by them as of no evidential value.)

At the same time, says Mr. Joesten, there was on foot a conspiracy to kill the President, the parties to which included one of the President's aides, Ken O'Donnell, Chief Curry and Captain Fritz of the Dallas police, members of the F.B.I. (among them, it seems, Mr. Hoover) and—Mr. Joesten makes much of this—Mrs. Paine, a Quaker lady, who had been kind to the Oswalds and in whose house Marina Oswald was living at the time. The President was to be killed by simultaneous fire from the famous "grassy knoll" and from a window in the Book Depository—in essentials, the plot is the same as that postulated by Messrs. Lane and Weisberg and by Professor Popkin. The man who fired from the window (according to

Joachim Joesten

Mr. Joesten) was not Oswald but Patrolman Tippit of the Dallas police, who was chosen (like Crafard) for his physical resemblance to Oswald: "I am not making this charge lightly", says Mr. Joesten: "It is my considered opinion that the sniper in the sixth-floor window of the T.S.B.D. was Tippit rather than Oswald". He varies this account later by suggesting that Tippit's *rôle* was only diversionary:

He [Tippit] didn't fire a single shot or at any rate a single bullet. He fired all right, and made an

awful lot of noise in order to attract everybody's attention to that window. . . . Plenty of noise came from the Book Depository but not a single bullet. I believe the man in the window was Officer Tippit, of the Dallas police force. And the man who fired from the Dal-Tex building was, I believe, Larry Crafard.

Oswald, an innocent "fall-guy", was to be seized before he left the Depository, where his gun, fetched from Mrs. Paine's garage, was to be planted by the police (this is suggested also by Mr. Lane); he was to have the guilt pinned upon him, or be "made to confess", and then to be liquidated "before a lawyer or anyone else [could] challenge the 'evidence'".

"I am satisfied", says Mr. Joesten, "that this was the blue-print, give or take a few minor details."

Ruby's plot did not come off, because Crafard's bullets failed to kill the Governor; the other plot also miscarried, because Oswald managed (in all innocence) to leave the Depository unapprehended. This faced the plotters with a problem: with Oswald at large, "one of their own fellow conspirators, indeed one of the two killers, was in danger of exposure. That man was Patrolman J. D. Tippit". Moreover, so long as Tippit himself was alive, there was a further peril: "in such a situation as this", says Mr. Joesten, "the danger of endless blackmail is ever present, and [he adds] it is usually eliminated at the point of a gun". "Now improvisation had to take the place of careful planning": and within a few minutes of the assassination "the death of Patrolman Tippit was irrevocably decided by those in control of the entire operation". Where and by whom and how this decision was taken Mr. Joesten does not tell us: anyhow, he is satisfied that Sgt. Hill of the Dallas police was told off (by Capt. Fritz, it seems) to dispatch Tippit, and Oswald, his own revolver having been planted on him by the police, was arrested in the Texas Theater.

Oswald having been apprehended and saddled with the guilt of both murders, Ruby, "the tool", was called in by the police, "justifiably afraid that their lies and distortions, their trumped-up charges and fabricated evidence, indeed the whole pattern of the frame-up, would come apart at the seams in the course of a fair trial, and would reveal the underlying fabric of conspiracy and official complicity", and he finished off Oswald "in approved gangster style".

* * * *

Mr. Joesten's story is extravagant and incredible, his book a compound of bad logic, bad English, bad temper, and bad taste. But it is not without its lessons, and these are applicable to all large-scale conspiracy theories: it shows the lengths you have to go to in order to support them. No wonder Messrs. Lane and Weisberg have no positive theory to suggest!

Take the murder of Patrolman Tippit. To believe Oswald innocent of it, you must not only reject a mass of eyewitness and circumstantial evidence, individually open to criticism but cumulatively overwhelming (the revolver, the bullets, the cartridge-cases, the discarded jacket), you must also suggest some other plausible explanation of the murder. Mr. Joesten's incredible hypothesis is the only one so far put forward. Mr. Weisberg, who refuses to believe that Oswald killed Tippit, can suggest no other explanation: Mr. Lane seems to be equally reluctant to accept Oswald's guilt, but is equally unable to produce an alternative. But if Oswald *did* kill Tippit, he must surely have been guilty at least of complicity in the murder of the President. Why should a completely innocent Oswald shoot a policeman? Why should an Oswald who had acted merely as a "front" for the President's real murderers gratuitously commit a murder on his own? We shall never know what passed between Tippit and his murderer; but the obvious explanation is that Oswald, confronted by a policeman within an hour of having shot the President, lost his head and fired: it gave him a chance of escape, and a second murder could not increase the penalty he would suffer if he was caught.

It is instructive to observe how, when faced by difficulties such as Tippit's murder, Mr. Joesten is compelled, in order to supplant the story told by the Commission, to treat as perjured the evidence of witness after witness, and to brand as accomplices in the conspiracy one party after another, each less likely than the last, until the structure becomes top-heavy and collapses under its own weight.

Thus in order to explain away Oswald's attempted assassination of General Walker, which he confessed to his wife, Mr. Joesten has to allege that Marina's circumstantial account of the confession, supported as it is by physical evidence, was simply an invention—for him, this is easy: she was admittedly a temperamental and sometimes unreliable witness: therefore, in accordance with the familiar principle, all she says can be dismissed as perjury (Lane and Weisberg suggest that the F.B.I. brainwashed or bullied her into inventing the story).

Again, it was an essential factor in the supposed conspiracy that Oswald should obtain a job in the Book Depository: in order to account for the awkward fact that the job was procured through Mrs. Paine, whose honesty shines out from every line of her evidence, Mr. Joesten has to make her an accomplice in the plot.

To take one more instance: to justify imputing to Oswald advance knowledge of the route of the procession, Mr. Joesten actually suggests that the President's assistant Ken O'Donnell, who had some responsibility for planning the trip to Texas, was implicated in the plot. Most of his other accusations are essential to any large-scale conspiracy theory; this one is as gratuitous as it is cruel.

* * * *

There is this, however, to be said for Mr. Joesten: he has the courage of his own crazy convictions; he is not afraid to put forward a positive theory, and he names his guilty men. And in this he has provided an object-lesson for Messrs. Lane and Weisberg, most of whose suspicions and innuendoes are directed at the same targets as are Mr. Joesten's forthright denunciations. They have had three or four years in which to think of a more convincing conspiracy theory than that of Mr. Joesten, but they have not produced one. Why not?

Mark Lane

They must have considered possible alternatives; if either of them had found one, why should he not have brought it forward? Presumably, each of them realizes that all the explanations he has been able to think of fail to cover all the facts; and that if extended so as to cover them they would become, like Mr. Joesten's, top-heavy and patently implausible.

* * * *

Mr. Lane and Mr. Weisberg have therefore adopted a method of controversy that does not expose them to direct refutation: they offer no connected account of what they think occurred. Mr. Weisberg, contenting himself with a ceaseless small-fire of rhetorical questions, Mr. Lane with a steady barrage of innuendo. Most of Mr. Weisberg's questions misfire or are misdirected; so far as they are relevant and valid they can be answered consistently with the Commission's theory (many of them in fact are answered in the "Speculations and Rumours" Appendix to the Report), and many of them could be directed just as effectively against a rival hypothesis if he dared to put one forward. As for Mr. Lane's innuendos, they mean nothing if they do not imply a conspiracy implicating, among others, Chief Curry, Captain Fritz, and other officers of the Dallas police; but when he is faced (as he was not long ago in a review in *Town*) with the suggestion that he is charging these officers with murder he has recourse to bluster and abuse.

If one cannot attack conclusions that Mr. Lane refuses to state, one can at least criticize the methods he employs in establishing a basis for his innuendos. Let me give an example or two; one does not have to look far to find them.

On the first page of *Rush to Judgment* Mr. Lane recounts, as if it was established fact, the story told by a Miss Mercer, who on the morning of the assassination saw a truck parked by the grassy knoll from which (according to him) fire was later opened on the President; she saw a man take "what appeared to be a rifle-case" from the truck, carry it towards the bushes on the knoll and put it (according to Mr. Lane) behind a fence; three Dallas policemen were standing near, but did not move the truck or take any action. Mr. Lane complains that Commission investigators did not question Miss Mercer and "did not try to identify the three police officers so as to question them or to locate the truck"; he charges the police with thus condoning a breach of security regulations, and suggests that the incident was connected with the fire from the grassy knoll; the obvious innuendo being that the police turned a blind eye and that the Commission culpably abstained from probing into the incident. Thus on its opening page he creates an atmosphere of suspicion which pervades his book.

What Mr. Lane does not tell us is that the F.B.I. took statements from Miss Mercer and the police and identified the truck (which belonged to a construction firm working on a neighbouring building); it had broken down, and if any box was removed from it, it must have been a tool-box; the police managed to get it moved on, with all its occupants, shortly before the arrival of the President's procession. The report recording all this is accessible in the Commission's archives.

One can only suppose that Mr. Lane was ignorant of this report and recklessly made his ignorance the basis of his charge against the Dallas police. If that is so, was not his own negligence as gross as that which he imputes to the Commission?

My next example of Mr. Lane's methods comes a page or two later in his book. A crucial question is whether any shots came from the grassy knoll, in front of the Presidential car. Many witnesses thought so, and Mr. Lane, who devotes a whole chapter to "Where the Shots came from", insists that they could not have been mistaken. A key witness was Lee E. Bowers, a railwayman who worked close by. Here is a passage from his evidence:

Mr. Bowers: I heard three shots. One, then a slight pause, then two very close together. Also reverberations from the shots.
Mr. Ball: And were you able to form an opinion as to the source of the sound or what direction it came from?
Mr. Bowers: The sounds came either from up against the School Depository Building or near the mouth of the triple underpass.
Mr. Ball: Were you able to tell which?
Mr. Bowers: No; I could not . . . I had worked this same tower for some 10 or 12 years . . . and had noticed at that time the similarity of sounds occurring in either of these two locations . . . There is a similarity of sound, because there is a reverberation which takes place from either location.

Plainly, the sounds heard coming from the knoll might well have been reverberations of shots coming from the Depository. How does Mr. Lane deal with this important testimony? By making no reference to it. One can think of only three reasons for this omission: (1) Mr. Lane somehow missed the passage in his study of the evidence; (2) He read the passage, but did not appreciate its significance; (3) He appreciated its significance, but decided to suppress it. It would be interesting to learn from Mr. Lane which of these represents the truth, and whether he can suggest another explanation less damaging to his reputation as a dependable investigator.

Mr. Lane employs similar methods throughout the book—e.g., in dealing with the General Walker episode. Before his attempted assassination of the General, Oswald wrote a note to Marina, advising her what to do in the event of his arrest; this note was found in a book that was handed to the police by Mrs. Paine, together with other belongings of Oswald, on December 1, 1964; it was undated and did not name General Walker, but its contents show plainly enough that it is to that episode that it refers. (Mr. Joesten disposes of this note by saying that it was "produced" by the treacherous Mrs. Paine to confirm Marina's evidence [which he thinks perjured] about Oswald's confession. That it was in Oswald's handwriting, and was handed over to the police by Mrs. Paine months before Marina gave evidence of the confession, are details that do not trouble Mr. Joesten.) Mr. Lane has an easier way of dealing with this vital piece of evidence: he simply ignores it. In the few inadequate and misleading lines that he accords to the Walker episode in his book he does not mention Oswald's note; when he was questioned about the episode in interview he not only failed to mention the note but went on to deny by implication that it existed, declaring that a photograph of Walker's house, also found among Oswald's things, was "*the one piece of physical evidence* [my italics] used to show that Oswald shot at General Walker".

* * * *

One more example. It is important to Mr. Lane's case that the wound in the President's throat should have been the result of fire from the front. Unfortunately, within minutes of his arrival in hospital the wound was obliterated by a tracheotomy—the doctors had no time and no reason to examine it, nor did they turn the body over and examine the wounds in the back. Answering questions at a press conference that afternoon, in conditions that were said to be like Bedlam, the doctor who performed the tracheotomy and another surgeon said that the neck wound looked like, or might have been, an entrance wound; it was so described in a report drafted in the hospital that day. In evidence before the Commission, however, the same doctors repeatedly explained that they had no means of knowing whether it was an "entrance" or an "exit" wound; it might have been either. Mr. Lane tells his readers: "The doctors were unanimous about the nature of the throat wound: it was an entrance wound"; they "took a stand", he says, to this effect; and he declares in interview: "*Every doctor at Dallas's Parkland Hospital who examined the wound in President Kennedy's throat* [my italics] and made a statement to the press on the day of the assassination said the throat wound was an *entrance* wound." (This becomes, in the mouth of Mr. Lane's disciple, Professor Trevor-Roper, "doctor after doctor at first *insisting* [my italics] that the *shots* [Professor Trevor-Roper's plural; my italics] came from the front".) Had he stopped to think, Mr. Lane would have realized that it was, to put it mildly, misleading to say that the doctors unanimously pronounced the throat wound to be an entrance wound, and worse than misleading to suggest that anything they said was based on an examination of it.

Mr. Lane's zeal for the truth as he sees it leads him again and again, no doubt unwittingly, not only to suppress but to misrepresent the evidence on crucial points. On every issue of importance—e.g. the origin of the shots that hit the President, the nature of the President's wounds, the identification of Oswald's rifle, the "fabrication" of the important paper bag, the attempted murder of General Walker, the murder of Tippit, the murder of Oswald himself, the alleged association of Tippit and Ruby—as well as on a host of subsidiary issues, his presentation of the facts is so slanted—owing no doubt, to his firm conviction that his conclusions must be right—that it simply cannot be relied upon. In short, *Rush to Judgment* confirms Mr. Dwight Macdonald's impression that Mr. Lane is "less a truth seeker than a tireless demagogic advocate" who "expounds the conspiracy thesis far less reasonably and far more tendentiously than the Warren Report argues the opposite case".

* * * *

It is a relief to turn from writing of this kind to Mr. Edward Epstein's *Inquest*, which is short, clear, extremely well argued, and all the more effective because it is moderate in its conclusions and states them quietly. The book started life as a university thesis on the workings of Government-appointed investigative bodies, of which the Chief Justice's Commission was taken as a signal example. The academic origin of the work seemed to guarantee its scholarly accuracy, and it claimed authority as being based upon a series of interviews granted to the author during 1965 by five of the Commissioners and a dozen members of their legal staff.

Inquest created a sensation when it appeared in the summer of 1966, and it has probably done more to damage the Commission in the eyes of enlightened readers than any other contribution to the debate.

The greater part of the book consists of criticism of the way the Warren Commission went about its work. The Commissioners themselves, Mr. Epstein alleges, were desultory in attendance at the hearings; their staff, many of them busy lawyers, were short-handed and over-worked; both Commission and staff had to conform to an impossibly restricted time-schedule; they suffered from having to rely on Government agencies for the collection of material; above all, they were to a man committed to the "dominant purpose" of allaying public anxiety by suppressing all traces of a possible conspiracy—an aim that blinded them to any evidence, and prevented them from following up any line, that might have shown Oswald not to be the sole assassin.

These allegations were made all the more striking by the author's repeated appeals in support of them to his interviews with members of the Commission and their staff. For Mr. Epstein took his readers behind the scenes, showed them the Commission performing (or scamping) its duties, and let them overhear what the Commissioners and the staff said about their aims and about each other. As Mr. Epstein presents it, it is a damaging picture. One of the staff counsel, Mr. Wesley Liebeler, appears as a conscientious dissident, protesting against procedures of which he disapproves and conclusions with which he disagrees; time and again "Liebeler interview" is given as the authority for some particularly damaging

Jim Garrison

remark; for instance he is quoted as saying, when asked what the Commissioners did, "in a word, nothing"—while Mr. Ball, a senior counsel, is said to have declared that they "had no idea what was happening". Most damaging of all, Mr. Epstein illustrates the Commission's subservience to its "dominant purpose" by a remark of their chief counsel, Mr. J. Lee Rankin, about the rumour that Oswald had been a paid informer of the F.B.I.: this (said Mr. Rankin) was "a dirty rumour . . very bad for the Commission . . . very damaging to the agencies that are involved in it and it must be wiped out in so far as it is possible to do so by this Commission". That must mean, according to Mr. Epstein, that the rumour was "considered dirty", not because it was known to be untrue, but because it was known to be "damaging" to the government. The "solution proposed" he explains, "was to 'wipe out' the rumour. This would satisfy the implicit purpose

of the Commission ". In other words, Mr. Epstein is claiming that he has caught the Commission's chief counsel *in flagrante delicto* declaring that the Commission's purpose is to scotch rumour, even at the expense of truth.

* * *

No wonder *Inquest* created a sensation. Some six months after it appeared, however, *The Law Quarterly Review* published an article by Professor A. L. Goodhart which was in effect an Inquest upon *Inquest*. Professor Goodhart had applied Mr. Epstein's methods to Mr. Epstein's work: he had gone behind the scenes and questioned some of the persons from whose interviews Mr. Epstein had quoted; and in his article he presented the results. They were startling: Mr. Ball had replied that all the quotations attributed to him by Mr. Epstein were "wrong or false": he saw Mr. Epstein once only, for about ten minutes in the lobby of a hotel; he had protested to the publishers. As for Mr. Liebeler, he had denied having said that the Commission did "nothing", and declared that he was incensed at Mr. Epstein's misstatements or distortions of the record: his own criticisms of the Commission's staff work, he said, "were directed not at the investigation—which he believes was thorough—but at the writing of the Report". He declared himself "thoroughly in accord with the Commission's findings", and said that he was appalled at the nature of the attacks that questioned the conclusion (which he fully accepted) that Oswald was the assassin and acted alone.

Finally, Professor Goodhart showed that Mr. Epstein had facilitated misinterpretation of Mr. Rankin's remark about wiping out the "dirty rumour", by quoting it out of its context. It occurred in the course of a discussion between members of the Commission and their staff which is set out at length by Mr. Gerald Ford, himself a Commissioner, in *Portrait of the Assassin*. No one who reads Mr. Ford's account can have any doubt about their determination to get at the truth, and Mr. Rankin himself concluded the discussion by declaring that the aim of the Commission must be "to find out the facts . . . to such an extent that this Commission can fairly say, 'In our opinion he was or was not an employee of any intelligence agency of the United States'."

Those words (not quoted by Mr. Epstein) are, as Professor Goodhart says, "not a declaration that the 'rumour' must be 'wiped out' even if it is true" but "a declaration in words that cannot be mistaken that the Commission must fairly say whether Oswald 'was or was not' an employee of the F.B.I."

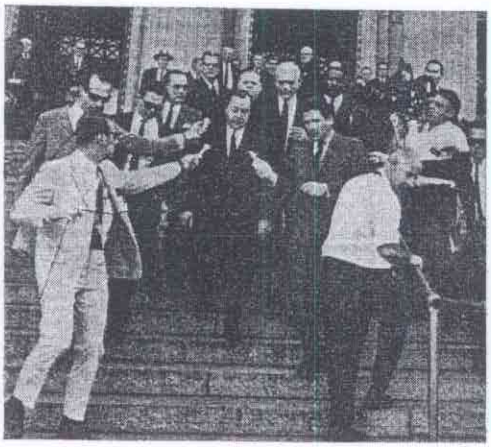
* * *

Critical though he is of the Commission, Mr. Epstein is no demonologist: he does not believe in a conspiracy involving the police or the F.B.I., or suggest that the latter acted collusively with the Commission. He accepts the view that Oswald shot the President, and does not (it seems) question the conclusions of the Report concerning the murders of Tippit and of Oswald himself: he does not make play with the planting of bullets and rifles, with puffs of smoke and fabricated paper bags. He confines himself to a hard core of evidence, from which, by close argument, he concludes that the Commission's theory is untenable and that there must therefore have been a second marksman.

[The "hard core" consists of the following difficulties and doubts: (1) the fact that the interval between the reaction of the President and that of the Governor was shorter than the shortest time within which two shots could be fired from Oswald's rifle; (2) the difference between the account of the President's back wounds given in the doctors' autopsy report and that given in two F.B.I. reports, apparently based on statements from agents who were among those present at the autopsy; the F.B.I. reports are inconsistent with the single-bullet theory adopted by the Commission in order to surmount difficulty (1); (3) photographs of the President's clothing *prima facie* supporting the F.B.I. evidence about the wounds; (4) "Bullet 399", which ought, on the Commission's "single bullet" hypothesis, to have been distorted by its passage through two bodies; (5) Governor Connally's impression that he heard a shot (which must have hit the President) before he felt the shot by which he himself was hit. Difficulty (1) can be surmounted by supposing that a single shot hit the President and the Governor, the latter's reaction being delayed by rather less than two seconds; difficulties (3) and (4) are not conclusive: the clothing might have been rucked up by the President's movements; the bullet might have emerged almost intact, particularly if it did not pass through strong and solid bone; (5) the Governor's evidence is not dependable: he was clearly bewildered, and he became unconscious shortly after the event. As for (2), the F.B.I. has explained that its reports reproduced the first impressions of the doctors, reported by its agents while the autopsy was still in progress; the autopsy report, according to which the wounds are located consistently with the single-bullet theory, represents the doctors' final conclusions.]

* * *

So far, then, as concerns the assassination itself, Mr. Epstein's conclusion, though it differs from that of the Commission, is not sensational: it simply means that Oswald must have had an accomplice. In order to vindicate it, however, Mr. Epstein has to allege that the Commission induced the doctors to scrap a genuine report containing an account of the President's wounds inconsistent with its single-bullet theory (and agreeing with the F.B.I. reports, which for some reason they left unaltered) and persuaded them to substitute a false report which did not necessitate the existence of a second assassin.



Clay Shaw after a session of the hearing

Mr. Epstein makes this allegation in discreet terms: his verdict, he says, "indicates that the conclusions of the Warren Report must be viewed as expressions of political truth"—i.e., the Commission fabricated a document in order to achieve its "dominant purpose" and reassure the public that the President's death was the work of a "lone assassin".

Why did the Commission have to resort to such an expedient? Because, says Mr. Epstein, they accepted a conclusion that he attributes to Mr. Redlich, Mr. Rankin's special assistant, who played a leading part in the compilation of the Report: "To say that [the President and the Governor] were hit by separate bullets is synonymous with saying that there were two assassins"; if it accepted this, the Commission could not afford to publish an account of the autopsy that contradicted the single-bullet theory. Unfortunately for Mr. Epstein, he misquotes Mr. Redlich on this vital point: asked by Professor Goodhart about the remark attributed to him, Mr. Redlich replied that "he did not say this and he did not believe it", and went on to declare that he was "appalled by the inaccuracies of the book and the statements which [Mr. Epstein] has attributed to me which I never made". What Mr. Redlich did say, it appears, was that the facts could best be explained in terms of the one-bullet theory; but neither he nor a majority of the Commissioners "rejected as impossible the other explanation that Oswald had fired two shots that separately hit the President and Governor Connally". (Professor Bickel, in the article above referred to, has advanced a plausible alternative to the one-bullet theory, which accounts for all the "hard-core" difficulties consistently with Oswald's being the sole assassin.)

Unfortunately, readers of *The Law Quarterly Review* are counted in hundreds, as against the thousands of those who have read *Inquest*; so that despite Professor Goodhart's exposure of his method, in the eyes of the public Mr. Epstein remains, for the time being at any rate, in possession of the field.

Of course, Mr. Epstein did not deliberately mislead his readers; but his book shows how a clever man can unwittingly allow *parti pris* to vitiate the building up and presentation of a case, so that a chain of reasoning cogent enough if one adopts certain presuppositions is made to lead to a conclusion that is in fact ill-founded. In short, Mr. Epstein has proved about himself what he sought to prove about the Commission.

[A key point in relation to the hard evidence relied on by Mr. Epstein is provided by the X-rays and photographs taken during the autopsy. These have been placed in the National Archive and, till 1971, can only be seen by permission of the Kennedy family. If they show that the posterior "neck" wound was really a wound in the back, that practically rules out the possibility of the anterior neck wound's being a wound of exit, and with it the single-bullet theory. The critics therefore clamour for a sight of this evidence, and some have suggested that the embargo is due to a guilty desire to suppress it. Here Mr. Manchester has produced vital evidence. On p.192 of *The Death of a President* he writes: "In the summer of 1966 a former Cornell graduate student [Mr. Epstein] published a book which suggested that this first bullet followed a different trajectory. The implication was that a second assassin had aided Oswald. The issue is resolved by the X-rays and photographs which were taken from every conceivable angle during the autopsy on the President's body. Because this material is unsightly, it will be unavailable until 1971. However, the author has discussed it with three men who examined it before it was placed under seal. All these carried special professional qualifications. Each was a stranger to the other two. Nevertheless their accounts were identical. The X-rays show no entry wound 'below the shoulder' as argued by the graduate student. Admittedly X-rays of active projectiles passing through soft tissue are difficult to read. Yet, the photographs support them in this case—and reveal that the wound was in the neck." And that, it would seem, is that.]

* * *

Professor Richard Popkin, Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at the University of California, is an expert on the History of Scepticism—a history to which, in his book *The Second Oswald*, he has himself made a notable contribution. Such intense scepticism as Professor Popkin's needs a great deal of credulity to support it: in order not to believe in the probable there is so much of the improbable that he has to believe in.

Professor Popkin is no more of a demonologist than is Mr. Epstein: he makes no sensational accusations against the C.I.A. or the F.B.I. or the Dallas police, and his only criticism of the Commissioners—"that they did not do an adequate investigative job, and did not weigh all of the data carefully"—is based on the "revelations" in *Inquest* and on the supposed contents of the "twenty-six page critique" of Mr. Liebeler's therein referred to. Unfortunately for Professor Popkin, since his book was published these supports for his criticism have been undermined by Professor Goodhart's article.

The merit of Professor Popkin's book is that, like Mr. Joesten, he puts forward a positive theory; but while Mr. Joesten attempts, with disastrous results, to make his explanation cover all the facts, Professor Popkin concentrates on one element in the pattern, and leaves most of the difficulties to take care of themselves. Like a Baconian who has discovered a hidden cipher, he follows the clue wherever it leads him, oblivious of attendant inconsistencies.

* * *

For Professor Popkin, the key lies in the existence of a Second Oswald. A number of witnesses declared that during the months immediately preceding the assassination they had seen Oswald, or someone very like him, in places and circumstances—there were about a dozen such occasions—into which Oswald could not be fitted. The Commission concluded that the witnesses, if truthful, were mistaken: in all sensational cases scores of people will come forward who think that they have seen the principal figure, and honestly persuade themselves that they remember things that confirm the supposed identification. Professor Popkin adopts the unlikely assumption that in every one of these instances the witness's recollection was accurate, and bases on it the ingenious suggestion that the man in question was a conspirator impersonating Oswald. This man, apparently, was an expert marksman, chosen to be the assassin for his resemblance to Oswald (unless it was that Oswald was chosen for his resemblance to the marksman), who went about before the assassination showing himself in order to attract attention to the image of Oswald and divert it from himself, and also (it seems) to provide the real Oswald with some sort of alibi if he was caught.

At Dallas on November 22, according to Professor Popkin, "there were two assassins, plus Oswald the suspect. Assassin one was on the knoll; assassin two, second Oswald, was [he must mean 'assassin two *and* second Oswald *were*'] on the sixth floor of the Book Depository"; "Second Oswald was an excellent shot, real Oswald was not. Real Oswald's *rôle* was to be the prime suspect chased by the police, while second Oswald, one of the assassins, could vanish." Everything went according to plan, says Professor Popkin, except for the murder of Tippit, which he light-heartedly explains as the result of a "monumental misunderstanding."

* * *

This hypothesis is vulnerable at every stage: (1) the evidence for the existence of a deliberate impersonator is mis-stated in the book and its effect exaggerated; it is really very tenuous; (2) his supposed pre-assassination activity is (in current jargon) "insufficiently motivated", not to say pointless; and (3) his suggested *rôle* in the assassination itself involves a number of practical impossibilities which Professor Popkin cannot explain away.

Most of the appearances of "O^2" were (though Professor Popkin does not tell us this) anonymous—the man appeared without giving a name in shops, stores, &c., in Dallas or its neighbourhood. Now Oswald had, in the words of one of the witnesses (not quoted by Professor Popkin), "a common face for this part of the country"; "his features, face and all is [*sic*] common with the working class here and he could easily be mistaken one way or the other". May there not well have been not only one person, but several persons, in the neighbourhood who resembled Oswald closely enough to have been confused with him, in recollection, by people who saw them in stores or shops or rifle-ranges? And if the man these people saw was really engaged in actively impersonating Oswald, why did he not give Oswald's name?

Even where there is evidence connecting O^2 with Oswald's name, Professor Popkin's presentation of it is not always dependable. A tag marked "Oswald", relating to repairs to a gun that was certainly not his Mannlicher-Carcano, was found in an Irving gunshop: "The clerk is sure he ran into Oswald somewhere, and the clerk seems reliable. His boss was convinced", says Professor Popkin. In fact, the clerk was a woman, and all she said about seeing Oswald was that she could not remember his ever being in the shop. The owner was away during the relevant period, and was "convinced" of nothing. The key witness was the manager, who contradicted himself to the police about whether he had ever seen Oswald, and, when pressed about the contradiction on oath before the Commission, and asked whether he could say definitely whether he had seen him "outside of the shop any place", replied (and his answer, seen in context, seems to cover the shop also): "No, Sir, I don't believe I have. I mean, I couldn't say specific, because back again to the common features, so on and so forth." (This was the only evidence connecting the tag with a man who looked like Oswald.)

Again: Professor Popkin tells us that on November 8 Oswald asked Hutchison, an Irving grocer, to cash a cheque for $189, "payable to Harvey Oswald". True, Hutchison told the F.B.I. that he saw the name Oswald in ink upon the cheque; but he swore to the Commission that he did not recall to whom the cheque was payable: "No, Sir; no, Sir. I sure don't. It just didn't enter my head, Mr. Jenner, after it was that amount"—explaining that he never cashed cheques over $25, and a look at the amount was enough for him. He repeated this denial—but Professor Popkin makes no reference to it. There was nothing apart from the cheque to connect this customer with the name of Oswald.

* * *

In any case, it is not clear how O^2 was helping Oswald or his fellow-conspirators by his acts of impersonation. He does not seem to have declared himself politically on any of these occasions (except a highly dubious visit to a Mrs. Odio, who was involved in anti-Castro, not pro-Castro, machinations) or to have exhibited in any other way a striking "image". Surely the plotters would have given their "double" something better to do than pay these unmemorable and anonymous visits to grocers and furniture stores, to garages and rifle-ranges? And what was their object? Not, according to *Professor Popkin, to "frame" Oswald; the only answer he can* give to his own question "Why duplicate Oswald?" is that the cases of apparent duplication may be "plausibly interpreted as evidence that Oswald was involved in some kind of conspiracy which culminated in the events of November 22, when the duplication played a vital *rôle* both in the assassination and the planned denouement". He admits that his hypothesis is "tentative and conjectural"—he might have added "nebulous".

The weakness of the theory is reflected in the reasoning with which Professor Popkin defends it. "In October", he says, "there seems to have been little double Oswald activity." This is a serious objection, for on his hypothesis one would expect O^2's activity during that month to have been intense. The best that Professor Popkin can offer by way of explanation is the following: "This may be explained by the facts that Oswald was looking for a job and that his second daughter was born on October 20." But why should the fact that the real Oswald was preoccupied in one place preclude the second Oswald from impersonating him in another? It is fortunate that Professor Popkin's Chair is not a Chair of Logic.

When he comes to the assassination, Professor Popkin, so sceptical about the Commission's theory, readily accepts any explanation that comes to hand in order to dismiss objections to his own. He admits, for instance, that if, as he believes, at least one bullet hit the President from the front, he knows of no satisfactory answer to the question what became of the bullets, and is content to conclude that they must have "fragmented or were deflected and disappeared in the confusion of that day".

Again, he believes (with Mr. Lane) that the bag Oswald brought up from Irving to the depository on the morning of November 22 contained not his rifle but a bundle of curtain rods. Being, like Mr. Lane, unable to account for the disappearance of the bag and its contents, he dismisses the difficulty by saying "The package vanishes by the time he enters the building"—the curtain rods, one assumes, being lost (like the bullets) in the confusion of the day.

One more example: after the

shooting, O², the real assassin, is supposed to have run out of the depository and into the roadway, in full view of all; he is the man, according to Professor Popkin, who was seen by a police officer to jump into a station-wagon. Was he carrying the assassination rifle? Clearly not. What happened to it? It too, one must assume, was lost in the confusion of the day.

Contrast with this ready acceptance of improbabilities involved in his own story the scepticism with which Professor Popkin treats explanations contained in the Report—e.g., the reasonable suggestion that Tippit stopped Oswald as a suspect: "It seems odd", says Professor Popkin, "that Tippit would have stopped a suspect. He was unimaginative, and had shown no real initiative in all his years on the force, as evidenced by his failure to get a promotion in thirteen years."

[Professor Popkin's own explanation is that Oswald mistook Tippit's car for the car provided as a get-away by his co-conspirators—"Tippit comes along slowly, Oswald thinks it is his ride, and approaches the car"; Tippit then mistakes Oswald for O², at whom he had glared in a café a few days before: "a monumental misunderstanding then occurs. . . . Hence, the shooting".]

Professor Popkin modestly admits that his ingenious hypothesis is "no more than a possibility", and it would not call for consideration if it had not been taken seriously by persons who ought to know better: one Professor of Philosophy calls it "plausible and significant", another describes it as "a brilliant reconstruction"; a Professor of Sociology praises it as "logically convincing", and Mrs. Sylvia Meagher, who has compiled a subject index to the Report, declares that it is "stamped with the authority that can only be achieved by patient and comprehensive study of the testimony and exhibits".

* * *

What now of Big Jim Garrison, the "Jolly Green Giant" of New Orleans, behind whom Mr. Joesten, Mr. Lane, Professor Popkin and most of the critics of the Report seem recently to have aligned themselves? To judge from his appearances on television and the interviews he has granted to the press, he is a handsome, quick-witted, forceful, ambitious man, with an engagingly frank and easy manner, but seriously lacking in judgment. His record as District Attorney during five years shows that he has used his powers without fear or favour and with conspicuous success.

Immediately after the assassination he arrested some suspicious characters in New Orleans, releasing them soon for lack of evidence and on the faith of reassurances about them from the F.B.I. When the Warren Report came out he was ready to accept its conclusions, but in the autumn of 1966 his suspicions were again awakened, and in the following February he re-arrested such of the original suspects as he could lay hands on, and instituted investigations which have culminated in criminal proceedings which are now in progress. Whatever the outcome of these proceedings, they cannot be dismissed as negligible: Mr. Garrison has charged one Clay Shaw with conspiring to assassinate the President, alleging that Shaw is to be identified with a man who tried to brief a lawyer named Andrews to defend Oswald immediately after the assassination. Andrews, who contradicted himself several times on oath about his relationship with Shaw, has been convicted of perjury and Shaw himself has been sent for trial by a court of three judges and by a grand jury.

So far, Mr. Garrison has won each round of the legal battle, and from what has transpired, very dubious though his evidence is, it would certainly appear that something fishy was going on in anti-Castro circles in New Orleans during the summer of 1963. Such goings-on are not *a priori* improbable, and Oswald was in New Orleans at the time; but it remains to be seen how far Mr. Garrison can link him with these machinations, or these machinations with the actual events in Dallas.

Certainly the District Attorney is not lacking in confidence. He alleges that in the years following the President's failure to give full support to the Bay of Pigs adventure, various "elements"—anti-Castro Cubans, ex-Minutemen, neo-Nazis, with a sprinkling of Cuban or Latin homosexuals—formed, with the active assistance of the C.I.A., a "spider's web" of conspiracy, the object of which was the assassination of Castro. When in the late summer of 1963 it became plain that Kennedy was aiming at a *détente* with Cuba, the plan was changed: its object now was to assassinate the President. It was at this stage, apparently, that the conspirators decided to make a tool of Oswald, who had for long, according to Garrison, been an agent of the C.I.A.—a belief held strongly by Oswald's mother, but hard to reconcile with his marriage to Marina, and quite irreconcilable with the contents of his Historic Diary. (This is a key document, which the critics are inclined conveniently to forget; if pressed, no doubt they would suggest that, like Casement's Diary, it was a forgery.)

Oswald's mother, from the jacket of *A Mother in History* by Jean Stafford

Mr. Garrison does not explicitly accuse the C.I.A. of being a party to this new, anti-Kennedy, conspiracy: "In the absence of further and much more conclusive evidence", he says, "we must assume that the plotters were acting on their own and not under C.I.A. orders when they killed the President." But he maintains that the agency was so greatly embarrassed by the fact that men whom it had formerly employed were involved in the plot that it presented fraudulent evidence to the Commission, and "has spared neither time nor the taxpayer's money in its efforts to hide the truth about the assassination from the American people"; and he believes that the C.I.A. may well have murdered a number of men who gave evidence before the Commission that was "awkward" from the point of view of the authorities.

* * *

Mr. Garrison agrees with Professor Popkin in suggesting that a "second Oswald" was employed to create a pro-Communist "image" of Oswald, so as to divert suspicion from the Right-Wing motivation of the plot. "Oswald's professed Marxist sympathies", he says, "were just a cover for his real activities . . . [His] actual political orientation was extreme right wing". Why, when Oswald professed Communism himself, it was necessary to employ someone else to profess it under his alias, Mr. Garrison does not explain. And when he is asked why Oswald, if he was a neo-Nazi, should have shot at General Walker, he can only say that it "was just another part of Oswald's cover": the whole episode, he declares, "rests on the unsupported testimony of Marina Oswald" (he forgets the photograph and the note), and he concludes that "it makes little difference . . . whether this incident was prepared in advance to create a cover for Oswald or fabricated after the assassination to strengthen his public image as a Marxist".

The actual murder, according to Mr. Garrison, was carried out by "a precision guerrilla team of at least seven men", four of whom fired at the President—two from the "grassy knoll" (with two more whose sole function was to catch the cartridges as they were ejected from the assassins' rifles), one (not Oswald) from the Book Depository, and one from the Dal-Tex building; five, six, or seven shots were fired. All the murderers got clean away; as for their identities: "I can't comment . . . there will be more arrests".

* * *

It is not clear why Oswald, whose *rôle* in this plot is exceedingly obscure, should have consented to take the rap for his fellow-conspirators when, according to Mr. Garrison, he did not fire a shot; pressed on this point, he can only say: "I'm afraid I can't discuss it till we've built in a solid case." Nor does he explain his assertion that Oswald "undoubtedly" got his job at the Depository on the instructions of the plotters (unless, like Mr. Joesten, he includes Mrs. Paine among them). His rifle, we are to believe, was not used by him at all: Mr. Garrison follows Mr. Lane in suggesting that it may have been "taken from Oswald's home after the assassination and planted in the Depository". This, of course, implicates the police—but then, according to Mr. Garrison, they must have been up to the hilt in the plot, as appears from his explanation of the deaths of Tippit and of Oswald himself. Tippit was murdered not by Oswald but by two men whom "I hope we will be able to produce in a court of law". As for the cartridges found on the site, "We suspect that cartridges had been previously obtained from Oswald's .38 revolver and left at the murder site by the real killers as part of the setup to incriminate Oswald". We are not told who the killers were, or why Tippit was chosen as the victim, or the circumstances of his murder; nor is the next step in the execution of the conspiracy any clearer: "the plan was to have [Oswald] shot as a cop killer in the Texas Theater while resisting arrest." "I can't go into all the details of this", Mr. Garrison continues, rather lamely: "but the murder of Tippit, which I am convinced Oswald didn't commit, was clearly designed to set the stage for Oswald's liquidation in the Texas Theater after another anonymous tip-off". Finally: "The conspiracy had gone seriously awry [through Oswald's escaping death in the Theater] and the plotters were in danger of exposure by Oswald"—and so "Enter Jack Ruby—and exit Oswald". As for Ruby's own "exit", Mr. Garrison thinks (with Mr. Norman Mailer) that the police may well have killed him by injecting him with the cancer cells, and he shares the suspicion entertained by most of the demonologists that there may have been wholesale liquidation of awkward witnesses by the F.B.I. during the last three years.

At many points, as will have been observed, Mr. Garrison's theory runs parallel with Mr. Joesten's: "On all essential issues", says Mr. Joesten in his most recent book, "I completely agree with Mr. Garrison's presentation of the case." His one reservation concerns the degree of guilt to be imputed to the C.I.A.: "Does not the fact" (he asks) that the C.I.A., in Garrison's own words, "began its criminal activities immediately after the assassination, in shielding the assassins, as it did, with all its power, clearly also bespeak a C.I.A. involvement in the plot itself?" Which, one may ask, is the harder to believe: Mr. Joesten's theory that the C.I.A. were actually a party to the assassination, or Mr. Garrison's, that they joined the conspiracy afterwards, to cover up a crime in which they had no hand?

The near future will show how much of the Joesten-Garrison conspiracy theory can survive examination in Court; at the moment Shaw's trial is pending, and it is perhaps significant that no co-conspirators have yet been added to the indictment.

* * *

I have not been able, in the given space, to do more than describe in general terms, with a few supporting examples, the main attacks upon the Report and the hypotheses put forward by its critics. Throughout them all there run two fatal weaknesses. Of the first, and perhaps the more frequent—an inability to see the wood through obsession with a single tree—I will give but one example: Oswald's jacket.

There is difficulty in identifying the jacket, found on Oswald's route from Tippit's murder to the Texas Theater, with any jacket known to have been in Oswald's possession; in particular, it has a laundry-mark, and Oswald did not have his jackets laundered. So obsessed are the critics with the laundry-mark and its attendant difficulties that they forget two simple facts: Oswald was seen buttoning up his jacket when he left his lodgings at 1 p.m.; he had no jacket on when arrested at about 1.45 p.m. in the Texas Theater. If this jacket (which was found in a car park towards which the man who killed Tippit was seen to be running) was not his, then what became of his jacket? Was it lost (with so much else) in the confusion of the day?

The other fatal weakness that runs through the critics' theories is that their authors have never thought themselves back into the circumstances existing at the relevant time and asked whether it is possible to believe that the persons concerned, with the knowledge then available to them, could have decided to do the things they are supposed to have done.

Take, for instance, the alleged "cover-up" policy of the Commission. The Commissioners, if they decided to "cover up" a conspiracy, must at the time either have known its nature and extent or else, while aware of (or suspecting) its existence, have been uncertain how far its ramifications extended. In either alternative, could they have been so foolish (let alone so criminal) as to conduct their investigations and compose their report on the footing that no conspiracy existed? In the second (and surely more plausible) alternative, the thing is almost inconceivable. If in the early months of 1964 they knew of (or suspected) a conspiracy of unascertained dimensions, how could they have felt any assurance that its existence might not in the near future become common knowledge? For the critics' phrase "cover up" is misleading: the Commission could not hide a conspiracy simply by ignoring it; if the "covered up" conspiracy were to burst on the public soon after the publication of their findings, what—they must have asked themselves—would then be thought of them and their report?

And one may ask today, if there really had been a conspiracy in 1963, surely some trace of it, in a country where secrets are not easy to keep, would by now have come to light? Here Mr. Lane has for once performed a service to the truth: throughout four years America has been drag-netted, hundreds of witnesses have been interviewed, no money and no effort has been spared—and the nets are empty, save for a handful of homosexuals and other queer fish in New Orleans. Thanks to Mr. Lane's own efforts, we can reject with added confidence the possibility of any such large-scale conspiracy as his criticisms presuppose.

A policy of "covering up" would have required the complicity of the seven Commissioners and the acquiescence of some, if not all, of their investigating staff. Could the Chief Justice have obtained such agreement? And, when it comes to the actual fabrication of documents alleged by Mr. Epstein, one must go further and ask—for he would have been a brave man to suggest such a step to his colleagues unless he was sure of their unanimous support—could he have counted in advance upon obtaining it? No reader of Mr. Ford's *Portrait of the Assassin*—a plain, vivid, day-to-day account by a member of the Commission, telling how they went about their business—can hesitate a moment about the answer to these questions.

* * *

The same inability to form a picture of how things happen in real

life vitiates at several points the theories of conspiracy.

First, the selection of suitable assassins. Mr. Lane misses the point when he says—to quote verbatim—"I personally don't know who a conspiracy would pick as its assassin. Perhaps the conspirators, if they exist, would have preferred a college professor or a Rhodes Scholar. But I do know that Ruby killed Oswald quite effectively". The point that Mr. Lane so lightly and so scornfully dismisses is a real and an important one: it is hard to conceive a pair less likely to be accepted—still less, to be chosen—as tools by men sitting down to plan a conspiracy that had to go like clockwork, than the moody and impulsive Ruby and the neurotic and unstable Oswald.

Then, the actual assassination. If it is hard to believe that Oswald hit his target in two out of three quick shots, it is harder still to suppose that two men, more than 100 yards apart and unable to see or communicate with each other—for a tree obscured the grassy knoll from the Depository window—could have synchronized their fire so perfectly; and it is hardest of all to imagine that conspirators would have allowed the success of their plan to depend on such a feat of synchronization.

Again, it is hard enough to see how a man could have fired repeatedly from the grassy knoll and got clean away in full view of the public; but it is really impossible to suppose that anyone planning an assassination would have placed him there for the purpose, in total ignorance of how many lookers-on, when the procession passed, would be standing near by, or perhaps actually occupying the place selected as his firing-point.

So with the murder of Oswald. It is suggested that Ruby, having arranged with the police to shoot the prisoner (before millions of viewers) in their basement, joined a queue five minutes before the shooting to send a cable in a Western Union office more than 100 yards away; the cable was handed in at 11.17 and the shooting took place at 11.21. Ruby reaching the basement with 30 seconds (by his own account) or (at most) three minutes to spare. Such a course of action—whether he knew, or (as seems much more likely) did not know, the exact time when his target would present itself—seems quite inconsistent with a concerted plan.

Finally, the crucial Bullet 399. True, on the "single bullet" theory of the Commission there was a strong actuarial probability that it would not have remained as nearly "pristine" as in fact it did, if it encountered strong and solid bone in its passage through two bodies. But how much stronger an obstacle to belief is provided by the practical improbability that a conspirator would have succeeded in reaching the hospital four miles away, in gaining access, through its maze of wards and passages, to the right place, in identifying the stretcher, and "planting" the bullet in it unobserved. And, above all, how is it possible, if one gives due weight to all those difficulties, to conceive of anyone's devising a plot in which the bringing off of so improbable an exploit was a vital factor?

[The improbability can (as always) be diminished by recruiting another conspirator—this time, someone on the hospital staff. But the more one thinks about the planted bullet theory the less credible it becomes. What was the purpose of planting it? To incriminate Oswald? It seems a very roundabout way of adding to the evidence against him, which was in any case, surely, strong enough without it. The planting seems altogether too chancy an exploit to have been made an essential factor in any plan, and far too elaborate a business to have been incorporated as an inessential factor.]

Much of the physical evidence adduced by the critics belongs to the same unreal, melodramatic world—a world where an object moving slowly away from the marksman (not *across* his field of vision) becomes a difficult target at under 100 yards; and where the discharge of a rifle in the open gives rise to a smell of "gun-powder" pervading a wide area, and creates (like a blunderbuss) "puffs of smoke" rising "six to eight feet" into the air. One wonders whether any of the critics who solemnly put forward such evidence in favour of a marksman on the "grassy knoll", or any of the readers who accept it, has ever fired a rifle in his life.

This lack of realistic thinking pervades alike the demonologists' and the professors' theories of conspiracy. They suppose that a complex organization can improvise and implement plans as easily as an individual—as when "the Dallas police" suddenly "decides" to bump off Tippit in his car and does so at a moment's notice. Their "possibilities" are paper possibilities, abstract and unreal, not credible in the context of actual events; the actors in their drama are puppets, precluded from doing things that will not fit the predetermined hypothesis, because no perfectly reasonable man would have done them, yet allowed to do absurdly improbable things (because such things are mathematically possible) if the hypothesis requires it.

So with the witnesses: the critics treat them as simply "honest" or "dishonest", as if evidence that could not be swallowed whole must (or may, as suits the critic) be rejected entire; they forget that in real life witnesses are human beings, who may be—like Marina—temperamental, forgetful, less than candid, liable to contradict themselves, and yet bear honest and valuable testimony to the truth.

* * *

Faced with such a volume of controversial matter, how—it may be asked—is one to reach a conclusion? Read as much as you like of the critics, I would say, and dip as deep as you can into the twenty-six volumes of evidence; then turn to Mr. Manchester's hour-by-hour chronicle, to Mr. Ford's vivid *Portrait*, to Oswald's own "Historic Diary", to the Report itself. Glance, too, at Miss Jean Stafford's account of her interviews with Oswald's mother (who can "absolutely prove" her son's innocence, yet believes that he shot the President on the instructions of the C.I.A.—a "mercy-killing", for the President was dying of "Atkinson's Disease"), and at the honest picture of the family background given to *Look* by Robert Oswald, who is convinced of his brother's guilt. To read these human documents after the hypotheses of the demonologists is like coming back, after a course of science fiction or a study of microscopic slides, to the actual, everyday world; things appear in a recognizable context and in their true proportions; Oswald, Marina, Ruby, and the rest become real people—unsatisfactory witnesses it may be; unreasonable, even half-crazy individuals, but living human beings. There is room in that actual world for unaccountable factors and improbable events—the unexplained repair tag in the gunshop; the laundry-mark on Oswald's jacket; the strange entry in the Mexican bus manifest; the dubious apparition of Ruby at the Parkland Hospital—but such incidental mysteries do not shake one's ultimate conviction, on a review of the evidence as a whole, that the Commission were correct in their reading of the facts and just in their assessment of the principal characters. Neither Oswald nor Ruby was a cold-blooded schemer, a cog in some complex machine, a tool of the C.I.A. or of the Dallas police force; each acted on his own, and the actions of each were entirely in keeping with his nature.

Oswald, the frustrated husband, the disappointed Communist, the rootless misfit, nursed a vindictive grudge against success, against Society, against the United States—all personified for him in the President. The critics, looking for a copy-book assassin, ask why he should have denied his guilt, why he did not, rather, glory in the deed? But Oswald was no Harmodius; he ran away, like the little rat he was; and *Sic semper tyrannis* would have sat ill upon the lips of one who had just killed a "poor dumb cop".

As for Ruby: "You all know me, I'm Jack Ruby!": he was as familiar in the police-station as the stable cat—the last man the police would have relied on to do their dirty work for them, but just the man to slip into their basement unregarded, like the postman in the Father Brown story; and just the man, when he got there, to fire, on impulse, a half-premeditated shot.

I would conclude then, that even if one agrees with Mr. Dwight Macdonald in his strictures on the Report—its shortcomings, he says, are serious and sometimes inexcusable—one must also agree with him that it "proves its big point beyond a reasonable doubt"; "Oswald and Ruby did it all by themselves . . . we must accept that even though the Warren Report says it's true."

* * *

How is it then that people have fallen for the demonologists, and fallen so completely? The story proves, and has proved twice over, the truth of the old adage—*Populus vult decipi*: the public is very ready to be deceived.

At the outset, the ordinary man in the United States was eager to be given an "innocent", i.e., non-conspiratorial, explanation of the tragedy. Very naturally he wanted to be told that the American people were "not guilty of their President's death". So he gladly accepted the reassuring verdict offered by the Warren Commission and was ready to take on trust the conclusions contained in its Report. So, for a time, the Commission enjoyed the benefit of a climate of public opinion determined not by reason but by an emotional need.

Then a reaction set in: rebuked for credulity, people began to be ashamed of their previous wishful thinking, and the tide of opinion, still impelled by a force that owed less to reason than to emotion, turned and began to work in favour of the critics.

By the autumn of 1966 the public, in its chastened mood, was ready for a conspiracy theory, the more sensational the better. And here those who attacked the Report enjoyed an advantage over its defenders: they had a more exciting story to tell. The man in the street, moreover, likes to hear that something sinister has been going on, particularly in high places, and the innuendoes of the demonologists certainly satisfied that requirement. Those innuendoes had also another kind of appeal: they allowed full scope for the exploitation of political prejudice; no targets could be more welcome, both to the rank and file of the Left and to its intellectual leaders, than the Texan oil plutocracy, the Radical Right, the F.B.I., and the C.I.A. If the White House and its present occupant could be somehow implicated, so much the better.

* * *

So the anti-Establishmentarians, sincerely convinced of the justice of their case, set about their work. Their task was all too easy, for the public has almost lost, under the impact of "the media", the faculty of judging in a complex case between two conflicting bodies of evidence—and in this case what proportion of those who believe in a conspiracy has attempted such a judgment? How many of them have opened the Report—let alone weighed its arguments against those of its attackers? Here again time has brought in its revenges: the critics who two years ago justly rebuked the public for accepting the Report without having looked at its contents are now profiting from the very same failure on the public's part: they can quote and misquote *ad libitum* from the twenty-seven volumes, with little fear of challenge or correction.

* * *

The last word—if indeed the last word is ever to be spoken—must await the outcome of the trial at New Orleans. But no light shed by that trial upon the tragedy can excuse its aftermath, or efface from the record a stain deeper than the crime itself: that left by the appetite that could swallow scurrilities like *MacBird!* (for which Mr. Robert Lowell claims "a kind of genius"), by the gullibility of the American public, and by the recklessness with which that gullibility has been exploited, under a law that allows almost unlimited calumny of public officials, at whatever cost to the reputation of the innocent.

Postscript

Since the above was written, I have received from America copies of two books just out or on the point of publication—Mrs. Sylvia Meagher's *Accessories After the Fact* and Professor Josiah Thompson's *Six Seconds in Dallas*. I have not had time to study either, but I have read enough of each to be satisfied that further reading would not lead me to alter substantially anything that I have said.

As I have tried to show, critics of the Report are of two kinds: "demonologists", who are ready to sling at the authorities any stone and any mud that presents itself, and serious inquirers, who concentrate on a hard core of relevant evidence. Mrs. Meagher belongs to the first of these two classes, Professor Thompson to the second.

* * *

I had hoped for an authoritative judgment from Mrs. Meagher, who has an unrivalled knowledge of the Report and Evidence, to which she has compiled an Index; but the *parti pris* and political prejudice that permeate her book drive her to extremes that make her criticism ineffective. She confesses that her instantaneous reaction to the news on November 22 was to assume that a Communist would be "framed" as the assassin; readers who do not detect a Right-Wing plot behind the assassination must be, in her phrase, "indentured to the Establishment"; and she thinks it relevant to refer in the course of her appraisals to "American Nazi thugs" and "the napalmed children of Vietnam". Not surprisingly, she is inclined to agree with Mrs. Marguerite Oswald's "constant theory that her son had gone to the Soviet Union on clandestine assignment by his own government" (she makes no reference in this context to his Historic Diary); she thinks that there is "a powerful presumption of his complete innocence of all the crimes of which he was accused"; and she in her turn accuses the Commission of "unscrupulous misrepresentation". I cannot, on an admittedly hasty reading, discover anything important in her book that is not in the other books that I have dealt with, though she supports her allegations with a greater wealth of references drawn from the twenty-six volumes of evidence, and has unearthed one new item in the shape of a parcel addressed to Oswald at the Post Restante in Dallas—another inexplicable clue that leads to nowhere.

Mrs. Meagher's gift for innuendo and her cavalier treatment of the evidence rival Mr. Lane's (on page 151, I notice, Nurse Henchcliffe says that the neck wound "looked like an entrance bullet hole to her"; by page 156 this has become "Nurse Henchcliffe—who had maintained firmly that the wound was an entrance wound"); in vituperation of the Commission she is a match for Mr. Joesten; and the chapter in which she suggests wholesale murder of the witnesses ("Viewed subjectively, the witnesses appear to be dying like flies") is as deplorable as anything I have come across in all the books relating to the controversy.

* * *

Six Seconds in Dallas is a very different kettle of fish. Its author is a Professor of Philosophy who has taken a year off from his academic studies to work on the problems of the assassination. He has gone in far greater detail than any previous student into two special areas of the inquiry: the origin and nature of the shots and the evidence of the bystanders. I can only deal very summarily with his conclusions. Basing himself on scientific evidence (set forth with a wealth of mathematical equations in a technical appendix prepared by an expert) he believes that the President was hit by four shots, two from the Book Depository, one from the knoll, and one from the roof of the Records Building on Houston Street, on the East side of Dealey Plaza.

I find the enlarged photographs which are supposed to reveal assassins in windows and behind fences quite unconvincing; and the photographs from which Professor Thompson deduces the movements of the President and the Governor, when hit, and his assumptions about the effect of the strike of a bullet on the movements of a human body, seem much too uncertain a foundation for the precise calculations that he bases on them. I therefore question his scientifically deduced conclusions about the trajectories of the bullets and the origin of the shots.

* * *

As for the testimony of the bystanders, Professor Thompson sets out statistical analyses of the evidence of nearly 200 of them, and appeals to the consensus of 33 (as against 25 in favour of the Depository) as proving that one at least of the shots came from the knoll. (He does not mention Bowers's evidence about the echo. Why not?) For reasons given in my article, I think that small weight can be attached to ear-witness evidence; Professor Thompson believes the reverse; but that belief militates against his own scientifically based conclusion that a shot must have been fired from the Records Building, for if anything stands out from his analysis it is that not one of the 190 witnesses is recorded as thinking that any shot came from that source.

Professor Thompson gives the fullest account I have seen of the finding of Bullet 399 and suggests an ingenious alternative to the theory that it was "planted"; acceptance of his theory, however, seems consistent with the bullet's having come originally from the Governor's stretcher, a conclusion he wishes to refute. In dealing with the autopsy X-rays and photographs, he is clearly nonplussed by Mr. Manchester's disclosure; and his harsh criticism of the Commission's approach to the one-bullet theory would have had to be modified if he had read Professor Goodhart's revelations about *Inquest*.

Professor Thompson advances no wide or wild conspiracy hypothesis: he does not seek to involve the F.B.I. or C.I.A.; Ruby's name is mentioned only once in his book, Garrison's not at all. "Did Oswald shoot the President?" is one of the Unanswered Questions with which his book concludes, and among the Answered Questions are two in which he corrects extravagances of Mr. Lane, one being a reference to Miss Mercer's evidence, of which I have gratefully availed myself in the text above.

The following are among the books and periodicals consulted by Mr. Sparrow.

WILLIAM MANCHESTER: *The Death of a President*. November 20-November 25, 1963. 784pp. Michael Joseph. £2.

MARK LANE: *Rush to Judgment*. Introduced by Hugh Trevor-Roper. 478pp. Bodley Head. £2 2s.

EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN: *Inquest*. The Warren Commission and the Establishment of Truth. Introduction by Richard H. Rovere. 244pp. Hutchinson. 30s.

JOACHIM JOESTEN: *Oswald: Assassin or Fall Guy?* 206pp. Merlin Press. 18s. *Marina Oswald*. 165pp. 25s. *Oswald: the Truth*. 312pp. £2 2s. Peter Dawnay. *The Garrison Enquiry*. 158pp. Peter Dawnay in association with Tandem Books. 5s.

GERALD R. FORD and JOHN R. STILES: *Portrait of an Assassin*. 510pp. New York: Simon and Schuster. $6.95.

RICHARD H. POPKIN: *The Second Oswald*. Introduction by Murray Kempton. 159pp. Sphere Books and André Deutsch. 4s. 6d. *The Case for Garrison*. The New York Review of Books. September 14, 1967.

HAROLD WEISBERG: *Whitewash: The Report on the Warren Report*. 368pp. Mayflower Dell Books. 5s.

BARBARA GARSON: *MacBird!* 76pp. Penguin 4s. 6d.

A. L. GOODHART: *The Mysteries of the Kennedy Assassination and the English Press*. Law Quarterly Review. January, 1967.

DWIGHT MACDONALD: *A Critique of the Warren Report*. Esquire. March, 1965.

ROBERT L. OSWALD: *He was my Brother*. Look. October, 1967.

JOSIAH THOMPSON: *Six Seconds in Dallas*. 323pp. New York: Bernard Geis Associates. Distributed by Random House. $8.95.

SYLVIA MEAGHER: *Accessories After the Fact: The Warren Commission, the Authorities and the Report*. 477pp. New York: Bobbs-Merrill. $8.50.

JEAN STAFFORD: *A Mother in History*. 98pp. Chatto and Windus. 12s. 6d.

Playboy interview with Mark Lane. February, 1967. *Playboy interview with Jim Garrison*. October, 1967. Playboy magazine.

ALEXANDER M. BICKEL: *The Failure of the Warren Report*. Article in *Commentary*. October, 1966.