

WARREN REPORT'S VERSION CHALLENGED

A new look at Tippit killing

A COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY research team has published an article challenging the completeness of the Warren Commission Report, especially as relates to the murder of Dallas policeman J. D. Tippitt—whom Lee Oswald is said to have slain as he allegedly fled from the scene of President Kennedy's assassination. The article, by George and Patricia Nash, appeared in the Oct. 12 issue of the magazine *New Leader*.

According to the Nashes, who spent two weeks in Dallas, they contacted "witnesses at the Tippit murder scene who were not questioned or even contacted by the Commission. We had little difficulty in tracking them down and we could find no reason to doubt their veracity." One witness, they wrote, was Frank Wright, "who lived in a ground floor apartment on 10th St., about half a block east of the murder site." Wright was quoted as saying:

"I was sitting watching television with my wife. I was sitting in a chair next to the door. I wasn't but two steps from the door. I heard shots . . . I went out the door. I could see a police

car in the next block . . . I saw a person right by the car. He had just fallen down . . . I saw a man standing right in front of the car. He was looking toward the man on the ground. He stood there for a while and looked at the man. I couldn't tell who the man was on the ground.

"The man who was standing in front of him was about medium height. He had on a long coat. It ended just above his hands. I didn't see any gun. He ran around on the passenger side of the police car. He ran as fast as he could go and he got into his car. His car was a gray, little old coupe. It was about a 1950-51, maybe a Plymouth. It was a gray car, parked on the same side of the street as the police car but beyond it from me. It was heading away from me. He got into that car and he drove away as quick as you could see. He drove down 10th St., away from me. I don't know how far he drove . . . I tried to tell two or three people what I saw. They didn't pay any attention. I've seen what came out on television and in the papers but I know that's not what happened. I knew a man drove off in a gray car. Nothing in the world's going to change my opinion . . . They can say all they want about a fellow running away, but I can't accept this because I saw a fellow get in a car and drive away."

NOTING that the Report attributes the first report of Tippit's killing to Domingo Benavides, a truck driver who called police on the slain patrolman's radio, the Nashes stated that the initial report was actually

made by Wright's wife, who dialed the telephone operator, giving her address. The police then contacted an ambulance, dispatching it to Mrs. Wright's home. The ambulance, of course, halted a half-block from the Wright residence to attend Tippit. The question of address is relevant because it indicates that police were aware of Mrs. Wright's call. Despite this, the Wrights do not appear in the Commission Report.

Wright's testimony is crucial because it contradicts that of Mrs. Helen Markham and other witnesses who state that Tippit's killer ran from the scene.

"In the light of our own findings," the authors wrote, "it appears quite possible that Mrs. Markham came on the scene only after hearing the shots; and without Mrs. Markham, there is no one to say precisely what happened between Tippit and Oswald."

Benavides, incidentally, was not brought to police headquarters to identify Oswald in the line-up because—despite the fact that he is considered to have been the person closest to the murder of Tippit—he told authorities "he did not think that he could identify the man who fired the shots."

Pointing out that the Report declares "the only woman among the witnesses to the slaying of Tippit known to the Commission is Helen Markham," the Nashes stated that they interviewed a second woman witness—the woman alluded to in Mark Lane's initial critique of the Report (*GUARDIAN*, Oct. 3, pages 3-6). The article goes no further than saying that the woman exists,

naming her, that she was questioned briefly by an official assumed to be from the FBI. Lane has refused to divulge the woman's name because, he said, she had been ordered by Dallas police to keep silent. Lane wrote Oct. 3 that the woman described the killer of Tippit "as short and heavy"—a description also given the New York lawyer by Mrs. Markham, who later denied having made such a statement (until Lane produced a tape recording). Oswald, of course, was of medium height and slim.

THE ARTICLE by the Nashes also reveals: 1) Another worker in the Texas Book Depository Building was "found to be absent after the assassination" despite the impression given by the Report that Oswald was the only one. 2) "The Report mentions that 'the front door' and 'the rear door' of the Depository were guarded about six minutes after the shooting. What it omits, however, is that there were four separate 'rear doors,' all of which were open and only one of which was guarded . . . This conceivably might be relevant to a question of whether Oswald acted alone."

In conclusion, the team declared: "Our subject has simply been to demonstrate that future historians and social scientists will not be able to reconstruct what occurred last Nov. 22 from the Commission's Report alone."

In another aspect of the case, Dallas Police Chief Jesse Curry said in a letter to the Commission made public Oct. 6 that an FBI agent had asked him to deny that the federal agency failed to warn the police about Oswald before the assassination. Curry said agent Gordon Shanklin, agent in charge of the Dallas FBI office, made the request by telephone Nov. 22, soon after Curry told newsmen that the FBI had not informed his department about Oswald.

Only in America

IN A PANEL DISCUSSION of the Warren Commission Report televised Oct. 18, Percy Foreman, president of the National Association of Defense Attorneys, said:

"I would like to offer this suggestion with reference to the foreign reaction to the shooting. It's impossible for any country in Europe to conceive of a fact situation under which an individual would have enough freedom to where he could commit, unaided and without a great deal of help, this horrible crime. This is the only country in the world that it could have happened because of our freedom of the individual, and that's why the rest of the world has hesitancy to accept the verity of the Warren findings . . .

"The reason they [people abroad] believe there was a conspiracy is because there would needs have been one anywhere else in the world except here . . . And it's impossible; this thing could not have happened in any country on earth except America."

The moderator asked: "Why could it happen here without a con—?"

Foreman broke in: "Because we have the freedom of the individual, freedom of movement."