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MORE ON THE WARREN REPORT

L'Affaire Oswald, by Leo Sauvage
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During the weeks that followed President Kennedy's assassination all Europe was demanding an answer to the mystery: who really killed Kennedy ? How could Oswald, unbacked by arganized plotters, have done it alone ? And why did Americans so readily accept the solution of Oswald's guilt ? Now, almost two years later, and despite the publication of the Warren Report, Europeans are still unsatisfied. Leo Sauvage, New York correspondent of the Figaro, who was on the scene from the very beginning, has written an attack on the findings of the Warren Commission, here reviewed in France's most authoritative daily, Le Monde (June 22, 1965).

Undoubtedly much remains to be written on the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The man was of too high a stature for his disappearance to be written off simply on the "profit and loss" statement of some growing enterprise. The crime was definitely far too mysterious for us to accept unquestioningly the explanation furnished by the Warren Commission.

The explanation obviously did not satisfy Mr. Sauvage either. As New York correspondent for the Figaro, from the beginning of the case he has called attention to countless obscure points which surround the death of the thirty-fifth President of the United States. Now he offers us not a series of newspaper articles but a thick volume, written in a brisk, accusatory style, difficult for the non-initiated, but thrilling for those who followed the investigation.

Mr. Sauvage does not attempt to be a seer, and rightly so. No single individual could conduct an investigation that leads from Moscow to Minsk to New York (not counting some dozen cities in the United States). He does not tell us how the events occurred. He limits himself to determining whether or not they took place in the fashion in which the members of the commission affirm that they did. In short, his book is the trial of a trial which never occurred -- that of Lee Harvey Oswald. Mr. Sauvage's work ends with a harsh condemnation of the commissioners appointed by President Johnson. Indeed, for the author-prosecutor, "It is logically untenable, legally indefensible, and morally unacceptable to assert that Lee Harvey Oswald was the assassin of President Kennedy."

His demonstration of this conclusion requires over four hundred pages. It is, on the whole, convincing. If Oswald had been tried it is quite possible that he would not have been proved guilty -- which does not necessarily prove that Oswald was innocent (although Mr. Sauvage cannot resist mentioning the Dreyfus affair). But the method the author uses has a great value: it throws doubt on the reliability of the seven "wise men" of the Warren Commission and their assistants. The entire management of the investigation proves that they were preoccupied with proving that Oswald could have killed John Kennedy and not with finding out who killed him.

Thro ghout his book Mr. Sauvage piles up the instances in which, having to choose between several contradictory testimonies, the Commission in the end retained only the testimony that was prejudicial to Oswald, hastily forgetting the other. Mr. Sauvage refers constantly to the twenty-three volumes of the appendix to the Report and brings to light various "trails" that the Commission could have followed but chose not to, because it would have diverted the Commission from its main objective.

Examples of this prejudice through omission abound. Let us cite but two instances. First, because it is an extreme case which, amazingly, hasn't even been touched upon in the Warren Report, there is the possibility that there was a fake Oswald. This hypothesis -- which the investigators ought, however, to have found to their interest to disprove once and for all -- is based on three very real facts:

In the days or weeks prior to Kennedy's assassination, an unknown man had a telescopic lens mounted on a rifle at a gunsmith's in Irving (a suburb of Dallas), gave his name as Oswald, then disappeared.

A second unidentified man, who, according to several witnesses bore a strong resemblance to Oswald, drew attention to himself by his rudeness and his skill in shooting at a rifle range in Dallas. He too disappeared as suddenly as he had appeared.

A third unidentified man, resembling Oswald and calling himself Lee Oswald, tried out a car at a Dallas dealer's, but then in spite of his promises to return gave no further sign of life.

Instead of trying to find these three men, the Commission didn't even attempt to identify them, and simply declared that this wasn't the Oswald they were interested in.

The second example: the Commission accepted identifications made of Oswald on the basis of photographs -- and this two months after the same photographs had been printed in every paper in America. It also accepted identification made during a "lineup" in which Oswald, with his "shiner," vehemently proclaimed his innocence. Mr. Sauvage does not stop here. He points out other, even more disturbing but better known gaps in the investigation.

Mr. Sauvage offers us a substantial work, one which must henceforth be taken into consideration. It is a pity that the case is considered closed in the United States, for Mr. Sauvage's indictment necessitates a reply, if only to dispose of certain doubts about the work of the Warren Commission.

Jacques Amalric

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