

ADVANCE FOR 2230GMT --CAUTION: NOTE TIME)

WITNESSES-PROBE

BY MARTHA COLE

(ADVANCE)--WASHINGTON, SEPT. 27 (AP)--THE WARREN COMMISSION AND ITS STAFF TOOK THE TESTIMONY OF 552 WITNESSES IN THE NINE MONTHS AND 26 DAYS IT EXISTED.

BY EXECUTIVE ORDER, PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON CREATED IT LAST NOV. 29, SEVEN DAYS AFTER JOHN F. KENNEDY WAS ASSASSINATED, AND TOLD IT TO FIND THE TRUTH.

THE COMMISSION TECHNICALLY ENDED SEPT. 24 WHEN IT PRESENTED ITS REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT.

IN ITS FOREWORD, THE COMMISSION SAID IT HAS FUNCTIONED NEITHER AS A COURT NOR AS A PROSECUTOR "BUT AS A FACT-FINDING AGENCY COMMITTED TO THE ASCERTAINMENT OF THE TRUTH."

TAKING TESTIMONY DID NOT BEGIN UNTIL FEB. 3. OF THE 552 WITNESSES, 94 APPEARED BEFORE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION, 395 WERE QUESTIONED BY THE STAFF, 61 SUPPLIED SWORN AFFIDAVITS AND TWO GAVE STATEMENTS.

THE TWO WHO GAVE STATEMENTS WERE PRESIDENT AND MRS. JOHNSON, WHO WERE RIDING IN THE SECOND AUTO BEHIND THE ONE IN WHICH KENNEDY WAS SHOT.

THE COMMISSION WENT TO THE WASHINGTON HOME OF MRS. JOHN F. KENNEDY, THE WIDOW, TO TAKE TESTIMONY IN PERSON. SHE IS THE ONLY MEMBER OF THE KENNEDY FAMILY ON THE WITNESS LIST.

GOVERNOR AND MRS. JOHN B. CONNALLY OF TEXAS, WHO WERE IN THE KENNEDY CAR, APPEARED IN PERSON AT THE COMMISSION'S HEARING ROOM.

THE LIST OF WITNESSES INCLUDES SUCH DIVERSE PERSONS AS FBI DIRECTOR J. EDGAR HOOVER AND A TOURIST WHO WAS IN MINSK, RUSSIA, IN 1961, WHEN ACCUSED ASSASSIN ~~LEE HARVEY OSWALD~~ LIVED THERE.

CONGRESS GAVE THE COMMISSION AUTHORITY TO SUBPOENA WITNESSES AND EVIDENCE. IT ALSO AUTHORIZED THE COMMISSION TO COMPEL TESTIMONY FROM WITNESSES WHO INVOKED THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AGAINST SELF-INCRIMINATION BY PROVIDING FOR THE GRANT OF IMMUNITY TO PROSECUTION. IMMUNITY UNDER THESE PROVISIONS WAS NOT GRANTED TO ANY WITNESS DURING THE COMMISSION'S INVESTIGATION.

ALL HEARINGS WERE CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC UNLESS THE WITNESS REQUESTED AN OPEN HEARING. ONLY TWO HEARINGS WERE OPEN. THESE WERE THE TIMES MARK LANE, NEW YORK ATTORNEY WHO SAID HE REPRESENTED THE INTERESTS OF OSWALD, TESTIFIED.

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