

'NATIONAL SECURITY' VS. THE FACTS ABOUT OSWALD

Presidential Commission:

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The men and the job

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By Jack A. Smith

WHEN JUSTICE Earl Warren's statement about withholding certain evidence gathered by the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy may have been an unintended disclosure. But his remark, which he himself excused as "facetious," may have revealed more about the approach of the seven-member panel than many of the official pronouncements issued by the commission since it was created by President Johnson Nov. 29.

Warren's statement did two things: (1) it strengthened the belief that matters of "national security" are indeed involved in the investigation of Kennedy's death, centering on the person of Lee H. Oswald; (2) it created further doubts that the story of the events in Dallas on the week end of Nov. 22 ever will be fully revealed.

President Johnson instructed the commission to "satisfy itself that the truth is known... and report its findings" to the world. His ability to induce Warren to head the panel was a strategic move that overshadowed the nature of his other six choices—five conservatives and one liberal Republican.

CONFIDENCE: Moderate and liberal circles, usually wary of such a right-wing disproportion, immediately expressed confidence in the commission based on the Warren leadership and the selection of outstanding staff members (many of them with liberal reputations) to assist the conservative group. The Nation said Jan. 27:

"The confidence which we previously expressed in the Warren Commission has been strengthened by the announcement that J. Lee Rankin has been selected as counsel and that Norman Redlich, of the New York University Law School,



King in the New York Daily News Weird starting position

will serve as Mr. Rankin's personal assistant."

The same issue contained a recapitulation of reports that have appeared in several publications, including the GUARDIAN, concerning Oswald's possible connection with the FBI or Central Intelligence Agency. The article said, the commission "must tell us if the FBI or any other government intelligence agency was in any way connected with the alleged assassin."

QUESTION OF GUILT: Is the commission prepared to make public such information? In view of Warren's statement, it would appear that the panel would consider this against the national interest. It also seemed to feel that its job was not to find the assassin.

"The commission is not engaged in determining the guilt of anybody," said Rankin in rejecting a plea by Mrs. Marguerite Oswald that lawyer Mark Lane be allowed to defend her late son during panel hearings. But there is little doubt

that when the commission issues a final report—as is expected, in basic agreement with FBI allegations — Oswald's guilt will have been stated.

After nearly three months, it appears that the commission's primary function is the formidable task of dispelling world-wide uneasiness about the circumstances surrounding the violent death of America's 35th President, rather than a disinterested exploration and exposure of the myriad circumstances that abound in the "crime of the century."

Earl Warren is but one of seven men —one of eight, actually, if President Johnson is included. These are the other six members of the Presidential panel:

• Sen. Richard Russell (D-Ga.), an arch-segregationist. Considered the most powerful man in Congress, he has the distinction of being personally responsible for delaying more civil rights legislation than any other senator. He is a close friend of Johnson. Soon after the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, Russell told a television audience:

"If we ever can completely assure peace in this hemisphere, we are going to have to get rid of Castro. I would be in favor of doing it now . . ."

Oswald is said to have been pro-Castro (though he attempted to contact an anti-Castro group in New Orleans and lied about his connection with Fair Play for Cuba). Would Russell be anxious to dispel the charge that the person accused of killing Kennedy had pro-Cuban sympathies?

Soon after Kennedy's impressive civil rights speech last June, Russell said: "I hope that the American people will not be swept further down the road to socialism by the present unprecedented wave of propaganda [for civil rights]. To me, the President's legislative proposals are clearly destructive of the American system and the constitutional rights of American citizens."

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