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Questions About the Kennedy Assassination

John F. Kennedy, had he lived, would have been 58 on May 29. He died, as we know, nearly 12 years ago, the victim of assassination. The anniversary of his birth offers an opportunity for a few observations on the burgeoning demands for a new investigation of his death.

These demands are cropping up everywhere — in Congress, on college campuses, in magazines. Robert Sam Anson recently contributed to *New Times* magazine an excellent roundup of the many doubts, conjectures and suspicions that have arisen. Watergate left a fertile soil for the growing of coverup theories. These have taken root, and they are flowering.

One week after the assassination, President Johnson named a seven-man investigating commission, headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren. The commission made its report in September 1964. The report advanced these conclusions:

"There is no question in the mind of any member of the commission that all the shots which caused the president's and Governor Connally's wounds were fired from the sixth-floor window of the Texas School Book Depository. The shots . . . were fired by Lee Harvey Oswald . . . The commission has found no evidence that either Lee Harvey Oswald or Jack Ruby was part of any conspiracy, domestic or foreign, to assassinate President Kennedy."

These conclusions were strongly attacked when the Warren Report first appeared, and the controversy now has been revived. Non-believers contend that Kennedy was slain by a conspiracy; that Oswald did not act alone; that the ultimately fatal shot was not fired from a building behind the president, but from in front of his limousine; that the Warren Commission collaborated in a massive coverup to prevent the truth from coming out. They want the investigation reopened.

Some of the critics' arguments strike me as persuasive. Some purported ballistics evidence, if credible, would

appear to provide convincing proof that another rifleman was involved. Many puzzling questions remain unanswered. But it takes a very accommodating gullet to swallow the conspiracy theory whole, and my present inclination is to stick with the Warren Report.

During the course of its investigation, the commission took testimony from 552 witnesses. The FBI conducted 25,000 interviews and submitted 2,300 reports amounting to 25,000 pages. The Secret Service conducted 1,550 interviews and made 800 reports of 4,600 pages. This tremendous mass of material simply cannot be discarded as so much white-wash.

In order to believe the conspiracy theory, one must believe that all these were parties to a gigantic coverup: the commission members, the commission staff, the slain president's brother Robert, the president's successor in office, the FBI, the Secret Service, the CIA, and the Dallas police. One must discount sworn testimony of ballistics experts, the evidence of Oswald's fingerprints, and testimony of eyewitnesses.

The dissenters ask too much. The gauzy speculations that tie in Gordon Liddy, E. Howard Hunt, the Mafia, and "Texas millionaires" have no more substance than moonbeams.

If a fresh investigation were to be made, who would make it? The doubters would scorn a commission named by President Ford (he served as a congressman on the Warren Commission). A congressional commission also would be establishment-tainted. The dissenters themselves are too zealously committed to their conspiracy theories to have any appearance of objectivity.

Yes, the critics have raised some troublesome doubts, but great crimes inevitably produce great doubts. Whole schools of scholars still sift the assassination of Lincoln. I wouldn't gag the dissenters for the world — we ought always to pursue truth — but for the moment, I wouldn't buy the hyped-up conjectures they're trying to sell.

O.S. report on JFK assassination
 subject: Kennedy, J.F.

- Washington Post _____
- Agton Star-News A-11
- News (New York) _____
- New York Times _____
- Wall Street Journal _____
- National Observer _____
- Los Angeles Times _____

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