REPORT TO READERS

A chapter still not closed

THE REPORT of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy seems clearly designed to reassure the nation that the assassination is a closed chapter in American history—except for the question of protecting Presidents more closely in the future. It says that the murderer is no longer among us, and, since he had no accomplices, we can all breathe more easily despite the pain and sadness produced by the events in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963.

If the careers of the members of the Commission were not a matter of extremely public record, the conclusion might be drawn that the Report was the product of a group of naive men. But this cannot be said of a panel made up of an eminent jurist, seasoned politicians, a banker and a master spy.

The more likely conclusion, strengthened by the many leaks from the Commission or sources close to it during the ten months of investigation, is that the Commission accepted from the outset the hypothesis of the guilt of Lee Harvey Oswald as the lone killer, accepted evidence that supported this hypothesis, and rejected evidence that tended to discredit or weaken it.

The further conclusion is that the Commission's findings coincide with what its members—and the American Establishment as a whole—consider to be "the national interest." It is not irreparably damaging to the American image to attribute the ghastly murder of a popular President to a misfit with a grudge against society; and to write off the murderer of the alleged assassin as an emotional man whose love for the First Family and his grief caused him to commit his act.

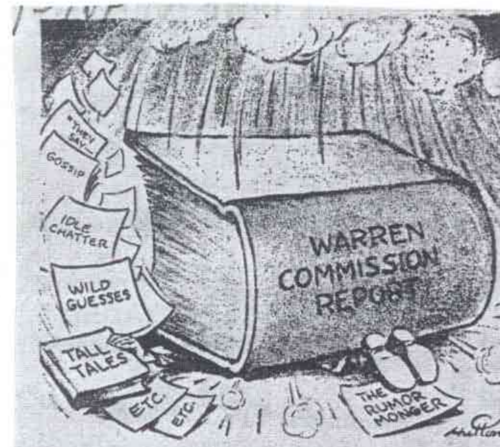
IF LEE OSWALD was a lone misfit killer, there is no accounting for the sensational statement by the Commission chairman, Chief Justice Earl Warren, last February that the facts in the assassination may not be disclosed in our lifetime. What need be concealed about the history and movements of a lone misfit?

Nor is there any accounting for the failure of the Commission to press the questioning of Jack Ruby and his reported connection with the slain officer Tippit and with Oswald himself—and this in the face of Ruby's expressing himself to Justice Warren as being in mortal terror of right-wing plotters whom he sought to link to the assassination of the President.

Nor is there a plausible explanation for the ease with which Oswald obtained a passport (in 24 hours) for a second trip to the Soviet Union although he was a known defector from the United States. The Commission's brush-off of this point (see p. 1) is painfully apparent, and can only increase the suspicion that Oswald may indeed have been a U.S. agent. If Oswald were an agent, it could account for the failure of the FBI to notify the Secret Service or the Dallas police of the presence in Dallas of a suspected "subversive" who bore watching.

Nor is it reasonable for the Commission in effect to reject the testimony of Governor Connally of Texas which disputed the findings of ballistics experts. If, as the Governor contends, he was hit by a second bullet, and not by the first bullet that struck the President, it might establish that more than the officially accepted three shots were fired (again a widely challenged conclusion), and that therefore more than one man was involved in the assassination.

MORE TO THE POINT, in the immediate aftermath of the Report, is the vindication of the Commission's seeming confidence that it would meet with no challenge in the U.S. press, despite the strong—and justified—criticism of the journalistic circus that played rings around Dallas on that awful November weekend. With 100% unanimity, the daily press, radio and TV backed up the Commission. "A tremendous service," said the Boston Herald. "A comprehensive and convincing account," said the New York Times. "Deserves acceptance as the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," said the Washington Post. "A major historic document of our times," said the Philadelphia Inquirer. "Clear, detailed, conscientious, judicious, demonstrates beyond a reasonable doubt . . ." said the New York Herald Tribune. "A monument to patient sifting and analysis of fact," said syndicated columnist Marquis Childs.



Hutton in the Philadelphia Inquirer

THAT OUGHT TO SETTLE HIM!

(A typical cartoon the Monday after)

Not one newspaper, not one commentator noted, for example, that the Commission completely demolished the evidence presented by District Attorney Wade Nov. 24 (printed in full in the New York Times Nov. 26); nor that having discarded Wade's "evidence" that Oswald was the lone killer, the Commission had to accept a whole new set of circumstances to come to the same conclusion.

The searching criticism of the Report will be left to foreign newspapers and opinion, which have indicated belief that the Report raised far more questions than it answered. It will be left also to such persevering civil libertarians as Ber-

trand Russell abroad and Mark Lane at nome.

IN A STATEMENT to the NATIONAL GUARDIAN, which first published his "Brief for Lee Harvey Oswald" on Dec. 19, 1963, Lane said: "The Commission's Report completely substantiates the validity of publishing the brief for Oswald. The Commission itself demolishes the case against Oswald as presented by Wade, in less detail and with less enthusiasm, perhaps because of the GUARDIAN brief."

It was this brief, widely reprinted in many countries, which supported with legal argument the suspicions and doubts that were increasing throughout the world. In the U.S. alone the GUARDIAN distributed 50,000 reprints.

Lane has expressed his determination to proceed with his own independent inquiry. He will be assited at home by the hundreds of concerned persons who have joined him in the Committee of Inquiry of which he is the chairman and by similarly concerned persons abroad.

It is ironical that the press of the U.S. was to an extent instrumental in forcing the government of France to acknowledge the miscarriage of justice in the Dreyfus case; perhaps the press of the world—in the abdication of responsibility by the U.S. press—may have the same effect today.

Within the borders of its own country, the NATIONAL GUARDIAN will continue to pursue the facts in the "crime of the century" until, as Lane put it at his press conference Sept. 27, "the people in a free and open society can obtain the facts to which they are entitled." —THE GUARDIAN