

The Assassination: A New Inquiry Appears Warranted

By PHIL KERBY

THE third anniversary of President John F. Kennedy's death found Americans increasingly skeptical of the Warren Commission Report. This is due, in part, to the ceaseless work of the critics. It is due also to the magnitude of the event, which even now, three years later, still seems unreal.

That the head of state could be assassinated by a well-organized conspiracy "makes sense." That the President could be struck down almost casually by a psychotic, acting alone, is difficult to accept. That a second, psychotic, acting alone, could walk into a police building two days later and kill the assassin overwhelms the imagination.

Fiction must have some credibility to be accepted. Life often defies logic, and history is marked by "senseless" events. The Warren Commission, after a long and intensive investigation, came to the conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald, alone, killed President Kennedy, and that Jack Ruby, alone, killed Oswald.

Although the pattern of events in Dallas almost defied belief, the Commission's verdict was widely accepted at the time and the nation was relieved. Rational people of whatever political persuasion were grateful that political life in this country had not degenerated to the point that any group of dissidents would organize a conspiracy to kill the President of the United States. There was general relief that no evidence linked the assassin with any conspiracy beyond our borders.

But as the nation recovered from shock, doubts about the Report began to arise, stimulated by a growing band of critics. Many of the critics could be dismissed as self-seekers and purveyors of sensationalism for money. Others who began with honest skepticism that the Commission had done a thorough job succumbed to the heady intoxication of publicity, and their charges and speculations took on the character of hallucinations.

Yet all the critics cannot be dismissed. Persons of solid professional eminence, like Alexander Bickel, Professor of Law at Yale University, have reservations about the Warren Report, and these reservations should not be brushed aside.

Despite many troubling questions, the Warren Commission's version of the assassination seems to us to be far more credible than any of the theories advanced by the critics. On this, we agree with Prof. Jacob Cohen's thoughtful analysis in last month's *Frontier*. But widespread public doubt continues and will increase, and the public requires, and deserves, reassurance.

A new investigation along the lines suggested by Rep. Theodore R. Kupferman of New York would serve the public interest. He has proposed an inquiry by a joint Senate-House committee. Such an investigation need not be a reflection upon the Warren Commission, although we agree thoroughly with the indignation of the Commission personnel at many of the careless—and sometimes sinister—charges made against the Report.

A new investigation, if it confirms the essential findings of the Commission, will not satisfy some of the critics, who by now have an emotional, and it is fair to say, an almost neurotic drive in proving that the Warren Commission perpetrated a massive fraud. Others m