

# Doubts Cast on Warren Report Have Substance

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President Johnson's purpose in creating the Warren Commission was to prevent the growth of irresponsible rumor and speculation about the assassination of John F. Kennedy. But now, nearly three years after the tragedy and more than two years since the Warren report was made public, rumor, speculation and wild surmise still prevail. What is more, public confidence in the commission's competence has been almost fatally destroyed.

lawyers and bestowed upon their subordinates most of the essential tasks of the investigation.

A great number of witnesses were heard, but there was very little cross-examination, which would have served to straighten out the discrepancies and contradictions in their testimony. Certain witnesses who might have been most useful were not questioned at all.

The amazing thing about this revival of interest in the case is that the most penetrating criticism of the commission and its report has been contributed not by a distinguished lawyer, judge or statesman. It is embodied in a book written by a 30-year-old graduate student who began his research as a routine academic assignment.

Edward Jay Epstein was a student at Cornell, and his professor suggested that as an exercise in political science he write his Master's thesis on the Warren Commission, for that body represented an interesting example of an extra-judicial and quasi-official method of investigating a murder of great national importance.

The President was moved to create the commission because the customary investigative agencies—the FBI, the Secret Service and the law-enforcement machinery in Texas—were in a sense parties of interest, for they all had borne some responsibility for the security of the President. A congressional committee, despite the probity of its members, might have been harmful to the public interest.

But Epstein, working for many months without any of the powerful authority given to the Warren Commission, has shown in his book, "Inquest," that the chief justice and his associates failed in their task in many vital respects.

The members of the commission were most distinguished people who because of their many commitments gave inadequate time to their work. The associate counsel were busy

And in the hasty writing of the final report there seemed to be an effort to concentrate the guilt upon Oswald and to depict him as an individual—a "loner"—who, for reasons which have never been established, planned and carried out the crime with no accomplices and never a clear motive.

That more than one weapon was used by more than one person was not effectively pursued, although the available evidence seems to point to that probability.

In summing up, Epstein says in substance that while the commission was designed to accomplish two purposes—find the facts and allay public suspicions—the latter purpose got squarely in the way of the first.

Despite the efforts of the commission, the researches of Epstein and many others who have written articles and books during the past months have clearly shaken the belief of many thoughtful people that the case was closed when Warren submitted his report to the President in 1964.

My space here does not permit a review of the evidence. The reader

may find that in Epstein's book. But after a careful reading of the Epstein thesis and a rereading of the conclusions in the Warren report, I must be counted among the doubters. Prior to the tragedy of Nov. 22, 1963, three Pres-



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idents were assassinated. In two cases the assassins, Booth and Czolgosz, were politically motivated. Guiteau, who killed President Garfield, clearly acted on his own.

In the former two cases the prior associations were in the nature of a conspiracy. In the case of Oswald there were suspicious earlier political associations. The failure of the Warren Commission to trace those associations constitutes, in my judgment, the most serious flaw in the report.

In an eloquent brief submitted by Louis Nizer, a notable trial lawyer himself, as an introduction to the Doubleday edition of the Warren report, the author quotes:

"We see yonder the beginning of the day, but I think we shall never see the end of it."