

NEW YORK TIMES
AUG 6 1968

Another 'Report' Report

The Doubters Get a Third Helping

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IT IS COMFORTABLE and uncomplicated to believe that President Kennedy was slain by a single man acting alone, that the assassin was Lee Harvey Oswald and that the assassin himself was slain by another who also acted alone, Jack Ruby. But regardless of how tidy and reassuring this theory may be, after the Warren Commission released its report in the fall of 1964 a public opinion poll showed nearly a third of the people still believing that a conspiracy was involved in the assassination. Fewer than 50 per cent thought the commission had put all the cards on the table.

It is safe to assume that many of these doubts are still with us today. And it is an established fact that these second thoughts will be fanned to flame by author after author attacking the Warren Commission and its report.

TWO well-heralded works—"Inquest" and "Whitewash"—are already on sale, and a third is due at midmonth. Mark Lane's "Rush to Judgment" is offered by Holt, Rinehart and Winston at \$5.95. Lane charges repeatedly that the commission lifted witnesses' statements out

of context, distorted their meaning and frequently presented a finding in its conclusions that was in direct conflict with the evidence.

Let us apply the same line of reasoning to Lane himself. His book, heavily footnoted, has all the appearances of impartiality and scholarly research—the work of a historian and bar-ter dedicated to getting at the facts—all of them.

To have wrought this appearance must have been no mean feat. The author is the same Mark Lane who was arrested as a Freedom Rider in Jackson, Miss., in 1961 along with the president of the New York Chapter of NAACP.

He is also the same Mark Lane who has championed such causes as the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, the Civil Liberties Union and the Americans for Democratic Action.

He also, incidentally, was retained as legal counsel by Mrs. Marguerite Oswald, mother of the alleged assassin. Impartial? Scholarly? Let us not, as Mr. Lane counsels, jump to conclusions.

THE LAYMAN who still harbors doubts about the commission's findings may lose a few hours of sleep either during or after reading "Rush to Judgment." Some of its passages are indeed compelling.

Listen to Arthur A. Cohen, vice-president and editor in chief of Holt, Rinehart and Winston:

"Where before I was content to believe that the published findings (of the commission) were conclusive, I have no such certainty now. Precisely the opposite.

'Rush to Judgment' persuades me that we know terrifyingly little about what actually transpired on Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas."

The book makes no direct accusations, although at times it comes dangerously close. Most of the attacks are followed by question marks. Permit, then, one more.

Do not the doubting 31 per cent represent a fertile pasture upon which to feed? Projected throughout the population, are not 68,200,000 doubting Americans eagerly awaiting further fuel for their suspicions?

HOW MANY MORE reports on the Report will ultimately be run through the presses can be a matter only for speculation.

Some may be more provocative than the first three; many will probably fall short. It will be 75 years, as Lane points out, before certain "vital" information collected by the commission can be released from the National Archives. Chief Justice Earl Warren said the curious will never see the information in their lifetime, and he apparently made good his declaration.

There are, to be sure, discrepancies in the Warren Report. And there are still many, many unanswered questions concerning those hideous three days in which a president, a police officer and a suspected assassin were gunned down in Dallas.

The one simple way to prove the commission wrong is to come forth with the other assassin(s).

The critics may reply that this is not their task.

To which the reply must be: What, then, is your task?