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Managing

Editorial

The Riddle of Dallas

The latest flurry of books questioning the findings in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy should not be surprising.

The solutions of sensational crimes rarely has met with universal satisfaction in America. Always there have been those who would hint darkly that the full story was not told, or that there had been a miscarriage of justice.

There are people who were not yet born at the time who will argue vehemently today that Lizzie Borden did, indeed murder her father and stepmother with an ax on a steaming August day in 1892 in Fall River, and that the jury that acquitted her was blind.

Likewise, a whole generation has grown up in the belief that Nicola Sacco and Bartholomew Vanzetti were victims of prejudice when they went to the electric chair in 1927 for murder seven years earlier during a payroll robbery.

And, more to the point in relation to the Dallas tragedy, many scholars and historians have written books purporting to show that persons in high places were involved in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

The latest pair of books about the murder of President Kennedy — "Rush to Judgment" by Mark Lane, a New York City lawyer, and "Inquest," by Edward Jay Epstein, who set out originally to write a thesis for his master's degree — are focused mainly on the report of the Warren Commission. Neither author seeks to exonerate Lee Harvey Oswald, but both draw the conclusion that the Warren Commission report ignored or suppressed evidence which might support the theory that Oswald was not alone in the crime.

These, of course, are doubts and rumors that were widespread on the day of the assassination. Indeed, it was because of such doubts and rumors that President Johnson called the Warren Commission into being to conduct a thorough investigation of the crime. The purpose was partly to prove — if proof were possible — that the case was solved with the arrest of Oswald and partly to dispel the belief which was widespread abroad that President Kennedy was the victim of a political plot.

The full report of the Warren Commission comprises

several ponderous volumes and has been read, of course, only by scholars. The public, for the most part, is familiar only with the summary of the report. Hence, it is difficult for the average person to pass judgment, either on the report or the books which criticize it.

It is hardly likely that a satisfactory answer ever will be given. The murder of Oswald himself, of course, eliminated one avenue of investigation, and the passage of time will bring distortions and interpretations that can be based only on surmise.

No doubt there will be other books in years to come, and other alleged exposes of what purports to be the truth about the Kennedy assassination. And as time goes on, that dark seed will take its place with the legends that have grown up after other major crimes, making it more and more impossible to separate the true from the false.

As President Johnson said in those first hours, when someone asked what he thought was behind the assassination, "We just don't know," and it is unlikely that we ever will know.