

HOLMES ALEXANDER

Warren Report Still Suspect

WASHINGTON, D. C. — For nearly 30 years after the Sacco-Vanzetti execution in 1927, it was the liberal dogma to believe that two humble, high-minded, innocent idealists had been railroaded to death by right-wing reactionaries. Francis Russell, who wrote one of the several books which vindicated the findings of our courts, says this:

“Even to approach the case with an open mind was considered intellectually contemptible. . . For over a third of a century they had to be innocent. Intellectuals have accepted this as an act of faith.”

It says something about the growth of American maturity to find that the Warren Report on the assassination of President Kennedy — also a liberal dogma — has not survived so long as two years. The initial reaction of the liberals was to condemn unidentified right-wingers, and when Harvey Lee Oswald turned out to be a Marxist, to condemn the rightist city of Dallas. The Warren Report, published two years ago next month, was a third choice — for it pinned the guilt on a lone assassin while exonerating him of any Marxist conspiracy.

THEORY CRASHES

But the theory of the solitary, crazed, unaffiliated killer is now crashing on the rocks of stubborn research. The latest demonstration of dubiety concerning the Warren Report is the forthcoming book, “Rush To Judgment,” by attorney Mark Lane, who was engaged by Oswald’s mother to look after her son’s interests.

Two years ago such a book by an advocate of the presumed assassin would have been thought an outrage and a scandal. But this one is ringed with respectability. It has a supporting introduction by the British historian, Hugh Trevor-Roper. It is the September choice of the Mid-Century Book Club and a Special offering by the Book-of-the-Month Club.

The Lane book follows a bad one by Thomas Buchanan, “Who Killed Kennedy?” which raved against the Dallas “oligarchy” and a good one by Edward Jay Epstein called

“Inquest,” which was low-pitched and convincing in its indictment of the Commission. More recently still the Greater Philadelphia Magazine brought out a 20,000-word article, based on a strange interview with Philadelphia District Attorney Arlen Specter, a Warren Commission investigator. All are publications of protest against suppression of truth.

Mark Lane’s book is horrifying in its realism about the President’s wounds. It is merciless in its exposure of the Commission’s predisposition to reach the convenient conclusion of Oswald’s isolated guilt. If we look now at the purposes behind President Johnson’s appointment of the Commission, we can see that these purposes as well as the investigation remain uncompleted.

Louis Nizer’s introduction to the Doubleday edition of the Report states one official purpose: “Will the Report’s conclusions be accepted. . . ?” he asks, and then goes on to excoriate in advance “some who will resist persuasion. . . (whose) sight can be blocked by neurotic adherence. . .” The other official purpose was stated by FBI Director Hoover, who declared that the Report had rendered “incalculable service” in “overcoming foreign skepticism.

But neither public acceptance nor the tranquilizing of foreign skepticism has been accomplished. None of the critics has solved the crime, but all have assisted at demolishing the certified solution. A few minutes after President Kennedy’s death, Lyndon Johnson said:

“We don’t know whether there is a world wide conspiracy; whether they are after me as well as they were after President Kennedy. . . We just don’t know.” But the Warren Commission was his creation—and we still don’t know.