



Henry Brandon, from Washington

The Kennedy embers are kept glowing

WASHINGTON, Saturday.

THREE YEARS ago the world paid its last tribute to President Kennedy. This time an anonymous but reverent crowd bowed past the graveside. The sunshine was almost warm; many came bareheaded, some coatless.

It was a scene of quiet serenity. But beyond the peacefulness of Arlington cemetery the controversy about the conclusions of the Warren Commission report had reached a new pitch.

Governor Connally stoked the fires of controversy anew when, in an interview in Life magazine, he restated (what in effect he had already told the Warren Commission) his conviction that he had not been hit by the same bullet as the President. This again raised the question whether Oswald was the lone assassin since, according to the Commission's findings, he could not have fired that quickly.

Connally's restatement was accompanied by enlargements of the Zapruder film which magnified the blur of the pictures and the mystery without adding any new evidence. But almost as soon as the Governor had impugned the Commission, he defended its findings at a Press conference by differing with Life's conclusion, and rejected the idea for a new investigation unless compelling new evidence was brought forth.

The Commission, in its report, discounted Connally's impressions by concluding that he could hardly be expected to recall clearly what happened. Having been in Dallas in the Presidential caravan myself I know how difficult it was even to decide how many shots I had heard.

Time Magazine in disagreeing with its sister publication maintained that "lacking any new evidence, there seems very little valid excuse for so dramatic a development as another full-scale inquiry." Several members of the Commission spoke up in the same vein.

Further clarification emerged this week in support of the one-bullet theory strong enough to further undermine the basic assumptions of those who claim that Oswald was not a lone assassin. The clarifications came from Dr Thornton Boswell, one of the team of three pathologists who performed the autopsy and who for the first time on November 1 examined the photographs and X-rays now deposited at the national archives.

He says they prove conclusively that the two shots that struck the President came from behind him, that there was no bullet in the President's body and that discrepancies about whether the bullet had entered through the back of the neck or lower down arose only because a drawing of his was not exact though the handwritten notes on it were.

He also spoke of the existence of slides of tissue, which had not been mentioned before but which also confirm that the neck wound was an entrance wound. The path of the bullet was determined by the bruise marks in the lung area and Dr Boswell believes in the probability that Governor Connally was wounded by the neck bullet. The misleading information in the FBI report that no point of exit for the bullet had been found was explained by J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, who spoke up for the first time yesterday. "The FBI reports record oral statements made by autopsy physicians while the examination was being conducted and before all facts were known. The autopsy report records the final findings of the examination," he said.

It was Connally, though, who denounced the motives of those who had criticised the Warren Commission report as having "political overtones." Could these overtones hurt President Johnson? Has an obscene whisper campaign begun?

The scepticism the critics of the report have aroused no doubt

is troubling the President, and there are some lifted eyebrows over the fact that Senator Kennedy gave William Manchester permission to publish his book "The Death of a President," which deals with events during the six days surrounding the assassination, so much earlier than originally contemplated.

Kennedy, however, has some persuasive explanations. He says that now is probably the least undesirable time. If it were issued in 1967 it would be interpreted as an attempt to influence the party convention, if after the 1968 election, people would say it was to start off his own presidential campaign.

The fact that the Kennedy name continues to seep into all phases of public life is of no comfort to the President. The Senator, on the other hand, is beginning to worry that he may be "speaking" too soon, and that it will be difficult to maintain the momentum of publicity he is getting. What seems to be gradually happening is that Robert Kennedy is succeeding in embodying the legend of his brother.

As the visiting Russian poet Yevtushenko, who captivated his audiences here, put it after a talk with the Senator: "If President Kennedy could hear what his brother said today he would have felt that his task is being continued."

So the Kennedy legend and the Kennedy future somehow become fused, and the mystery over the assassination has somehow become part of both. And because of the mystery and its political connotations it is not impossible that, while the uneasiness of the national conscience for a long time refused to question the Warren Commission conclusions, it may in its growing uneasiness clamour for a new investigation. But the answers available now may well remain the best attainable.