

Kennedy Mystery Lingers

Now that the third anniversary of the assassination of President Kennedy has passed perhaps the controversy over the tragic event may be permitted to retreat back into the inside pages of the newspapers and the book review sections of magazines.

The theorizing and questioning and evidence - examining can be expected to continue, however, and to surge up anew each November. The assassination of a president is not a minor occurrence, and when it is surrounded, as this one is, by so many doubts and possibilities and unanswered questions, it leaves a mark on the public consciousness that takes decades to erase.

From the time the Warren Commission published its report 10 months after the assassination, both its procedures and many of its findings have been under attack by various writers.

The commission has been charged with having begun with a theory — that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone and unaided — and of having searched for only those facts which would support the theory. It has been charged with giving great weight to certain evidence and testimony and dismissing other evidence and testimony that cast doubt on the theory.

What has sown doubts in the minds of thousands who had accepted the Warren Report and has done most to provoke calls for a new official inquiry is Governor Connally's positive statement that he was not hit by the same bullet which passed through the President.

(Connally himself, incidentally, opposes reopening the case.)

It is agreed that there were

three shots. According to Connally, and others, the first one struck the President in the back, the second struck the governor and the third fatally wounded the President in the head.

But since it was found impossible to fire Oswald's rifle three times in the span between the President's first wound and his last wound, the commission decided that the first bullet hit both men, the second killed the President and the third missed the presidential limousine completely.

Critics offer a different explanation: There was no miss; there was an accomplice assassin.

Popular conception to the contrary, eyewitness testimony is often the most unreliable kind of testimony. Other witnesses are as positive about their impressions. One newsman heard three shots coming from the Depository Building behind the cavalcade; other persons heard firing from a point ahead of it.

On the basis of its reconstruction of the murder and the tight web of circumstantial evidence implicating Oswald, and in the absence of any compelling evidence pointing to a different answer, the commission concluded that Oswald killed the President and wounded the governor with two bullets.

Like Mayerling in the 19th century and the disappearance of the Dauphin of France in the 18th, the death of John F. Kennedy may go down as the greatest unsolved mystery of the 20th century—unsolved in the sense that we can never re - create exactly what happened in Dallas on that fateful 22nd of November in 1963.