

Judgment Stands

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THERE will, of course, be no new full-scale inquiry into the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

The Congress, tho it will install dozens of new members in January, is not about to try second guessing a Warren Commission whose roster included two respected senators and two leading House members.

President Johnson hardly would know where to turn to find an investigating body more prestigious than the one he named in 1963 to work under Chief Justice Earl Warren.

Moreover, as many thoughtful responses to the commission's critics have made abundantly plain, no evidence has been unearthed since release of the commission's findings which would justify a major review.

For all the critical books, articles and French television shows, no one has established — or even begun to demonstrate — that any shot was fired at the late President from any place but the 6th floor of the Texas school book depository.

Nor have the critics linked any person other than the slain Lee Harvey Oswald to the crime.

What they rely upon, for the most part, are the impressions and observations of many people at or near the death site who believe they heard more shots than the three the commission says were probably fired, that shots came from amid trees atop a grassy knoll to the right and somewhat forward of the Kennedy car, that the "knoll gunman" escaped.

Since these impressions are without the support of even an iota of tangible evidence, the "witnesses" could as well have dreamed it all. They have no gunman, no gun, no bullets, and no wound which, demonstrably, could have been inflicted upon Mr. Kennedy from the direction they consider the crucial one.

Aside from their persistence in relying upon the unreliable, the critics have founded their "case" upon the inevitable errors (long since corrected) of men operating under great stress at assassination time — including the autopsy doctors and FBI agents.

The critics have tried to elevate a miasma of impressions collected at a chaotic moment into graven truth.

The French, ahead of all others, have indulged their taste for conspiracy. In the process of endlessly reworking the case, they have offered much truth about themselves and none about the crime.

This clinging to the plot theory, both at home and abroad, produces its paradoxes.

It is a rejection of the mindless behavior of a rebel Oswald, in an age when we are engulfed constantly by mindless violence.

It attempts to dismiss coincidences of human behavior and timing, when coincidences swarm upon us all again and again.

No inquiry, however exhaustive and repetitive, could resolve all doubts surrounding a crime so diffuse in nature as this murder, done by rifle fired at long distance in a crowded public place. It will never be known, for instance, what happened to the third of three bullets fired by Oswald. Nor, for sure, which shot went wild.

But doubts do not make opposing truth — unless they are very big. In this case, the weight of established evidence suggests they are not. It suggests instead that, until Jack Ruby killed Oswald, we had the man who owned and fired the gun whose bullets struck and fell near John F. Kennedy and the wounded Gov. John Connally of Texas.

Until some new, genuine evidence suggests otherwise, the commission's judgment will stand. Meantime, the unrealistic will demand over and over an end to doubt that can have no end. And lovers of plot will spin their unsupported theories and call them better than the oddly improbable but true coincidences of life.