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WHO REALLY KILLED KENNEDY?

by **CYRIL
DUNN**

WORLDWIDE efforts are now being made to throw serious doubt on the official American account of President Kennedy's assassination. One or two of these re-examinations of the "evidence" have appeared in America, but the more daring examples are coming out in Europe.

Copies of recent issues of the French weekly *L'Express*, for instance, have not been offered by its publishers for general sale in the United States. They contain articles about the assassination thought likely to "inflame" American public opinion.

They belong to a series which has been running in *L'Express* for several weeks. The first number was boldly headed: "Le Vrai Ranzon sur L'Assassinat." The author is an American novelist and computer-programmer called Thomas Buchanan, who has been living in Paris since 1961. The full Buchanan report is to be published as a book in this country by Secker and Warburg this month.

'Other gunmen'

Many Americans, among them officers of the F.B.I., are already satisfied that Kennedy had only one assassin—a mentally unstable young man named Lee Harvey Oswald, who operated quite alone.

It has been reported by leading American news magazines that this conclusion is likely to be sustained by the Warren Commission, set up by President Johnson to establish the truth.

But Buchanan suggests that there were two gunmen, neither of whom was Oswald. He also argues that Kennedy could have been the victim of a murder plot directly involving officers of the Dallas Police, one or two of whom must have been high-ranking. He implies that a conspiracy of this sort might well have been sponsored by some of the Texan oil millionaires.

Texas oilmen, Buchanan says, have financed and sometimes directed the activities of the extreme American Right. He argues that they have done so because of their vested interest in opposing any Russian-American understanding. He implies that they might have been drawn into an elaborate frame-up of Oswald, intended to discredit the American Left and Communism in general.

Buchanan does not pretend that Oswald was entirely innocent. He simply reduces him to the status of a minor accomplice with a left-wing background, tricked by the real conspirators into becoming their scapegoat. Buchanan is oblique in what he says about the role of Jack Ruby, the Dallas nightclub operator who shot and killed Oswald, but suggests that by so doing he must at least have earned the overwhelming gratitude of the plotters.

Exposure threat

For Buchanan's hypothesis covers the possibility that their plan ran into grave trouble, threatening them all with exposure. This occurred when Patrolman Tippit—now something of a national hero in America but nominated by Buchanan as another possible accomplice—bungled his part of the job by failing to kill and silence Oswald at the moment of arrest. Tippit, of course, was himself shot and killed, allegedly by Oswald.

Although easily the most startling, what Buchanan calls his "evaluation of the probabilities" is one of a basically consistent series.

The first detailed rebuttal of official "proofs" appeared in America less than a month after the assassination. It was written by a New York lawyer called Mark Lane, a well-known spokesman for American dissent, who was later to represent Oswald's mother. His "defence brief for Oswald" was published by the "progressive newsweekly" *National Guardian*. Lane examined, point by point, the case publicly made out against Oswald, on the day he was killed.

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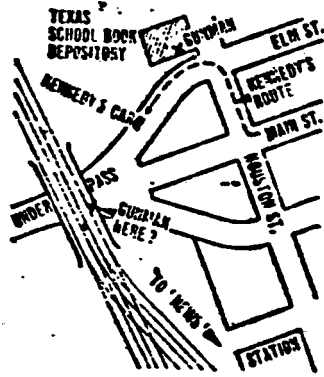
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by the Dallas D.A., Henry Wade, and Lane treated most of it with derision.

Almost all other re-examinations of the "evidence" against Oswald have patently been inspired by Lane's brief and make the same points. Buchanan himself seems to rely on it for his opening chap-



ters, though he then goes on to speculate about what might have happened with a freedom Lane must surely find dizzying.

Nobody who has studied the existing case against Oswald could be wholly satisfied with it. Some of the "contradictions and inadequacies" in statements made by American officials directly after the event do not seem to have been resolved by later amendments.

The case against Oswald based wholly on newspaper reports may not seem convincing; if it did, there would be no point in setting up the Warren Commission. But other and different cases which rest on the same "evidence" must surely be received with a similar scepticism.

No denial

It may be thought fair, for example, to examine the private eyes and their motives. Most of them seem anxious to absolve the American Left. It might be argued that they are justified in this by past events, such as the Sacco and Vanzetti case and the "Red hunt" that followed. But any sense of the pure objectivity of these investigators must be diminished by their distrust of the F.B.I., the Secret Service and the local police, which is often evident, and by occasional undertones of special pleading.

Nor does it appear that Buchanan, for example, has so far denied published reports that he was once a member of the American Communist Party with personal reasons for resenting the activities of American under-cover agencies, such as the F.B.I.

Perhaps it should also be borne in mind that none of the major critics of the case against Oswald was in Dallas when it was being built up. They had still not been to Dallas, or spoken to anyone directly involved, when they published their first articles. Both Lane and Buchanan have been there since. Lane found his private inquiry almost impossibly difficult, but conceded, after talking to some of Oswald's friends, that one of his major submissions was ill-founded. Buchanan, on the other hand, seems to have found his propositions triumphantly confirmed.

Things evidently thought sinister by the "private eyes" made a different impact on people who were in Dallas after the murders. The confused nature of official statements, the reckless freedom with which they were made, seemed open to innocent—though bizarre—explanation.

Nobody who has read the verbatim record of what the Dallas district attorney said at his Press conference on November 24—an astonishing mix-up—could honestly believe that this highly professional mix would have made out his case to a jury in anything like the same form. The fact is that the Dallas officials and police were under enormous pressure.

On the one hand were hundreds of fairly frenzied reporters, most of them insisting on the American "right to know." On the other were the Boss Men of Dallas—the bankers and corporation presidents whose authority has long been paramount in the city—insisting that "the Media" should have every facility. It may be thought deplorable that, with an accused man in custody, officials should have talked as they did. It would be absurd to rest a case, either for Oswald's guilt or for his innocence, on what they said.

It must now be difficult for any outsider to admire the Dallas Police for anything except the size of their shoulder-patches. But it is at least imaginable that some of the statements made on their behalf were primarily designed, not to convict an innocent man, but to save some shreds of their own tattered professional reputation.

The bullets

Even so, there are obvious discrepancies in the official story as it stands. Some of them are bound to disconcert honest men. The key issue seems to be this.

The police insist that all the shots came from the same place—a room on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository—that this building was 75-100 yards behind Kennedy's car when the shots were fired and that Kennedy was facing forward. Yet the doctors who tried to save the President's life at the Parkland Hospital in Dallas said that one bullet hit Kennedy in the throat and was an entry wound.

An autopsy was performed on Kennedy's body later that same day at the naval hospital in Washington. The doctor who performed it identified the throat wound as an exit wound. When two Secret Service men showed the Parkland doctors a copy of the autopsy report, they retracted their original statements.

Critics of the official version refuse to be satisfied by this apparent *vide-facere*. Who, they ask cogently, could be better qualified to identify the nature of bullet-wounds than any doctor practising in trigger-happy Dallas? Admittedly, it seems odd. But in fact the doctors operated on the throat-wound at once, trying to sustain or restore Kennedy's breathing. Is it possible that, obliged to act swiftly and appalled as they must have been by the lacerated body of their President, the Parkland doctors' judgment on this aspect was momentarily distracted?

Hole in screen

But Buchanan and others insist that at least one shot must have come from ahead of Kennedy. They rely on other evidence besides the throat-wound. For instance, two reporters—Frank Cormier of A.P. and Richard Dudman of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*—wrote that they had seen a hole in the wind-screen of Kennedy's car, though they were not allowed close enough to examine it. One of these reporters, Dudman, is now willing to believe the mark he saw on the wind-screen could have been caused by a ricochet from inside the car.

It is when Buchanan and Lane set out to show where the shot could have come from that they tax the credulity of anyone familiar with the scene of the murder. They argue that it could have been fired by a gunman hidden behind the parapet of a railway bridge over the underpass down which the Kennedy cavalcade was advancing.

Buchanan's case for a gunman on the bridge is particularly detailed and he claims to have established its probability by going there. It sets out to show that a gunman so placed would have had a sitting target, would have been perfectly invisible from the road below and could have walked away, reaching in five minutes and without difficulty the front door of the *Dallas Morning News*. And in this office Jack Ruby was seen before and after the assassination—but not for 15 minutes on either side of 12.30 p.m., when the first shot was fired.

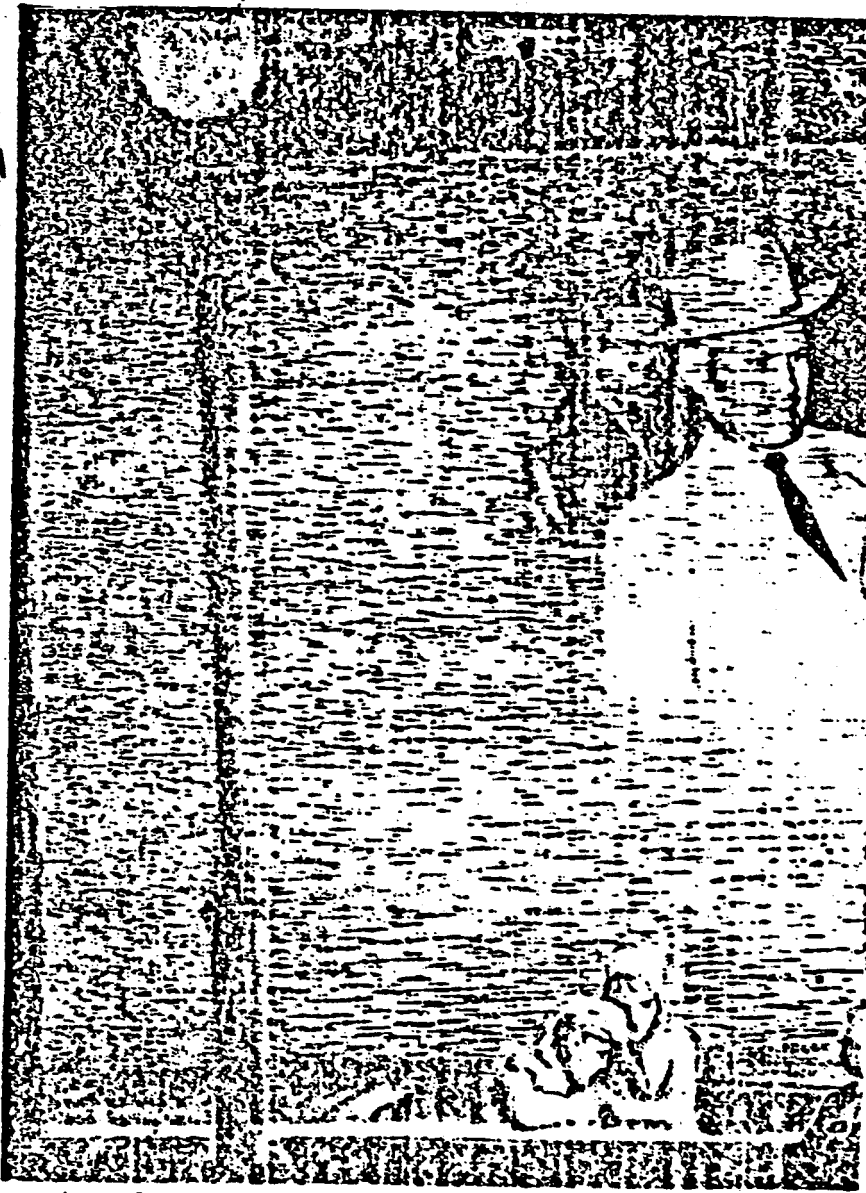
Buchanan believes his hypothesis explains away another major difficulty—how could a mediocre marksman like Oswald fire off in five and a half seconds at least three, and possibly more, deadly rounds from a bolt-action rifle at a moving target? Actually, Buchanan is not satisfied that Oswald fired *any* shots from the Depository, but presents us instead with an anonymous First Murderer—another Dallas policeman or perhaps a hired gangster—whom Oswald sneaked into the building before the assassination and who escaped after it with police connivance.

Appalling risk

The Buchanan case says if you stand where Kennedy was first hit and stare up at the railway bridge, it is like the skyline. Moreover, its

parapet is a balustrade with fairly wide gaps between the supporting pillars. It seems highly improbable that a gunman could have pushed his rifle through this balustrade and lowered his head to aim and fire without instantly being seen by the Secret Service men directly behind Kennedy.

But even if this gunman had been invisible from in front, behind him there was virtually no cover. A wide bed of rails runs across the bridge into Dallas Station. Buchanan himself says that if Ruby had still been in the newspaper office, five minutes' walk away, he could have seen a gunman on the bridge. Would anyone have taken so evident and so appalling a risk?



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THE AUSCHWITZ TRIAL has moved. Dislodged from its first courtroom in the council chamber of Frankfurt Town Hall, it has retreated to a district of wide avenues and small factories, where a brand new community centre has just been built.

The resumption of the great trial here on Friday provided the most fighting inauguration to be imagined. The Auschwitz trial is like a black raft, floating slowly away down the months and years through changing surroundings, the steady discourse of German voices running imperurbably on.

Friday's hearing brought fresh evidence against Boger, whose alleged crimes have made him the most notorious of the accused. An elderly witness who had been a "trustee" prisoner and given a clerk's job in the camp said that Boger, who rode about his duties on a bicycle, had been known as "death on wheels."

Describing how Boger helped to put down the rising of a "crematorium commando," he overreached himself by adding that he was "foaming with rage." Here the presiding judge, Dr Hofmeyer, intervened.

Shaken

Had the witness seen Boger at the beginning of this incident, or later? He could not remember, and replied uneasily that if he had known there would be a trial one day he would have taken notes.

Going on, he described the gassing of 2,300 people as a retaliation for the murder of Heydrich, and the liquidation of the whole gypsy section of the camp on the last night of July, 1944. Too angry, too eager, his

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