

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

# Memorandum

Tolson	_____
DeLoach	_____
Walters	_____
Mohr	_____
Casper	_____
Callahan	_____
Conrad	_____
Felt	_____
Gale	_____
Rosen	_____
Sullivan	_____
Tavel	_____
Trotter	_____
Tele. Room	_____
Holmes	_____
Gandy	_____

TO : Mr. Wick

DATE: 3-24-67

FROM : M. A. Jones

SUBJECT: "THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT"  
BY WILLIAM MANCHESTER

## SYNOPSIS

The New York Office has obtained from Harper & Row an advance copy of captioned book which will be officially released April 7th. Book is lengthy (647 pages of text; 710 pages total). Contains appendices, chronology of events for period November 20-25, 1963, source materials utilized by Manchester, identities of persons interviewed by author, maps and index. Key portions of book previously serialized in Look Magazine. Book deals with events surrounding assassination of President Kennedy; not subsequent investigation. Reflects tremendous amount of work and compilation by Manchester. FBI mentioned frequently, but does not play prominent role in narrative. Major comments about FBI previously publicized in Look series. For example, the comment that the Director did not send Attorney General Robert Kennedy a letter of condolence and that the Director's attitude was one of "no compassion;" a so-called favorite joke of President Kennedy in which Kennedy would state that the three most overrated things in the world were the State of Texas, the FBI and whatever else came to mind; that President Johnson applied a prod to the FBI to get the Dallas investigation underway; that Johnson showed Ted Sorenson an FBI memo that the rulers of an unfriendly power had been hoping for Kennedy's death. The memo was too vague for serious consideration and Sorenson allegedly commented that it was "meaningless." (The Director did send Mr. Robert Kennedy a letter of condolence. In this connection Mr. Hoover has commented, "Manchester is a liar, but it is obvious he was fed this by RFK." In reference to the Sorenson incident, no such FBI memo could be identified by the Bureau). In evaluating the assassination, Manchester comments that Lee Harvey

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- 1 - Mr. DeLoach EX-110
- 1 - Mr. Wick
- FCS:jer (7)
- 1 - Mr. Sullivan 62 - 109060 - 5035
- 1 - Mr. Rosen
- 1 - Miss Gandy

(Continued - Over)  
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M. A. Jones to Wick memo  
RE: "The Death of a President"

*shot  
above  
line*

Oswald's visit to Russia and subsequent behavior had brought him "under the active surveillance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation." Manchester adds that "one might have assumed that the seventy-five man FBI office in Dallas would have relayed word of his presence to the five-man Secret Service office there. Nothing of this sort happened." Manchester speculates on all the factors involved: "Conceivably the FBI and the Secret Service did do all that could have been done... Perhaps the blow could not have been averted. Perhaps it was hindsight to suggest otherwise." Toward the end of the book, Manchester comments that "the Secret Service had failed." Investigations of the assassination had begun but "the first steps were disquieting. The FBI assigned fifty agents to a crash study, wrote a skimpy report which dismissed thorny questions with the recurrent phrase 'There is no evidence' - and then leaked the report to a news magazine. The episode was a dismaying example of how threatened bureaucracies, turning a blind eye to the national interest, rise in defense of themselves." In general, Manchester approves of Warren Commission report, but has some reservations. "Although the conduct of the Secret Service, the FBI, and the Dallas police was found to have been less than admirable, they were handled gingerly, and corrective suggestions lacked clarity and force. Their subsequent fate was disheartening. J. Edgar Hoover, furious that his bureau should be criticized at all, protested so vehemently that the public overlooked the reports harsher censure of the Secret Service (which wisely laid low); by the time the Director had finished disciplining his Dallas agents, including the unfortunate Hosty, a great many newspaper readers had forgotten which agency had really been accountable for John Kennedy's safety." Relative to security of notables walking from White House to St. Matthew's Cathedral, Manchester mentions a vague "warning received from the FBI that the "Director" was "concerned" and "advised against" the march. This warning angered Sargent Shriver who reportedly stated that all were concerned and one didn't have to be Director of FBI to know the march would be dangerous. "It's a ploy, so that if anybody gets shot the Director can say, 'I told you so.' It'd be a different story if he'd turned up hard proof that some famous gangster had taken an apartment on Connecticut Avenue, or if the best agent in the OGPU had checked in at Washington National. Then I'd have to do a double-take. But this is just a self-serving device." The Director, in an exchange of letters with Manchester in February,

M. A. Jones to Wick memo  
RE: "The Death of a President"

1967, relative to the series in Look Magazine, commented that Manchester's "lack of research and irresponsible reporting in this instance (referring to comments on alleged failure to send note of condolence) are most disgusting." Over-all, book is long, full of many surmises and items of gossip, and is critical of Bureau in some instances.

RECOMMENDATION:

For information.

*P*

*Wick*

*✓*

*Js*

*nm*



M. A. Jones to W memo  
RE: "The Death of a President"

DETAILS

BACKGROUND:

The Bureau has received through the New York Office an advance copy of William Manchester's book, "The Death of A President," which is to be published April 7, 1967. This book, which has been highly publicized, deals with the period of President Kennedy's assassination, November 20-November 25, 1963. Excerpts were previously published in Look Magazine. It is an extremely lengthy book (647 pages). It contains an Appendix, a list of source materials, maps pertaining to routes in Dallas and Washington and a diagram of the Presidential plane and an Index.

Mr. Hoover and the FBI are frequently mentioned. The major listings are being set forth below:

p. 32-33

Manchester speculates about Lee Harvey <sup>V</sup>Oswald. Oswald's ravings stamp him as an "incoherent hater, nothing more. Looking for doctrine in them is like looking for bone in a polyp. Yet he had tried to defect, and both his conduct in Russia and his bizarre behavior after his return brought him under the active surveillance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Inasmuch as the Bureau's handbook charged agents to 'be on the alert for information 'indicating the possibility of an attempt against the person or safety of the President,' one might have assumed that the seventy-five man FBI office in Dallas would have relayed word of his Jim presence to the five-man Secret Service office there. Nothing of the sort happened. His file was in the hands of FBI Agent James P. Hosty, Jr., a husky, thirty-five-year-old Notre Dame graduate and an outspoken admirer of John F. Kennedy. Since November 4, 1963, Hosty had known that Oswald was employed as a laborer in the Texas School Book Depository at the corner of Houston and Elm Streets. This warehouse provided the deadliest sniper's roost on the Presidential motorcade route, because the motorcade was scheduled to first zig and then zag directly beneath its windows. A gunman could size up the President's car as it approached the building from the front, wait until it pivoted sharply at his feet, and fire as it crept slowly out of the turn to his right. Hosty, however, didn't make the connection. He had received no official



notification of the route, and when local newspapers published a map of it, his sole concern was whether or not Jim Hosty would catch a glimpse of Kennedy. 'I noticed that it was coming up Main Street,' he said five months later. 'That was the only thing I was interested in, where maybe I could watch it if I had a chance.'"

U. S.  
Manchester then goes on - talking about all the factors involved: "Conceivably the FBI and the Secret Service did do all that could have been done... Perhaps the blow could not have been averted. Perhaps it was hindsight to suggest otherwise."

• p. 119

Makes mention of Kennedy's "pet joke," the last line of which could be adapted to the occasion. It went: "The three most overrated things in the world are the state of Texas, the FBI, and hunting trophies."

p. 181

Immediately after the assassination virtual panic erupted at Parkland Hospital in Dallas. In one instance, "a tall man in a light gray speckled suit shouldered his way past her (Nurse Doris Nelson), shouting, 'I'm FBI!' He appeared violent, and Andy Berg, the closest agent (Secret Service), knocked him down. Sprawled on all fours the intruder gurgled, 'You're not in charge now. What's your name?' 'What's yours?' demanded Kellerman (Roy Kellerman, Secret Service), moving in. Credentials and commission books were whipped out; it turned out that the man really was from the Bureau's Dallas office, though his presence in the hospital was unauthorized. Dragging himself away, he protested, 'J. Edgar Hoover will hear about this!' Hoover did, and the unfortunate agent vanished into the limbo reserved for FBI men whose blunders embarrass the Director."

p. 192

Says that a United Press International Bulletin on the assassination went out from Dallas and that Mr. Hoover, along with other Government officials, learned about the news.

CONTINUED



p. 195-196

Mr. Hoover is shown as calling the Attorney General's office. Mr. Robert Kennedy is not there and Mr. Hoover talks with Angie Novello, an assistant. The Director then calls Mr. Kennedy at the latter's home in Virginia. Kennedy was at his swimming pool. The Director advises that the President has been shot, and that he would call later when he learns more details.

p. 257

Mr. Hoover calls Attorney General Kennedy again. The Director had been on the phone with Gordon Shanklin, Special Agent in Charge of the Dallas office. "Until a moment ago he hadn't been learning much (he was among those who thought Parkland was called Lakeland), but the most important of the details which he had promised that he would endeavor to get had just come through." Mr. Hoover said that the President was dead, "snappily and hung up."

"He expressed no compassion; he did not seem to be upset. His voice, as the Attorney General recalled afterward, was not quite as excited as if he were reporting the fact that he had found a Communist on the faculty of Howard University. Ordinarily garrulous, he had suddenly turned curt with his superior. It would be charitable to attribute the swift change to the stresses of that afternoon. Yet although Bob Kennedy continued in the Cabinet for over nine months, Hoover, whose office was on the same floor, never walked over to offer his condolences. One of his assistants wrote Kennedy a moving letter, and the agents in the FBI's crime squad sent him a message of sympathy, but their Director, unlike the Director of the CIA, remained sphinxlike. He did speak to Bob one day when they happened to enter the Justice Department together, and he accepted a Christmas gift from him, a pair of cufflinks bearing the Justice seal, but those were their only contacts. It was his brittle consistency which made Hoover unique."

p. 287

Mention is made that Dallas District Attorney Henry M. Wade's assistant, William F. "Bill" Alexander prepared to charge Oswald with murdering the President "as part of an international Communist conspiracy." However, Nicholas Katzenbach persuaded two members of the Vice President's Washington staff to have their Texas contacts kill it. A footnote at this point reads: "Shanklin of the FBI was especially helpful in aborting Alexander's folly."

p. 405

On Friday, November 22, 1963, after the Presidential plane had returned to Washington with the coffin, Mr. Johnson is in the White House. At 7:25 p. m., he called Mr. Hoover. "The Director was home. Unaware that regular programs had been suspended, he had waited until seven o'clock before turning his television on, thinking to catch NBC's nightly newscast on Channel 4. He was watching a rerun of Kennedy's October 22, 1962, missile speech and wondering whether this was the best Huntley and Brinkley could do when the phone rang. His old neighbor said he wanted a complete FBI report on the assassination. Depressing the receiver, Hoover called his office, ordering a special assistant and thirty agents to Dallas."

p. 432

Mention is made that an autopsy made at the Bethesda Naval Hospital: "...the metal from Oswald's bullet was turned over to the FBI."

pp. 457-459

A discussion of the Dallas situation relative to plans for convicting Oswald. Manchester comments that the publicity relative to Oswald and the so-called evidence possessed by law enforcement made responsible lawyers wince - that their comments to the press and television would make their legal case weak. In this connection, Manchester states: "...and when the FBI informed Chief Curry that its handwriting experts had identified the calligraphy on Klein's American Rifleman coupon as Oswald's, Curry revealed the details at a televised press conference. J. Edgar Hoover was furious. The Director called Dallas and warned that there must be no further discussion of FBI evidence in public. Curry admired Hoover and proudly displayed a signed photograph of him on his office wall."

p. 472

Mention is made that Johnson was extremely aggressive in ordering things done. Manchester mentions the new President "fenced sharply with the soft-spoken but immovable Nick Katzenbach over whether the assassination should be investigated by a federal or state board of inquiry; he applied the Johnsonian prod to J. Edgar Hoover, who by now was dispatching fleets of agents to Love Field...."



p. 481

The President and Ted Sorenson confer. The President asked whether Sorenson felt any foreign government might be involved in the assassination, and Sorenson questioned, "Do you have any evidence?" "The answer was that there were no hard facts. Johnson showed him an FBI memo advising him that the rulers of an unfriendly power had been hoping for Kennedy's death. The report was too hazy for serious consideration. There were no names or facts, and the name of the FBI's informant was in code. 'Meaningless,' said Sorenson, handing it back. The President said nothing."

p. 520

Manchester says that in both Kennedy's assassination and Oswald's murder "two vivid threads are evident: warnings of disaster had come from responsible sources, and peace officers, in weighing them, had miscalculated gravely." He then goes on to make the following mention of the FBI: "Actually, the Dallas Police Department's original plan had been to move Oswald at ten o'clock Saturday evening, and J. Edgar Hoover, among others, had retired under the impression that it was being carried through. At 2:15 a. m. Sunday, Hoover's Dallas office began receiving anonymous telephone calls threatening the prisoner's life. The Dallas FBI urged a 3 a. m. transfer - in vain."

p. 528

Manchester comments that after Oswald's murder by Ruby just about everyone thought the assassination actually was a conspiracy. "Indeed, the more a man knew about conspirators, the firmer his conviction was. In the West Wing lobby a Secret Service agent watched Ruby disappear and muttered tightly, 'That was the messenger.' Independently of one another the (Secret) Service, the CIA, and J. Edgar Hoover all assumed a previous link between Ruby and Oswald."

p. 560

For the funeral at St. Matthew's Cathedral were large numbers of security men of all types"...there were squads of FBI agents and the pick of the CIA...."





pp. 574-575

The discussion here centers on the walk of the notables from the White House to St. Matthew's Cathedral. A number of warnings of possible trouble were received - from the RCMP, the FBI and the CIA. "The RCMP had 'received information' that an unidentified French Canadian with an unidentified grievance was heading south to shoot General DeGaulle. The FBI was even vaguer: 'The Director' was 'concerned' and 'advised against' the march. This was too much for Sargent Shriver. Once more the precise businessman was confronted by the gray custard of bureaucracy, and once more he recoiled, emitting sparks. 'That's just ridiculous,' he snapped. 'We're all concerned. You don't have to be the Director of the FBI to know it's going to be dangerous - even the White House doorman knows that. It's a ploy, so that if anybody gets shot the Director can say, 'I told you so.' It'd be a different story if he'd turned up hard proof that some famous gangster had taken an apartment on Connecticut Avenue, or if the best agent in the OGPU had checked in at Washington National. Then I'd have to do a double-take. But this is just a self-serving device.'"

pp. 630-631

Mrs. Kennedy is now leaving the White House and Manchester does some summarizing. He comments that the President pinned the Treasury's highest award on Rufe Youngblood, the Secret Service agent, while, at Mrs. Kennedy's insistence Secretary Dillon also decorated Clint Hill of the Secret Service. He adds that these ceremonies left an undercurrent of dissatisfaction in much of official Washington. "The central fact was that the Secret Service had failed, and there was feeling that the first reaction ought to have been one of collective shame and not of pride in exceptional men - that the medals should have followed investigation of the failure. Investigations had begun, of course, but here, too, the first steps were disquieting. The FBI assigned fifty agents to a crash study, wrote a skimpy report which dismissed thorny questions with the recurrent phrase 'There is no evidence' - and then leaked the report to a news magazine. The episode was a dismaying example of how threatened bureaucracies turning a blind eye to the national interest, rise in defense of themselves."



In general, Manchester approves of the Warren Commission report. "The Commission had met its mandate. Oswald was correctly identified as the assassin; the absence of a cabal was established." However, he has some reservations. "The treatment of related questions was less satisfactory. This was especially true of the findings on Presidential protection. Although the conduct of the Secret Service, the FBI, and the Dallas police was found to have been less than admirable, they were handled gingerly, and corrective suggestions lacked clarity and force. Their subsequent fate was disheartening. J. Edgar Hoover, furious that his bureau should be criticized at all, protested so vehemently that the public overlooked the report's harsher censure of the Secret Service (which wisely laid low); by the time the Director had finished disciplining his Dallas agents, including the unfortunate Hosty, a great many newspaper readers had forgotten which agency had really been accountable for John Kennedy's safety."

In the source section of the book, Manchester mentions that he had interviews with the Director, Mr. DeLoach and Agent Hosty. File 62-111371 reflects that he talked to Mr. Hoover and Mr. DeLoach at the Bureau. On September 24, 1964, (the date Manchester lists for interview with Hosty), he called the Dallas Office and asked to speak with Hosty, without previously identifying himself. Manchester asked several questions, but Hosty said he was not in a position to answer.

#### OBSERVATIONS:

Manchester's book is a massive compilation of facts, surmises and suppositions. It is tremendously wordy. Already, even before publication, it is a controversial book and will probably continue to be. Manchester makes snide and critical remarks about the FBI and sometime reports information which is completely at variance with the facts, such as the comment that Mr. Hoover did not send a letter of condolence to Mr. Robert Kennedy. In an exchange of letters with Manchester in February, 1967, relative to Manchester's comments about this matter, Mr. Hoover stated: "Frankly, your lack of research and irresponsible reporting in this instance are most disgusting, and I have no alternative but to believe you have set forth a deliberate falsehood specifically designed to malign my reputation." The Look



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serialization earlier this year contained most of the comments about the FBI which have been outlined above. Manchester is quick to be critical and obviously has interviewed more of the Kennedy than the Johnson people, inasmuch as the book was originally commissioned by the Kennedy family.

The book is being maintained in the Crime Research Section (in the Bureau library).

*[Handwritten mark]*

*W. J.*

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