

follow-up car. It was done quickly. At 1:09 p.m., just moments after the announcement of JFK's death, the Dallas police radio log records the following from one of its motorcycle officers - " I have the two Presidential cars en route out there (Love Field)". (43)

By the time the Dallas police realized that an inspection of the car might aid them in some understanding of the crime, it was too late. At 4:10 p.m. the Dallas radio dispatcher broadcast the following to a deputy chief at Love Field: "hold the Presidential car at the location. 508 is in route to print 'em." (vehicle 508 was the Dallas police crime unit.) Came the reply, "they have been loaded and have left on the other transport" The Hercules transport had left at 3:35 p.m. (44) The crime scene escaped investigation.

The lumbering C-130 transport flew much slower than the presidential 707, and in spite of having left much earlier than Air Force One, it arrived in Washington after the presidential party returned. The first person that Kellerman spoke to upon landing at Andrews Air Force Base was Secret Service Chief Rowley. Kellerman advised Rowley that the limousine would be arriving shortly, and told him to ensure that it went into custody in the Secret Service garage. *

The car was never properly examined by any other investigative agency, for it had been many hours in Secret Service custody before the FBI team arrived early Saturday morning, and had already been cleaned out. And there were no contemporaneous photos of it to be examined. Texas Highway Patrolman Hurshel Jacks, in his statement of November 28, 1963, said, "We were assigned by the Secret Service to prevent any pictures of any nature to be taken of the President's car on the inside." (45) All the damning forensic information that it contained, the blood and guts of Governor Connally on the right interior panel, and the bullet hole in the windshield from the fourth shot, all disappeared forever when the car was hurriedly shipped to Detroit, the interior stripped, and the car rebuilt.

The only thing that ever entered the chain of evidence from that car were two further bullet fragments, alleged to have been discovered in the front seat at about 10:00 p.m. on the Friday, after the car was safely ensconced in

*The full, and confusing, story of the windshield is reviewed in detail in the Appendix A.

the privacy of the Secret Service garage.* It is therefore no surprise that to the extent that the fragments were traceable, they were determined to be 6.5 mm ammunition, consistent with the planted murder weapon. They could not be definitively linked ballistically to that exact rifle, but it wasn't necessary; the nearly whole bullet that had been found on a stretcher in Parkland had done that, and taken together, these missiles of dubious origin were later to prove to be among the most damning of the evidence produced against the alleged assassin.

There was then, of course, the inconvenient fact of Governor Connally and his wounds. The too-active John Connally reacted quickly to the crisis, and he had turned almost completely around on the fold-down jumpseat in an attempt to assess the damage to the President, if any, from the first shot. Regrettably for him, he had blocked the line of fire, and exposed his back, the anomalous result being a wound of entry under his shoulder blade, which had originated from the front of the car. Although not planned, his shooting in the back was to later greatly assist the official reconstruction, which placed the assassin to the rear.

Unlike the wounds sustained by the president, about which there exists much medical controversy and confusion, there was never the slightest doubt or debate about those sustained by the governor of Texas. The bullet clearly entered his back, and that fact alone, more than any other single factor, has always led to the otherwise reasonable conclusion that the origin of the shot was to the rear of the limousine. This deduction, sensible and natural on its face, was entirely consistent with the location of the T.S.B.D. at the time of the shooting, and in the minds of many who would later investigate this crime, would be a most decisive factor confirming the guilt of the alleged assassin, crouched in the sniper's nest on the sixth floor of that building. Equally important, it indicated to the mind of any doubter that there had been - had need to have been - a crossfire. The Zapruder film showed that Kennedy had been hit from in front, and Connally had been hit in the back. What else could possibly explain that, but a crossfire?

*No one at the Hospital, no one who drove the car from Parkland back to Love Field in Dallas, loaded the car on the plane, curiously inspected the car during transit, unloaded the car from the plane in Washington, or drove it to the Secret Service garage, had previously noted any of the fragments. According to the plan, these fragments were not originally needed. Since the frame-up rifle was now in the hands of the Dallas police, the bullets that created the 2 additional fragments were fired from a 6.5 rifle that was obviously not the one alleged to have been Oswald's, and just as obviously, were never ballistically linked. But they were 6.5, and that had been enough.

The Spectrographic and neutron activation analysis tests done on these fragments, to compare them with the other lead discovered, resulted in their total suppression. They were classified 'Secret', a designation that survived Harold Weisberg's Freedom of Information lawsuit, and have yet to be seen.

The readers attention is drawn to the photograph taken by photographer James W. Altgens. He, like many another Dallas citizen, had turned up in Dealey Plaza, absent any official assignment, save his own curiosity. He thus escaped the crass manipulation suffered by the other professional photographers assigned to the motorcade, his photos being released immediately by the wire-service for whom he worked. They are therefore completely reliable. Already public property, they could not be tampered with. Altgens stood on Elm Street as the limousine approached him, and his most famous photo shows through the car's windshield just how exposed Governor Connally's back became as he commenced his turn to his right, and to the rear of the car. As the Zapruder film shows, Connally turned even farther; almost around backward on the jump seat, before he was shot by Greer.*

The immediate problem for Greer and Kellerman upon their arrival at the hospital, of course, was John Connally's clothing.

The conspirators alone among all the agents knew how close the source of the shot had been to the governor's back; indeed, probably not much more than thirty inches. Blasting into his back at close range, the back of his coat and shirt sustained what are commonly called "powder burns", the residue of nitrates and explosive material that would have been detectable by microscopic analysis.

But the governor's clothes were to prove utterly useless as evidence, as the FBI later reported to the Warren Commission, who in turn reported to the public that "because the shirt had been laundered, there was insufficient characteristics for the expert examiner to form a conclusive opinion on the direction or nature of the object causing the holes." FBI agent Robert A. Frazier had told the Warren Commission that "there was no characteristics on which you could base a conclusion as to what had caused it, whether or not it was a bullet and if it had been, what the direction of the projectile was."
(46)

*The filmed reactions of Nellie Connally have been completely overlooked by both sides of the debate. In any review of the literature, she is a forgotten presence. At the first shot, she raised her arms, recoiling in front of her, toward Greer. Then, she turned inward, toward the middle of the car, her back against its side rail. In the Zapruder film, Mrs. Connally faces toward the viewer, and then turns to her left, looking directly at Greer. Mrs. Connally's testimony explaining these actions is reviewed in Appendix "A", Part II. For those with detailed knowledge of the Z film, the appendix will show that Connally was not hit until frames 287/290, when he has turned almost completely around on the jumpseat.

The exact timing of the laundering of John Connally's clothes is unclear. The FBI did not get access to this evidence until April of 1964, a full five months after the assassination. The chain of possession appears as follows. Parkland Nurse Ruth R. Standridge passed the clothing to high ranking LBJ aide Clifton C. Carter. (47) Carter signed a receipt for the clothing and received the garments in two paperbags, and passed them onto Congressman Henry B. Gonzales. The next day, at 3:30 a.m., the bags were placed in the closet of Gonzales' Washington apartment. (48) According to researcher Penn Jones, Rep. Gonzales "signed for the Governor's personal effects" at the request of Cliff Carter. (49) In a letter dated Nov 1, 1974, to researcher Fred Newcomb, Gonzales stated that a nurse at Parkland "quite frantically tried to turn them over to either Cliff Carter, an LBJ aide, or I . . . Cliff simply did not want to be burdened with the sack and wanted me to take it instead. Gonzales indicated to Newcomb that he hung on to the clothing "because I had not been able to turn it over to anyone else." Accordingly, "several months later" while the congressman was at home in Texas, Carter called Gonzales' office and notified a secretary that two Secret Service men were coming over to pick up Connally's property. When they finally arrived at the FBI for examination, they had been "cleaned and pressed". (50) Thus, FBI agent Frazier had nothing useful to report, but that telling fact. *

At Parkland, the clothes had been divided into two groups, one containing Connally's tie, trousers, and socks, (none of which had sustained bullet damage) but the shirt, and the jacket went "elsewhere." Nellie Connally stated that "it was almost two months before any of the investigators showed any interest in examining John's clothing." She had soaked the shirt in cold water, she said, "to preserve it". (51)

In addition to the important fact of the laundering of the governor's clothes was the physical alteration of same. Upon examination, the FBI reported that the hole in the back of the coat was elongated horizontally. (52)

* Interestingly, the citation for this telling bit of information (as it appears in the Report), is given in support of its assertion of the rearward location of the sniper, a proposition which it clearly undermines. As earlier noted, this happens too often to be purely accidental or clumsy, especially on such a vital issue. This artifice has succeeded in attracting both ridicule, and attention. Harold Weisberg noted this curious phenomenon, and while he was greatly distressed about the possible motive, he concluded that "without doubt, the Commission's staff had its own purposes to serve by such intensive disorganization of its printed material." (Whitewash II, pg. 10)

However, Parkland's Dr. Shaw, who operated on Connally, said John's wound was elongated vertically. (53) The FBI further stated that the hole in Connally's right shirt sleeve was elongated horizontally, while his physician reported that the actual wound in his wrist was elongated vertically. "Because of excessive tearing, none of these holes were well defined." (54)

Governor Connally himself always disagreed with the final judgment on the alleged assassin's feat, knowing as he did what actually transpired. Upon regaining consciousness that weekend, from his hospital bed, he stated that he had most definitely been hit by the second shot. "I think they shot me in the back. They got the President too." (55) This he said before he had had time to fully digest the implications of the plot against the president, or the full progress of the unfolding drama of the alleged T.S.B.D. lone assassin.

At 4:00 p.m. on November 22, 1963 (approximately two hours after Oswald's capture) Texas Highway Patrolman and Texas Rangers descended on Parkland "tightly securing the second floor where the Governor was being treated." All the locks were changed on the doors to the suite of rooms being occupied by John Connally and his staff. The new keys were given to Connally's entourage. Spotlights were placed "on the roof outside of rooms 223 and 225" and special window coverings prepared "for the Governor's room and the adjoining room." (56) The day after Oswald was murdered, twenty additional highway patrolmen were brought to Parkland from Tyler, Texas. Some were placed, with rifles, on the roof of the hospital. A colonel with the Texas Department of Public Safety stated that no one could see Connally without prior clearance, "and that included the Secret Service." (57)

Connally could not have foreseen the eventual emergence of the single-bullet theory, which has him being struck almost instantaneously with the first wound to Kennedy. His bedside report was immediately broadcast to a curious and concerned world, and the governor was forever after trapped by his moment of unreflective candour. He therefore consistently maintained in every interview ever given by him that he was hit by the second shot, as he had heard the first, and had the opportunity to turn to see its effect before the second shot was fired. Fifteen years later, under oath before a congressional committee later convened to review the case, Connally was steadfast:

"I must say to you", he testified, as I said to the Warren Commission, I do not believe, nor will I ever believe, that I was hit with the first bullet. I don't believe that. I heard the shot, I heard the first shot. I reacted to the first shot and I was not hit with that bullet.

Mrs. Connally said quite simply,

I know it was the second shot that hit the governor. (58)

In describing her actions during the shooting, Mrs. Connally was to report to James Reston Jr. that:

The only thing I could think to do was to pull him out of the line of fire . . . Maybe they wouldn't hurt him anymore.*(59)

It must be stressed that strictly speaking, this is the real and accurate, if not the entire, truth. John Connally may be excused for failing to identify the assassin, as it seems that no-one had asked him that question directly. Just as significantly, one will be reminded later that the one thing Mr. Connally never said to anyone was "do they know who shot us?" Like so many others snared by the tragic trap that day, he would not tell the whole truth of what he saw, dissembling on the point when pressed. His conscience would not allow him to lie outright. His firm and unwavering testimony on this point has ever been one of principal points of focus for the sceptics and critics, which has helped to keep the story alive, and the search for the truth of the event on-going. Mr. Connally had every opportunity to quickly back away from his own first version, and declined. His powerful and pointed dispute with the official story has been seized upon by every critic, who rightly gives much weight to the evidence of one of the victims. The testimony of the man closest to the shooting destroys the official verdict. Such was Connally's contribution, and his unhappy compromise with the politics of power. Said Connally:

As my own healing began, in late November of 1963, and my thoughts cleared, I saw the assassination as a story with no hope. But there was one: the preserving of the Constitution, the orderly transfer of power. Even in the worst of times, we cannot retreat into an attic. And so the torch was passed, from Kennedy to Johnson. (60)

*This was reported in a Time magazine, November 28, 1988. After twenty-five years of the story of the lone accused, Mrs. Connally says "they"• Interviewed again in 1993, Mrs. Connally said she still did not know why she and her husband had finally been spared. Governor Connally told in his book that, "It is true that I have never found a satisfactory answer to the questions of why my life was spared".

The later history of John Connally is intriguing. He changed parties renouncing his Democratic credentials and becoming a Republican. Under that party's later president Richard Nixon, he became secretary of the treasury.

This is the department which has jurisdiction over the Secret Service. Then, Connally was felled by a banking scandal and left office in disgrace. He became somewhat impoverished, but he never changed his story about the second shot. Interestingly, that was a point of some personal importance for Governor Connally. He entitled his autobiography In History's Shadow, and records there that he was quite proud of never having talked publicly about the assassination. In a review of his book, the New York Times critic concluded that many of the men Connally worked for after the assassination "were willing to put ambition ahead of dignity, and he wasn't." *

The wounding of the governor had been both a blessing and a burden for the conspirators. It had necessitated more shooting than the plan would allow for, but the fact of the bullet entry in his back greatly strengthened the unravelling story-line, once his clothes had been disposed of. His valuable eye-witness testimony, originally delivered in an unguarded moment, is dealt with by the simple expedient of ignoring him in the official report of the event. In the tortured dialectic of what became known as the "single-bullet theory", Connally is said to have suffered a delayed reaction from a missile which had pierced his back, collapsed his right lung, blown away four inches of rib bone, completely shattered his right wrist, and lodged itself in his thigh. The single bullet alleged to have done all that damage is Commission Exhibit #399, having also already struck Kennedy first. Hence the necessary delay, since it is observable in film of the event that the two men did not react together. The Governor, goes the Report, must be mistaken.

*Immediately upon Connally's death in 1993, the cry went up for an operation to recover the bullet fragments still in his body. Critics argued that their analysis would show a different type of lead than that from the 6.5 bullet, or a different type from that of the minute fragments recovered from President Kennedy. This would at last prove at least two shooters at the car that day. Mrs. Connally refused, for she remembered that such tests had already been done. The results of the spectrographic analysis of the fragments was classified secret, and remain so to the date of this writing. What they will show is that the lead in Kennedy and Connally was the same, and that none of it came from the 6.5 bullet. Thus it had been hidden, and although Mrs. Connally understood why, it wasn't for her to say.

For Kellerman and his cohorts, there existed evidence even more certain to be damning, and which could not be so easily concealed as that of Connally's clothes. This was the dead body of the slain president, for even a cursory post-mortem would reveal the number, and the direction, of the shots. Had Greer been able to execute the man as planned, autopsy evidence of a front entry wound would never have been an issue in the subsequent investigation. It would of necessity have been consistent with the proposed single shot at the president from the T.S.B.D. sixth floor as he approached the building along Houston Street. The important issue of what the medical evidence would reveal in postmortem examination was not given any real thought in the original plan of the event. If the conspiracy had succeeded, killing the president with the single bullet on Houston Street, the conflicting, confounding, and confusing questions caused by the autopsy would never have arisen. It would have been so simple. But when Greer passed the book building, leaving the sniper's nest to the rear, both he and Kellerman were painfully aware of the front entry wounds, as was everyone, without exception, who had initially viewed the president's body at Parkland.

There had been a small tear in his throat from the missed [first] shot, which had ripped open his wind pipe, and upon which the Dallas medical team superimposed a tracheotomy incision in their valiant attempt to resuscitate the lifeless body. And there was the entry wound back of the hairline near the right temple, which had blasted out his brain on the back right side of his head, leaving a huge gaping exit hole in the rear occipital region of the head, where the bones of the skull had sprung apart.

Secret Service Agent Sam Kinney, driver of the follow-up car, said, "I saw one shot strike . . . the right side of the head. The President then fell to the left toward Mrs. Kennedy." (61) Agent Hickey, in the same vehicle, said, "I heard what appeared to be two shots and it seemed as if the right side of his head was hit." (62) Bystander William Newman told reporters " . . . as the car got directly in front of us . . . a gunshot from apparently behind us hit the President in the side of the head . . . it looked like he had just been hit with a baseball pitch . . . near the right ear. In my opinion, the ear went." (63) Marilyn Sitzman, Abraham Zapruder's secretary, told researcher Josiah Thompson the shot hit the president "above the ear and to the front . . . between the eye and the ear."

Dallas Police escort Bobby Hargis told reporters that the fatal shot hit JFK on "the right side of the head." Hargis also said "it sounded like the shots were right

next to me." (64) James Chaney on the right rear motorcycle, told radio reports that the fatal shot "struck . . . in the face." (65) And at Parkland Hospital, Presidential Press Secretary Malcolm Kilduff told assembled reporters that President Kennedy's physician, Admiral George Burkley, told him that the bullet had entered "the temple . . . the right temple." (see Fig 11, Kilduff pointing to entry).

At all costs, something had to be done, for the autopsy that was sure to follow would undermine the possibility of shots that now had to have originated from behind the limousine. And the Dallas doctors were already describing to the public the frontal wounds of entry they had seen.*

In a desperate and ghoulish extemporizing, the conspirators realized the only option was to desecrate the dead body of the president, and somehow conceal, confound, or create wounds. Such was their desperation, and so little their unobstructed opportunity, that they were only able to pierce Kennedy's back with some sharp instrument (it may have been nothing more sophisticated than a ball point pen) creating what the chief autopsist would later euphemistically describe as a wound "presumably of entry", about six inches below the collar line, slightly to the right of the spine, damaging the third thoracic vertebrae. It was not a deep hole, and it did not exit, but it was at least in the back.**

*A more detailed analysis of the medical evidence will be developed later, and is thus temporarily postponed in an attempt to maintain something of the narrative flow. Such an important and contentious issue was deserving of its own later review, and in the meantime, events progressed. (See Chapter 11, Inferno)

**The president's jacket and shirt were later to reveal a hole in approximately the same location, as they were subsequently photographed by the FBI. The photographs were thus suppressed, not a part of the public record, until their disclosure was forced by Harold Weisberg. The photographs showed that the holes were not in exactly the same position; nor were they of the same size as the entrance diameter of the hole in the flesh. They were larger. They had been made later. The HSCA measured the holes, and discovered the jacket hole was 117.75 square millimeters, and the shirt hole, 75.36 square millimeters. The cross-section of the 6.5 millimeter Carcano bullet was 33.17 square millimeters. Thus, the coat hole was 3.55 times larger than the bullet's cross-section, and the shirt hole was 2.5 times as large. Kennedy's clothing and effects had been delivered to William Greer by Parkland Nurse Margaret Hinchcliffe, and were surrendered from Secret Service custody several days later. They had been kept by Greer in his locker. (66) The body therefore sustained the wound after the clothes had been removed.

And then, in the final descent into hell, the conspirators further smashed what remained of the top of the dead man's skull, shattering already fractured bone, punching another hole through the scalp and digging brutally and savagely into the brain cavity to remove the larger visible fragments of the exploded bullet. Both Kellerman and Greer were with the President's body the entire time, from its arrival at Parkland Hospital until the completion of the autopsy in the early morning hours Saturday back in Washington, and somewhere in that time, before the commencement of the autopsy proper, they finished their dirty work.*

As will be seen, no one suspected Greer or Kellerman, and therefore time in their custody was counted "safe" time. At the Bethesda Hospital in Maryland, where the body finally arrived for autopsy, other observers were given the slip by a "decoy" ambulance (explained as a security measure because of the large, sad crowd that had gathered there). Greer drove the ambulance with the body to the rear entrance of the morgue before anyone else got there, after offloading Jackie and Robert and the others at the front. General Whele, who had attached himself to the slain president in Dallas, acting as a solitary honour guard, followed the decoy for a time. He was, by the time of arrival at Bethesda, joined by a contingent of foot soldiers, who went with him. Riding in the back of their troop transport, they all later told stories of following the decoy.

For a short time in the Bethesda morgue, Kellerman, Greer, or both, were left with the body, unsupervised.

A brief few minutes when the President's corpse was unattended was sufficient to forever confound real attempts to make sense of that most important evidence in any subsequent investigation. It happened on the spur of

*The reader is referred to the detailed study of this area of the case by David S. Lifton entitled Best Evidence, a valuable work for the meticulous and scrupulous attention to detail which its author, schooled originally in the demanding science of physics, brings to the piece. His final conclusion of a pre-meditated "body alteration plot" are perhaps a bit too fantastical, and give far too much credit to the intelligence of men who are, after all, brutal murderers, to be wholly creditable. But Lifton's effort is otherwise valuable, and original, and is relied upon later in this work. The text provides the reader some insight into the level of debate in the community of critics, a sense of the confusion that surrounds these events, and a real appreciation of the confounding morass that the medical evidence became as it tried to accommodate brutal fracturing.

of the moment, as the impact of the description of the wounds the Dallas doctors were even then releasing to the public at a hastily organized news conference, was realized. ~~and~~ There had been time for greater reflection on the problems the event of the day had created, during the approximately two and a quarter hours while Air Force One returned to Washington.

During that time, other decisions had been reached, and necessary arrangements made, to meet the shattered remains of the presidential party, to convey LBJ to the White House; to de-plane from Andrews AirForce Base, and depart for Bethesda Naval Hospital. There was clearly time for the conspirators to digest more fully the frailty of their position should the true nature of the medical evidence be revealed, and to conclude an hasty addendum to the original plan, which involved tampering with this vital evidence.

All such efforts at concealment and confusion would be unavailable had the body not departed Parkland for a more easily controlled environment, an issue which became a pressing concern when Kellerman was confronted by the determined presence of Dr. Earl Rose, the duly appointed pathologist for the city of Dallas. By law, the body was his. Of that fact, there is no doubt. Mr. Manchester tells the story:

Rose was not a man to be plagued by self-doubt, and he was unaccustomed to criticism from others. He was the Dallas County Medical Examiner, with an office in the hospital. He was, moreover, an official of strong convictions. Pedantic and brittle, he had a way of wagging his finger and adopting the stylized tone of an over-bearing schoolmaster. He seemed to invite hostility. His colleagues thought him arrogant and smart. He was certainly bright; and knew a great deal of Texas law, and he treated it as revealed religion. 'Dura lex, sed lex' - 'the law is hard, but it's the law! That was his attitude . . . To him, the situation at Parkland was clear, and clearly outrageous. A man had been killed in Dallas. Other men were trying to remove the corpse, in open defiance of Texas statutes. They were flouting rights of which Dr. Earl Ross was the appointed guardian. Strong action was required, and he meant to take it . . . Kellerman blocked the way. In his most deliberate drawl, Roy said, "My friend, this is the body of the President of the United States, and we are going to take it back to Washington."

"No, that's not the way things are!" Rose wagged his finger." When there's a homicide, we must have an autopsy."

"He is the President. He is going with us!"

Rose lashed back, "The body stays."

"My friend, my name is Roy Kellerman. I am Special Agent in Charge of the White House Detail of the Secret Service. We are taking President Kennedy back to the capital."

"You're not taking the body anywhere. There's a law here. We're going to enforce it."

Dr. Burkley argued with Rose, physician to physician. It was useless. Kellerman, who hadn't moved from the doorway, gathered his million muscles and loomed forward.

"My friend, this part of the law can be waived."

Rose, stonewalling, shook his head. "You will have to show me a lot more authority than you have now." said Kellerman." (67)

According to Dr. Crenshaw,

Kellerman took an erect stance and brought his firearm into a ready position. The other men in suits followed course by draping their coattails behind the butts of their holstered pistols. How brave of these men, wearing their Brooks Brothers Suits with icons of distinction, (Colour coded S.S. buttons) pinned to their lapels, willing to shoot an unarmed doctor to secure a corpse. . . For the second time that day, there was little doubt in my mind as to the significance of what was happening before me. "Goddamit, get your ass out of the way before you get hurt ", screamed another of the men in suits. Another snapped, "We're taking the body, now."

. . . Had Dr. Rose not stepped aside, I'm sure that those thugs would have shot him. They would have killed me and anyone else who got in their way. (68)

The situation was becoming tense, and deteriorated into a physical shoving match. Ambulance driver Aubrey Rike described how he felt, caught in the middle:

I was scared to death . . . I was scared all the time I was there . . . Dallas wanted to do an autopsy. The Government wanted the casket out.

The Government said "Take it out"; Dallas said "Bring it back." You know, we'd start pushing, and somebody would grab us, and push us back, and

pull the casket back. You'd have to see it to believe it . . . it was the most unorganized, scary type situation I have ever been in in my life. (69)

Rose was contained; Kellerman seized the stretcher, and bulled his way out of the hospital with the coffin. In Manchester's words, "Rose had an ironclad case. Assassination is murder, murder is a felony, and in felonious crimes he had a legal obligation to Dallas County . . . nevertheless, there was area for reasonable debate. His error, which was grave, was that he was not behaving reasonably." (70) Reason would not have prevailed in any event, but by its abandonment, Rose had rendered himself merely officious, and meddling. Johnson had made it known that he would not leave Dallas without Mrs. Kennedy, and she in turn had been equally determined that she would not leave without her deceased husband. People quickly realized that such a situation effectively ham-strung the government, if Rose succeeded in detaining the body. Thus even those on the outside were offended, and aided Kellerman, leaving Rose to later ridicule as an interfering blusterer. He was anything but.

All his colleagues hold the highest opinion of the county coroner, Dr. Earl Rose, who was avoided with such official diligence that his name is not once mentioned in all the (Warren Commission's) testimony . . . All the doctors agree that had he done it (the autopsy), the questions that now exist would not." (71)

And so the body, and the balance of the presidential party, departed the grey walls of Parkland Hospital's emergency area. (Since this event, legislation has made the murder of a president an exclusively federal jurisdiction, the wisdom of which may be open to serious doubt.)

While this drama unfolded, LBJ was huddled in a room in the hospital where he had been hidden away by Rufus Youngblood, his Secret Service Agent. Youngblood, and others, had quickly responded to LBJ, recognizing that as constitutional successor to the slain Kennedy, he was now to act as president. The Secret Service had been split by the event. Some clung to the Kennedy party, an understandable reaction, and some went quickly to the new president.

Almost all refused to follow Kellerman, or simply ignored him. Manchester reports that when Kellerman attempted to divert the agents by posting them to guard the hospital (a job more suited to the energies of the many Dallas policemen now milling about the building), he was ignored.

Theoretically, Roy Kellerman was still the agent in charge. Emory Roberts had already defied him, however, and when Roy issued instructions that all the agents who had been riding in Halfback (The Secret Service follow-up car) were to guard the hospital's entrances, nobody bothered to point out that Roberts had undercut him by reassigning them. In fact, few agents bothered to tell Roy anything, which was probably just as well, inasmuch as a showdown would have led to no real decision. (72)

The divisions ran deep and initially split not only the Secret Service but the various political aides of both Kennedy and LBJ, who in the very first moments of the tragedy, was himself not above suspicion. This feeling dissipated quickly, as detailed by Manchester, and as Kennedy aides later acknowledged, LBJ has since been treated unfairly by history as a result of the stigma attached to his ascendancy to the highest office in the land. But the tension was apparent, and it affected everyone's judgment as they grappled to cope with the immediate implications of the crisis.

Manchester reports:

Two factors increased his (Johnson's) muddle. Johnson wasn't the only man incapable of coping with the fact of his succession. Kennedy's grieving staff couldn't bear to face it either . . . The second factor was the absence of Gerry Behn, the head of the Secret Service White House Detail. In deciding that he would not make each Presidential trip, Behn had not only broken precedent; he had left his agents without a leader. Had he been present, the bodyguards in Minor Medicine would never have dreamed of acting without his consent. But Behn was in the East Wing of the White House, gripping a telephone receiver and awaiting news from Roy Kellerman. Kellerman was his deputy. It is conceivable that a more tenacious deputy might have imposed authority over all the Secret Service men in Dallas, though that point is moot; Youngblood had had the bit in his teeth. Of all the agents there he had the quickest tongue and one of the clearest minds. He had Johnson's confidence. He and Roberts had a plan, and neither was in the mood to defer to Kellerman.

Indeed, they didn't even consult him. Although Roy was the agent in charge in Parkland, he wasn't told that the new President was to be taken from the hospital . . . Youngblood said "We don't know the scope of this thing. We should get away from here immediately" . . . Johnson was reluctant to leave. He did not want to seem presumptuous, he said, and he

told the agents that he would not move without approval from a member of the Kennedy family . . . Youngblood continued to hammer away "We don't know what kind of conspiracy this is, or who else is marked. The only place we can be sure you are safe is in Washington." (73)

Research conducted in tranquility after the event has confirmed that immediately upon the death of a president, the duties and powers devolve upon his constitutional successor.* Theoretically there is no hiatus, no void in the power structure, and although he did not yet recognize the fact, LBJ was already fully empowered. He had taken the same oath of office when he was sworn in as vice-president as he was to repeat that afternoon in the forward cabin of Air Force One, but its repetition was not necessary. This constitutional nicety is irrelevant; what mattered was the general belief in its requirement. Thus, there appeared to be a void, and it was determined that LBJ should leave Parkland as soon as possible and return to Love Field. It was presumed that he would depart immediately for Washington, but LBJ thought he had to be sworn in again, and his leaving was delayed while a Texas judge was located to attend and administer the oath. He also had determined to await the arrival of the Kennedy party, and he would not authorize the plane to fly until Jackie arrived.

Then at three-thirty Central Time, standing between the seats, Johnson was sworn in as President. A photographer captured his raised hand, the Bible, Lady Bird and Jackie at either side. He requested that the picture be distributed as soon as the plane took off, so the world would know the succession had taken place. (74)

*The vice-president is only really empowered to exercise the presidential power in an acting capacity. He does not technically become the president, unless he be later elected to his own four year term. This was done by the Constitutional founders to stifle the motive that might exist in seeing the policies of the second in command, if they were thought different and more correct, in being elevated improperly to the first position.

The technicality of the Constitution stipulates that unless the death of the predecessor occurred more than two full years prior to the assumption, the successor only inherits "acting" powers, and does not become president. Newcomb & Adams, because they suspected Johnson, recommended that a vice-president be forever banned from standing to continue. They had concluded that this would prevent a difference in policy between the Chief Executive and his vice-president arising as a motive for the change in position. They may well have made a point worthy of further discussion, but would be challenged by the melancholy observation that any successor, whatever office he might first hold with different policies, is still only a heart beat away. Such are the limits of constitutional theory.

Kennedy had been shot at 12:30 p.m. Dallas time; he was pronounced dead at 1:00 p.m., and LBJ left Parkland at 2:26 p.m., to be sworn in aboard the plane at 3:38 p.m. Slightly more than three full hours had elapsed, during the whole of which time, no-one was clearly certain who was the Chief Executive of the world's most powerful nation.* The importance of this confusion, and the delay, can scarcely be over-emphasized in attempting to comprehend the events. The fundamental fact of Kennedy's brutal murder was unalterable, and from that act, there could be no turning back, either for the conspirators or their victims. The conspirators enjoyed the advantage of fore-knowledge of the event, and as Mr. Manchester wryly notes

By every readable signal the situation was very red. Assassinations generally precede attempts to overthrow governments, and General Taylor issued a special warning to all troops in the Washington area. At (the Department of) Interior, Bill Pozen had assumed that this was the first stage in a coup. Never within his memory had the capital been so wide open. Six cabinet members were over the Pacific, and both the President and the Vice President were in Dallas. (75)

Washington was indeed vulnerable, and this fact is pivotal. For almost three full hours, there was no one acting as Commander in Chief, and the combined military forces of the U.S. were apparently without a leader. On the status of the Military that day, Manchester records that retired General Eisenhower stated, "there is no way of know^{ing} who is giving orders." The secretary of defense was in Washington, and McNamara scurried quickly to the Pentagon and summoned the JCS by 1:00 p.m., as Kennedy was officially pronounced dead. Fifteen minutes later, the JCS alerted the global commands and the whole vast complex of the military machine was thrown into the highest state of readiness short of actual war. The sense of fear in Washington was compounded by the fact that the telephone system collapsed, and within minutes of Dr. Clark's announcement in Dallas, almost no one could call in or out of Washington. Sabotage was immediately suspected, and the jittery nerves of Washington's powerful elites became completely frayed, as a mild panic began to seize control of people's minds.

*In Washington, where only sporadic reports first arrived, it was unclear what had happened to vice president Johnson, and for a time, some thought Speaker of the House McCormack was the president. The Speaker is third in succession. Agents of the Secret Service had been dispatched to his home, but he forcefully rejected their offer of protection.

That the failure of the phone system may have been only the natural consequence of the overburdened switching system collapsing under the weight of calls being attempted, or whether there was deliberate action to destroy the vital communications link, is beside the point. Manchester cites valuable statistics on the number of calls and the limitations of the system, consulting with telephone company officials, to conclude that the collapse was innocent, although unexpected. He also notes that it had exposed a weakness of the government in crisis that had hitherto been unknown. It was the fact of the collapse, regardless of its cause, that heightened people's perception of the event. Kennedy had made many enemies; the level of hate and animosity had been high, and dark rumours of a dastardly plan had circulated prior to his trip to Dallas. With the fact of his death now confirmed, people jumped to their own conclusions as to what might follow. Fear was endemic in many quarters of official Washington.

And there was real cause for alarm. The JCS had scrambled the forces to Def-Con 2, one step shy of nuclear war. In response, the vast arsenal of the Soviet Union was mobilized to full alert. America's finger was on the trigger; no one could say with certainty who was in charge, or who had authority to issue orders, and whether they would be obeyed. This is not fanciful. The entire two and one half years of Kennedy's relationship with the military had clearly demonstrated the proclivity of some branches of it, of some of its leaders, to act without authorization, to conceal vital information, and even to disobey or disregard his orders.

This, in the teeth of a forceful president. What, one may wonder, would prevail during the immediate hours after his death when no one appeared to assume command? The stakes were very high. Again Manchester reports:

The anxieties of General Maxwell Taylor were more immediate . . . the Chairman of the JCS had inwardly seethed over the satchel in Dallas. It was there, and it would be safe; he could count on the Signal Corps to put the bagman somewhere near the new Commander in Chief. That wasn't the problem. The difficulty was that Johnson had no idea of what was in the bag. He knew that it existed, but he hadn't been briefed about the contents, and if the thunderbolt of all-out war struck that afternoon, the country's retaliatory arsenal could be spiked until he had been led through Taz Shepard's primer for the first time.*

* It does seem a little incredible that the second in command was never fully briefed, but such had been the policy of American government, at least to that point. When Roosevelt died in office, vice-president Truman had to be told for the first time of the Manhattan Project, the secret development of the nuclear bomb.

For the second time the nuclear powers were eyeball to eyeball, while the accused assassin was reported as a communist.

The General's fears appear to have been justified . . . Johnson's ignorance of Ira Gearhart's football were real enough, and so were Gearhart's difficulties with the agents of the Vice Presidential detail at Parkland. (76)

LBJ's agents were not fully cognizant that Gearhart was the man whose job it was to attach himself always to the president, himself attached to a satchel (the 'football') that contained the presidential codes required to authorize arming the American nuclear system. When Gearhart had first approached, he was held at bay, LBJ's guards not recognizing him, or the importance of the contents of the bag. There was no way for General Taylor, or for anyone else, to get through to LBJ in those first crucial moments. Communications from Parkland were spotty, at best, and the Washington phone system went down at about 1:00 p.m. LBJ could not himself get through to Washington until he returned to Love Field and boarded AFI, which he did not do until 1:33 p.m. Dallas time, and then he was still over two hours flying time from Washington. He did not yet believe himself president, not having taken the oath, and really didn't begin to assert himself, or the authority of his office, until that had taken place. There was little that could be done, or was done, by either side, except to wait tensely and warily for the return to Washington of the shattered presidential party.

As soon as LBJ had taken the oath, the aircraft got under way. The tension on the plane was great, as the two camps of Kennedy loyalists and LBJ partisans were not yet reconciled to one another. With the exception of Mrs. Kennedy, and possibly Clint Hill, they were not yet certain of what had transpired. In fact, according to Manchester, they probably knew less of the unfolding melodrama than many American citizens, who had observed the rush of events on their televisions sets. LBJ himself had recourse to the TV in the stateroom of AirForce One, in an effort to gain more information from the news reports. In the eye of the storm, it is said, there is a certain stillness, and those at the centre cannot see the swirling vortex surrounding them. The isolation of the new Chief Executive, and the legitimate power that he represented, is significant. That he too was reliant upon the television news system is even more telling, for he instantly became seized of the unfolding story of the young accused assassin, and had as quickly appreciated the implications of Lee Oswald's alleged communist credentials and Kremlin affiliation.

Johnson's apparent initial acceptance of the contrived story left him tainted by some suspicion of involvement, until his true position became more clear, when he may have been told the truth. He was thus caught reacting to the melodramatic unfolding of the frame-up, not yet knowing of its falsity.

Mrs. Kennedy knew, and she sat quietly in the back of the aircraft, beside her husband's coffin, talking only occasionally with others on the plane. People were too uncomfortable to talk much: "nearly everyone in the cabin felt the smoldering animosity." Presidential aide Jack Valenti afterward described those two hours as "absolute chaos"; his colleague Chuck Roberts as "soreness." Sitting in the rear compartment of Air Force One with Jackie and the casket, Ken O'Donnell spat out, "They did it. I always knew they'd do it. You couldn't expect anything else from them. They finally made it." (77)

After the tumultuous events in Dallas, Jackie Kennedy had time to ponder her position, and she decided upon a course of action nothing short of heroic in the quiet determination with which she revealed to the world something of what had really transpired. She had lost all that really mattered to her; the politics of it had never been her greatest concern.

After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;
Treason has done his worst; nor steel nor
poison, Malice domestic, foreign levy,
nothing can touch him further.*

She knew the source of the hatred and the arrogance that had taken her husband's life, and she would defy them in her own strong-willed way. She understood that demanding the arrest of Greer and Kellerman would accomplish nothing; they were really rather meaningless to her. She knew them merely instruments. They all had guns.

> (P) She did not know how deep it ran among the others, and trusted only Hill. Mrs. Kennedy exerted a superhuman self-control, regained her intelligence, and quickly realized that without the authors, the instruments of the crime were worthless. They all had guns, and she was powerless.

Nothing obvious could be declared, for the safety of her family was her principal concern. They were in the hands of the Secret Service in Washington and there was no telling who among them had been turned as well.**

* Macbeth in Shakespeare's Macbeth. Here, art anticipated life, as Mrs. Kennedy was later to write, "But now he will never know more - not age, not stagnation, nor despair, nor crippling illness, nor loss of any more people he loved. His high noon kept all the freshness of the morning - and he died then, never knowing disillusionment." (78)

**She was not alone in her concern for the children. The celerious Hill had seized his first opportunity of communication with Washington to send instruction that the children be collected, and delivered to the home of Mrs. Auchincloss, Jackie's mother. Surprised upon her return to the White House Friday evening that her children were not there, Clint Hill took responsibility and said to another agent, "I'll explain later."

In such circumstances what foolish heroics does one wish of this trapped and shattered woman? Mrs. Kennedy spoke in ways more eloquent than mere words alone.

The day had gone forever when the polls dismissed the President's wife as 'Jackie the Socialite.' And she herself was a new Jackie, transformed by her vow that the full impact of the loss should be indelibly etched upon the national conscience . . . The new Jackie contrasted so sharply with the First Lady they had known that even the inner circle of Kennedy intimates were slow to grasp the extent of the volte-face. For as long as they could remember, she had been quiet and retiring; she had dodged the limelight, and when she did appear in public she was the apotheosis of the well groomed alumna of Miss Chapins, Miss Ponters, and Vassar. Stonghen had read O'Donnell's thoughts correctly; Ken was furious about the release of the oath pictures, fearful that they would show the stains on her. The feeling that something must be done about her appearance had become universal. In the stateroom the Johnsons and Rufe Youngblood were concerned about it, but so were the standees in the rear of the cabins. "Why not change?" Godfrey asked her. She shook her head vigorously. Kilduff saw the rust-red blood caked under the bracelet on her left wrist and recoiled. Mary's first thought on arriving from the front of the plane, was to fetch a warm washcloth and soap. Speaking in hushed tones, she consulted Godfrey, Clifton and Clint Hill about it until O'Donnell came over and said, "Don't do anything, Let her stay the way she is." Ken now grasped her purpose. Finally she broke her silence and spelled it out to Dr. Burkley. Kneeling, the physician indicated her ghastly skirt with a trembling hand. "Another dress?" he suggested diffidently "No", she whispered fiercely. "Let them see what they have done." (79)

As the plane approached Washington, Godfrey McHugh noticed that Jackie still had particles of the Presidents brain on her hat and suit. "It wasn't just the dried splotches of blood," he remarked. "That wasn't so bad. It was the gray brain matter. I pointed it out to her. She gave me the hat and I cleaned it off, fixed it up and handed it back. But she wouldn't let me touch the suit. "Let them see what they've done," she said. "I want them to see." (80)

Lyndon Johnson's wife approached Mrs. Kennedy as well, and reported that

She said, "Oh, what if I had not been there. I am so glad I was there."

I looked at her. Mrs. Kennedy's dress was stained with blood. Her right glove was caked - that immaculate woman - it was caked with blood, her husband's blood.

And then, with something - if, with a person that gentle, that dignified, you can say had an element of fierceness - she said "I want them to see what they have done to Jack." (81)

Mrs. Kennedy had hoped to forever impact the consciousness of the nation with the powerful image of those blood-soaked garments. In spite of that most singular and peculiar display, the nation was to disappoint her, for it has forgotten those horrid clothes. Guns were tested, films analyzed, medical reports hotly debated, competing stories asserted and probing questions asked; but where is the explanation for this women's ferocious insistence upon displaying those shocking stained clothes? Her message appears lost. She had wanted them to "see what they have done."

Mrs. Kennedy was to wear the blood-caked suit for the rest of the day, and did not remove it until finally succumbing to the need to rest at 4:30 a.m. on Saturday morning. The blood had dried on her body, and she would not even wash it off. She had had ample opportunity, and had been urged, to change her clothes while on the airplane. The stateroom was adequately provisioned. How can that proudly defiant display be reconciled with the backdrop against which it appears - an unknown stranger, with no known motive, as a killer? Mrs. Kennedy had not yet even heard the name of Oswald, and there could be no Grassy Knoll assassin in the airplane to see her in those clothes.

Mrs. Kennedy was not bizarre, and traumatic shock cannot be the answer. Mr. Manchester possesses ten hours of taped interview with this valiant woman, and he said that from the moment she released her grip on her dead husband's body, "her recovery was instantaneous, and complete."

Her remarkable courage resolved the widow to further action. Before the plane had arrived at Andrews Air Force Base, she had sent Clint Hill to approach Roy Kellerman, and he said, "she wants to see you." Back in the tail compartment, Dave Powers told Roy, "Mrs. Kennedy wants you agents who were with the President to carry him off, and she wants Greer to drive." (82) Newfilm of the arrival at Andrews Air Force Base documents the minor scuffle at the side of the plane, as Greer attempted to avoid this unpleasant task. Quickly corralled, the driver of the

navy ambulance that had backed into position to receive the off-loaded coffin was unceremoniously hauled out of the front seat, as Greer took his place. One may be accused of belabouring a point at this juncture, if the author asks: whence this behaviour? That the shattering image of this woman and her clothes had lost the public's imagination may be offered as justification for again asserting that this conduct is insensible, save that she is in full command of her faculties. Would such a woman, in what should have been the state of confusion surrounding her husband's death by persons unknown, have even cared who piloted the machine? Mrs. Kennedy was possessed of a purpose - "she wants Greer to drive."

Robert Kennedy had been at Andrews Air Force Base to meet the plane, and the moment it had come to rest he had scrambled up the front ramp, and ran through the body of the airplane until he found Jackie. The two of them are seen in films disembarking the plane, as together they approached the ambulance.

Clint Hill assumed that she would sit on the ambulances front seat and went that way." She balked." No, I want to go in the back," she said, and pivoted that way. The Attorney General entered the back seat opposite his sister-in-law. Bob Kennedy slid open the plastic partition separating the rear of the ambulance from the front and asked, "Roy, did you hear they'd apprehended a fellow in Dallas?"

Roy hadn't. For two hours, Lee Oswald had been news in the rest of the nation, but of 26000's passengers only those who had been watching the stateroom television knew of it.

"That's good," Kellerman said

"It was one man."

"At the hospital I'll come up and talk to you."

"You do that," said Bob, and closed the partition.

And so it appears Mrs. Kennedy told her brother-in-law everything that had happened in the car that day in Dallas, and she made Kellerman and Greer, sitting uncomfortably in their positions, hear her tell it.

Leaning gently on the coffin, Mrs. Kennedy whispered "Oh Bobby - I just can't believe Jack has gone."

Her eyes fixed on a gray curtain over his shoulder, she described the motorcade, the murder in the sunlight, and the aftermath. For twenty minutes he

listened in silence. Afterward he said, "It was so obvious that she wanted to tell me about it that whether or not I wanted to hear it really wasn't a factor . . . I didn't think about whether I wanted to hear it or not. So she went through all that."
(83)

At the risk of pedantic insistence, the question arises; all what? Mrs. Kennedy knows nothing, if the official verdict be credited. She had sat in the back of the plane, did not view the stateroom television, and had never heard the name of the accused assassin. Rather than having "described the motorcade, the murder in the sunlight, and the aftermath", a person so situated might reasonably be expected to inquire if anyone had, as yet, any information about who had killed her husband. This is a question which Mrs. Kennedy never asked.*

Upon Mrs. Kennedy's arrival at Bethesda Naval Hospital, she and members of her party occupied a suite on the 17th floor, waiting completion of the autopsy. The secretary of defence, Robert McNamara, arrived.

To Ben Bradlee the Secretary's very presence in the suite was electrifying: After Bobby he was the second towering person there. There was no subterfuge in that man, no special smile; just naked strength. He was a man without quile, and it was that kind of occasion.

McNamara walked through the suite and reached a decision: "She was in that suit with the bloody shirt and blood all over her stockings, and it was fantastic, (emphasis added) but she just wanted someone to talk to. I felt I had to be calm for her and listen to her. We were in the kitchen, Jackie sitting on the stool and me on the floor. It went on for hours. I was concentrating entirely upon her, because she needed me and I felt, the hell with the others; let them take care of themselves."

She talked about the murder. Family friend Charles Bartlett also recalls - "Jackie was poised, unreal. She was talking about the murder - I gather she had been talking about it for sometime." (84)

Until she had returned to the relative safety of Washington, there was nothing that Mrs. Kennedy could have done, surrounded as she was by hostile men, all armed with guns. Exercising tremendous strength of will, the woman

*The key to the mystery, it has been observed before, may sometime lie in why the dog did not bark. Sherlock Holmes, Silver Blaze.

caught in the middle of the trap resolved to remain quiet, to watch and study the actions of all those around her, until she could safely report what she had seen. She definitely refused to remove her blood-stained clothes, and as soon as she was alone with Bobby, she told him, then McNamara, exactly what had transpired in the car.* Now, there was no misunderstanding of the positions of either the conspirators, or their victims, for each knew that the other was aware of the real nature of the event.

There was a stand-off between the camps, for as Eisenhower had noted, "There is no way of knowing who is giving orders." But the conspiracy appeared with advantage, for the intellectual authors of the crime were still in the shadows. This is important, for without those who engineered the event (and they were still at large) could the real truth be given to the public? While the very mechanics of the killing in the car made it readily apparent as an act of treason from within the highest reaches of the government, it was impossible to immediately identify the exact person, or persons, truly responsible. Indeed, even had that been known, the victims were acutely aware of the great prize being played for. One must pause, and consider for a moment, the devastating impact of being witness to the brutal slaying in the car. It had been truly terrifying, and by its audacity were things quickly understood.

It is only the perception of vast power that protects the perpetrator from the vengeance and wrath that would be sure to follow the purposeful death of the President. There can only be one source of power so vast or impressive that its leaders could insulate themselves behind it, and remain unaccountable.

How, in the circumstances that confronted the Kennedy loyalists, could anyone be certain that orders, if given, would be followed? As we shall see [in Chapter 12] when some such orders were given, Manchester reports that they were "not obeyed . . . The military district of Washington was seized by a strange inertia." A true crisis in government loomed immediately, for it was at least certain that the victims could not risk failure in any attempt to apprehend. All democratic constitutions face the unanswerable question; who does one send to arrest the army? If a move was to be made to strike back at the conspirators, the survivors had to succeed, for having

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*This is the author's considered conclusion and either the frailty or the strength of the piece. Unless some explanation of Mrs. Kennedy's behaviour be given - for it is thought inexplicable against the backdrop of either the lone accused or the cross-fire - denial alone would not suffice.

been forced to the indecent expedient of political murder, the conspirators were past the point of no return. For them, there would be no hope of redemption. The act of murder was final, and by its brutality, the conspirators had been placed beyond the reach of any proper civil process. If challenged, what more could they lose? They could fight back, and the prospect of armed conflict between the camps, of the nation being rent asunder by a true revolution in arms, was a real and haunting spectre from the moment of Kennedy's death that afternoon.

The nightmare of all democrats is the ^{vision}~~spectre~~ of a madman at the helm. While critics have ever after alleged conspiracy, one must deal with the effect of the fear that is the natural consequence of the truth of their assertion. Some paralysis was inevitable and should be more easily understood. Besides being a killing, this was also about a government in crisis. After all, it had been a trap.

That assumes that the identity of the leadership of the cabal was known, which may well not have been the case. That would take more time than fate allowed, for the drama had unfolded with great speed. Already, the communist credentials of the accused assassin were public knowledge.

The possibility of Soviet enemy complicity had been seriously discussed. Lyndon Johnson had at first even expressed such a thought. As the Soviets themselves ~~had~~ mobilized troops to high alert, escalation of military activity because of the assassination could be easily justified.* It must always be recalled that in the midst of the crisis, the American military had advanced to Def-Con 2, and the silos were opened. The successor Johnson was, as yet, ignorant of the missile codes. The posture of the two nuclear arsenals must be given much sober contemplation, for the instinct to a forceful response or full disclosure is always stronger after the fact, when the danger has been removed. The enemies were once again "eyeball to eyeball." *America did not blink - her leaders instead bowed their heads, with their*

As the new president first huddled in a Dallas ^{eyes open.} hospital, and then delayed his departure from Love Field, there was no way of gauging the public's possible response to news that the assassin was a communist defector, controlled by Moscow, later to be found ready to flee back to his Soviet masters via the Russian consulate in Mexico. Thus were the loyalists truly snared, for the world already had the killer.

*There had before been such an incident at Sarajevo, when the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand had set into motion the irreversible events that lead to World War I. One must pause to consider how the equation had changed when setting the ball in motion risked nuclear war. It was no accident that the accused appeared a communist, a defector to Russia, recently returned from Moscow. *Could the passion of America withstood further manipulation of this evil truth about the assassin?*

Fate, it has been observed, is more unavoidable than unexpected. Since 1:50 p.m. Dallas time, Lee Harvey Oswald had been in police custody, and the rest of the world believed a disaffected communist loner had felled the leader of the USA.

DIVERTIMENTO IN D MINOR

The frailty of human beings is that they are subject to fear. This advances the chance of success for a killer. The next greatest asset of this conspiracy had been the unwitting complicity of the vast American media establishment. Almost as the echo of the final shot reverberated in Dealey Plaza, the world was alerted to the event, and participated in the swirling vortex of confusion and alarm that had engulfed those actually on the scene.

By 1:00 p.m. Dallas time, according to a University of Chicago study conducted the following winter, 68% of all adults in the United States - over 75 million people - knew of the shooting. . . . The swiftness of the blow intensified the national trauma. There is no way to cushion the shock of an assassination, but the knowledge that fantastic events were in progress that very moment, compelled with the maddening uncertainty, had created a havoc which had swept up tens of millions of Americans. The immediacy of a running account, however piecemeal, outstrips any report of an accomplished fact. . . . America's multi-million dollar communications empire had been reduced to a crude, truncated megaphone with two-thirds of the nation at the listening end and, at the shrunken mouth, two wire correspondents clutching commandeered hospital telephones. (1)

From such a source did initial news of the tragedy spread itself across the nation, and from the moment that the death of the president was confirmed at a news conference in the hospital at 1:00 p.m. that day, the stunned republic demanded to know the identity of the assassin. Next to the sorrow that spread across the country, this question was uppermost in the minds of all those waiting for news; it was the almost universal, and in the circumstances, quite natural, reaction. The notable and striking exception to this was the slain president's widow. It is a most singular fact that in all the vast literature that exists regarding this event - the many volumes of eye-witness accounts, testimony, recollections, press reports, newsreels, television tapes, interviews, or research - there is never once reported a single solitary instance of Jackie Kennedy ever asking that question which was universal: who was the assassin?

She knew from the instant, and not once does she query a friend, an agent, a police officer, and say, "What happened?" or, "Do they know who shot my husband?" There is no evidence of confusion, a tearful breakdown or a

fact

collapse of the emotional system, which a strain such as death by persons unknown would surely unleash. Quite the contrary: Mrs. Kennedy had regained herself almost fully at the hospital, and for the rest of that weekend, conducted herself with chilling clarity and genuine courage.* The glaring absence of any such confusion by the First Lady is an important fact. To students of the human condition, it has at least as much weight as any forensic point of evidence, and in this case, perhaps more. The physical circumstances surrounding this crime had been shamelessly manipulated, and the evidence of bullets or photos thus hopelessly confused. The real behaviour of people is otherwise, and no plan can account for their instinctive and true reactions.

Mrs. Kennedy bolted the car. In the only recorded response to the natural query about her action, she said, (addressing Dave Powers) "Dave, what do you think I was trying to do?" (2) She refused to change her clothes. She made Greer drive again, with Kellerman beside him in the front of the ambulance on the way to Bethesda from Andrews Air Force Base. Having seen what occurred, she had no need to ask what had happened. She and the Connallys were alone among those not curious about who had shot the president. While one may tamper with other evidence, one may not so easily change the character of people. Their silence on the question speaks volumes.

Indeed, Mrs. Kennedy only became aware of the story of Lee Oswald for the first time late Friday evening in Washington, and the information was volunteered to her by her brother-in-law, Robert Kennedy.

Beckoning Jackie aside, Bob told her, "They think they've found the man who did it. He says he's a Communist."

She stared. "On my God", she thought, "but that's absurd". Later she would think about hatred and the highly charged atmosphere of Dallas; at the moment, however, she just felt sickened. It was like existentialism, entirely purposeless, and she thought "It even robs his death of any meaning." She returned to her mother. "He didn't even have the satisfaction of being killed for civil rights," she said "It's - it had to be some silly little communist." (3)

The little communist had been known to the rest of the world since approximately 1:50 p.m. earlier that day, when he had been arrested in a theatre in Dallas.

The film was 'War is Hell', a bad B-movie. Oswald's own incredible tale is authentic, and America knows it, for the national audience was there. Because

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* So much so, in fact, that Mrs Kennedy was the object of guarded criticism in the world press, where some opinions were reported that she seemed not to care.

television squeezed a hundred million people under the canopy of that theatre marquee as he was being led out and then taken to Captain Fritz's Room 317 while newscasters fed the country scraps of data about his past, that authenticity was established during his first hours in custody. The nation knew as much as the interrogation team. (4)

One may pause and ask why, with the announced death of the president less than an hour previously, and the rest of his party still struggling with their grief at Parkland, the news cameras were present at the scene of an incident where the alleged crime was, at the least, failure to purchase a movie ticket, or at most, a possible suspicion of involvement in the slaying of a police officer. Such are the alternatively suggested reasons for the convergence of the police cars, film crews in tow, on that fateful theatre. The absurdity is obvious, but it doesn't really matter. It all happened too fast for the players to gain the appreciation of the event that reflection now provides; the media had been manipulated, and what counted, in Manchester's phrase, was that Oswald's "authenticity was established during his first hours in custody." This may well be the key to the puzzle. If there had been no credible alternative to the truth of the event, a forceful and quick counter-measure may well have been sensible. Perhaps even successful.

But there was Oswald, established authentic in the mind of the nation, and therefore very difficult to remove from the real story, especially when those who had laboured to construct his guilt were probably unknown. It was inevitable that the news system would report Oswald's obvious guilt, and the republic became seized of it as truth. Oswald's infuriating presence turned the tide, and the young man's manipulation was to prove successful. The Patsy had served his purpose, and taken the fall. In pursuit of the truth, and fed a pack of lies, the media reported on what they heard, what they saw, and what they had been told. It all happened very quickly.*

*The leadership of the media establishment has been slow to respond to criticism of their role. With some justification, they are indignant at the suggestion that they were used, for that is not their fault. Fairness allows forgiveness of their initial acceptance of the Oswald story - they were duped, not duplicitous. It is their duty, on the spot, to report events. But one should be less quick to excuse mainstream media for its later refusal to assume a meaningful critical posture. That role has been relegated to the fringe, and with rare exception, no major media organization has pursued real investigative journalism. Among the multitude of lesser known journals that complete the "free press" in the USA, this subject was a constant topic. Mainstream media had been equivocal, concluding upon the generic observation that "with all the questions that remain about Dallas, we may never know the truth." How such a posture satisfies any discerning intellect was never made clear.

The American military had well learned the lessons taught them by examination of German records after the defeat of the Nazi regime. The sick henchmen driven by Hitler had greatly abused the news system, converting it from a source of public information into a propaganda machine. Combining their manipulative skills with their expertise in trouble making, the Nazis had succeeded in convincing the German public of the reality of nationalist sentiment in the Czechoslovak Sudetenland, and of armed conflict on the borders of Poland, as justification for an annexation, and then war. History already knows that these alleged provocations were merely fraud, reported as truth. Scholars of the media, and artists, have struggled to make the nation aware of the dangers of 'double-speak', 'sound bites', and 'journalistic pools'; but the niceties of the analysis are too subtle. People respond to the immediacy of the reported event, and the drums can beat quite loudly in the global village. As Herr Goebbels had concluded, "The great mass of people will more easily fall victim to the big lie than the small one."

The waiting world, eager for information, was allowed to piece the story together over the course of the weekend, as pages from the biography of the 24-year-old were released for consumption. The alleged assassin is a self-professed Marxist; he had defected to the dreaded and feared Soviet Union; he had married, horror of horrors, a Russian woman; he was a Castro sympathizer, a member of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee; a loner; a nut. * Not

* In fact, the military thought themselves too good at manipulating the media, for they even went international with the story, and blundered somewhat. Our earlier reporter, Col. Prouty, because of his sensitive position as liaison between the military and the CIA had been ordered to Antarctica during the crucial weeks leading up to the killing. He was on his way home when the shooting occurred, and as he awaited a connecting flight from Christ Church, New Zealand, he read newspaper reports of the death of the president, which he later analyzed, and described, as follows:

" . . . almost one quarter of that front page in Christ Church was taken up with detailed new items about Lee Harvey Oswald. An excellent photo of Oswald in a business suit and tie was run on page 3. This odd photograph appeared in no other files.

At the time this edition of the [Christ Church] Star went to press, the police of Dallas had just taken a young man into custody and had charged him with the death of a Dallas policeman named J.D. Tippit. They had not accused Oswald of the murder of the President and did not charge him with that crime until early the next morning. Yet a long article put on the wires by the British United Press and America's Associated Press had been assembled out of nowhere, even before Oswald had been charged with the crime. It was propaganda. Where did those wire services get it? . . .

By what process could the wire services have acquired, collated, evaluated, written, and then transmitted all that material about an unknown young man named Lee Harvey Oswald within the first moments following that tragic and "unexpected" event-even before the police had charged him?" (5)