

Two
books
explore
Kennedy
murder
probes

Accessories After The Fact, by Sylvia Meagher. Random House, \$5.95.

The Assassinations: Dallas And Beyond, edited by Peter Dale Scott, Paul Hoch, Russell Stetler. Random House, \$15 hardbound.

Reviewed by Jonathan Marshall

More than 12 years after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, millions of Americans — including responsible journalists, public officials, medical experts and former intelligence agents — still believe the killing to have been the work of an organized conspiracy.

Judging by the outpouring of articles, books, public lectures, television programs and radio talk shows on the assassination, it would appear that the public's demand for a new, impartial investigation has never been greater.

The public's dissatisfaction with the Warren Report stems both from the obvious inadequacy of its handling of evidence, and from a new and profound distrust of government in the wake of Watergate. It no longer seems so implausible that the FBI or CIA would cover up evidence tending to reflect badly on their operations. In the light of CIA-Mafia assassination plots against Castro, it no longer seems so improbable that a "rogue" assassination unit turned on Kennedy following the Bay of Pigs disaster.

The spate of new books and articles leaves many Americans bewildered as to where to find reliable information on the assassination. Many fine monographs are available, but a few stand out.

The best place to begin is with Sylvia Meagher's masterpiece, **Accessories After The Fact**. Meagher subjects the Warren Report to withering scrutiny, critically comparing its conclusions and assertions against the factual record. The best of the "first generation" critics, she is careful never to speculate excessively regarding "who did it" or about the motives of the officials who covered up or bungled the investigation. The reader, however, will leave the book appalled by the FBI, the Warren commission and the Dallas police.

Meagher systematically reconstructs a plausible alibi for Oswald, and throws doubt on every aspect of the Commission's case — that Oswald bought a Manlicher Carcano, that he carried it into the Texas School Book Depository building, that he ever fired it, that he killed Officer Tippit, and so forth. As one who began her book convinced that Oswald was at least one of several assassins, if not the only one, I finished with my assumptions shaken.

Such findings do no more than discredit the Warren Report. Many recent writers, impatient to find the killers after all these years, have advanced hypotheses as to the nature of the conspiracy.

Theme expanded

Robert Sam Anson, in **They've Killed the President** points to CIA-Mafia involvement. (His is the best overall book on the assassination.) As Anson notes, the Kennedy administration's crackdown on organized crime and the Mafia-ridden

Teamsters Union gave the Mafia every reason to kill its enemy and put Lyndon Johnson into office. (Johnson, while still President, was accused in a national magazine of having taken payoffs from organized crime while a senator.)

The theory seems especially plausible in light of the intelligence or crime background of so many Kennedy assassination figures. Take Oswald — stationed while in the Marines at one of the world's largest CIA bases (Atsugi, Japan), he obtained a hardship discharge in record time, traveled to the U.S.S.R. despite an inadequate bank account, "defected," returned to the U.S. two years later, received a new passport and a transport allowance without question and was met at the airport not by a suspicious FBI agent but by the secretary general of the American Friends of the Anti-Bolshevik Nations — hardly the sort of man expected to associate with a "Marxist."

Later, Oswald set up a one-man pro-Castro committee in New Orleans, operating out of an office used by CIA-sponsored right wing anti-Castro Cubans. These and other aspects of his career smack more of U.S. intelligence than of the "one lone nut" syndrome. Oswald's pro-communist cover, however, proved convenient for those who set him up.

Jack Ruby's connections were with organized crime. Widely portrayed as an insignificant, patriotic bar owner who killed Oswald to spare Jackie Kennedy the pain of testifying in a trial, Ruby was actually a major Dallas organized crime figure who

first reached heights in the mob during his days as a Chicago labor boss.

Narcotics syndicate

FBI reports from the 1950s list Ruby as a kingpin of a nationwide narcotics syndicate. (He later became an occasional FBI informer.) And he was on intimate terms with gamblers from Las Vegas to Cuba — the same ones who saw Castro expropriate their billion dollar concessions. Did Ruby shoot Oswald on higher orders, to prevent Oswald from proving his innocence, with the expectation of receiving parole (and a big bank account) in a few years?

This is speculation, and it may be that the assassins have so well covered their traces that a new investigation would never uncover them.

But there is a mistake in assuming that the only purpose of an investigation would be to find the culprits. Actually, it might prove even more valuable as an education in the extraordinary dangers inherent in the existence of "large and sometimes overlapping networks of intelligence agencies and organized crime where secrecy is a way of life.

"In retrospect, the Dallas cover-up can be seen to involve many of these elements. The mere hint of an informant relationship between Oswald and the FBI raised 'national security' problems — not the proposition that the FBI had plotted the assassination, but the more general embarrassment of any links between the agency and the assumed demented leftist.

"Jack Ruby's friends in the Dallas police department and the Chicago

underworld posed similar embarrassments — promoting evasive testimony from the FBI and others who had secrets to keep which were unrelated to the assassination . . . (such as the) CIA assassination plots directed against Castro — at least one of which was even more embarrassing because it involved the proposed use of Mafia hit men."

Covert networks

This long quote appears in **The Assassinations: Dallas and Beyond**, edited by Peter Hock, Russ Stetler and Peter Dale Scott. Professor Scott is the man most responsible for showing that the incestuous and secretive nature of covert networks protected by "national security" justifications, breeds crime, conspiracy and coverups.

The Assassinations makes valuable reading alongside any standard "text," because it pulls together articles from such obscure sources as *Texas Observer* and *Forensic Science*. Particularly valuable are Scott's famous articles, "From Dallas to Watergate," examining the parallels and direct links between America's two greatest modern scandals, and Sylvia Meagher's demonstration that David Belin, attorney for both the Warren and Rockefeller CIA commissions, may have suborned perjury.

The Assassinations also contains a few suggestive articles questioning the official findings of the Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy killings.

Stanford Daily

5-7-76