

THE BOOK REPORT

Assassination and the Journalists

BY ROBERT KIRSCH
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Paperchase: Accessories After the Fact: The Warren Commission, the Authorities, and the Report by Sylvia Meagher, preface by Richard S. Schweiker, introduction by Peter Dale Scott (Vintage: \$5.95)

The Assassination: Dallas and Beyond—A Guide to Cover-ups and Investigations, edited by Peter Dale Scott, Paul L. Hoch and Russell Stetler (Vintage: \$5.95 paperback; \$15 hardcover)

Government by Gunplay: Assassination Conspiracy Theories From Dallas to Today, edited by Sid Blumenthal and Harvey Yazijian, introduction by Philip Agee (Signet: \$1.50)

Among the first generation of Warren Commission critics, Sylvia Meagher won the highest respect: She was careful, deliberate, analytical. Spinning theories was not her approach. Her values did not endear her to authorities or most reviewers. She was called a demonologist and a bore. She had written two books: The first, in 1965, was "Subject Index to the Warren Report," the first serious effort to bring some scholarly order to the 26 volumes; the second, "Accessories After the Fact," was published in 1967, either ignored by the press or derided.

"Accessories" went out of print and became a rare book as so many researchers found it indispensable. The price for a secondhand volume went to \$50. Now it is available in this paperback edition. Many more

readers will be able to judge for themselves the lucidity and logic of the writing.

Perhaps most important, there have been more validations of Miss Meagher's points than is generally known. Sen. Schweiker says her book was "instrumental in finally causing a committee of Congress—with full subpoena power, access to classified documents, and a working knowledge of the nuances of the FBI and CIA—to take a second official look at what happened in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963."

Just one of a number of examples of verification: Oswald's relationship with the FBI, she wrote in 1967, "remains to be uncovered and the tactics used to conceal it merely increase suspicion of the nature of that relationship." She has support for the hypothesis that Oswald had left a note at the FBI office in Dallas as he claimed. The FBI denied it and the Warren Commission ignored it. Nine years after the original publication of the book, FBI Director Clarence Kelly confirmed that Oswald had left a note at the office.



John F. Kennedy

and the efforts to uncover and criticize the official versions in the killings of President Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Sen. Robert Kennedy and the attempted assassination of Governor George Wallace.

Pioneer critics such as Sylvia Meagher, Mark Lane and Harold Weisberg are represented here, along with a group of the newer critics including the editors, and such analysts as Jerry Policoff on the media, David S. Lifton and pathologist Cyril H. Wecht.

Some defenders of the Warren Commission report are also included, among them David W. Belin and Richard M. Mosk. There are sections of the collection on Watergate and on the covert activities of the CIA and FBI.

The editors do not claim that these articles can solve the crimes but they offer them to "tell alert readers more about important covert processes of politics in America. And," they add, "such knowledge will be necessary if the role of these covert processes is ever to be diminished."

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Some of the same writers appear in "Government by Gunplay," another anthology which features the approach of a group called the Assassination Information Bureau, whose purpose it is "to politicize the issue of domestic assassinations." Their position paper claims political gunplay episodes from the assassination of President Kennedy to the attempts on President Ford (who they also believe "must be held accountable as a leading figure in the cover-up . . . as one of the most aggressive members of the Warren Commission in 'selling' the lone-assassin theory . . .") are of a piece. They widen that network to include the killings of Malcolm X and George Jackson. The essays here are generally more vivid, including pieces on Coin-telepro (the FBI plan to disrupt dissenter organizations), on Richard Nixon and organized crime and unsolved break-ins from 1970 to 1974.

Jerry Policoff has done a longer piece on the media and the aftermath of the Kennedy assassination and the Warren Commission report than the one in the collection above. His concentration on the New York Times and Eastern newspapers tends to homogenize the rest of the press as without influence. But the critics of the Warren report received a good deal of attention in the West, not all favorable but fairer than the antagonistic climate generally allowed. However, his analysis of press response is healthy and necessary.

Allard K. Lowenstein in his "Who Killed Robert Kennedy?" expressed what I consider the most convincing view:

"I do not know if we can ever find out the full story, if indeed there is a 'full story' not yet found out. I do know we had better free ourselves of preconceptions so we can do our best to find out."

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"The Assassinations," edited by second-generation scholars and critics Scott, Hoch and Stetler, is an anthology of important articles, essays, reports and interviews tracing development of what the editors call the politics of assas-