

A PREPUBLICATION ANNOUNCEMENT
FROM THE EDITORS OF

The Assassinations

DALLAS AND BEYOND:
A GUIDE TO COVER-UPS AND INVESTIGATIONS

EDITED BY
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FROM THE EDITORS

The Assassinations—Dallas and Beyond is scheduled to come off the presses in mid-January 1976 and to be available to the book trade as soon as possible thereafter. A cloth edition will sell for \$15.00 and a quality paperback for \$5.95. Both editions will be 576 pages, including index. Because of the urgency of the questions to which this book is addressed, we are taking this opportunity to acquaint a small number of interested people with the scope and thrust of the book's argument. The scope is apparent from the table of contents. Nearly all the contributions have been published before, but never have they all been conveniently accessible to a wide audience. Our motives in selecting these items are set forth in four short headnotes, which introduce the book's main sections. These headnotes, as well as our general introduction, are included here in the hope that they convey a perspective which renders current revelations about assassinations in America more comprehensible.

The long time-span between the submission of final manuscript in the summer of 1975 and the appearance of the book in 1976 has predictably resulted in new disclosures that are highly relevant to our subject. Most importantly, congressional committees with subpoena power have begun to examine some of the cover-ups discussed herein. In addition, some of the staunchest defenders of the Warren Commission in the past—including President Ford, David Belin and CBS—have now endorsed some kind of new investigation, though they have implied that the principal cover-up merely obscured Lee Harvey Oswald's ties to Castro's Cuba. In short, we are witnessing the final abandonment of the long-discredited Warren Report, as well as the rapid articulation of a new theory designed to preserve many of the articles of faith of the earlier official version (such as Oswald's guilt) while paying lip-service to the widespread skepticism about the candor of U.S. intelligence agencies.

We feel that in this new context our anthology assumes greater importance. The year of its publication, 1976, has the potential to reopen many of the questions raised in *The Assassinations*. Our hope is that the book will make its own contribution to the public demand for full disclosure and new, unrestricted and unprejudiced investigations.

INTRODUCTION

If a nation decides to live by lies, it has chosen a course of intellectual stagnation, and ultimately of political decay. Lies and murders frequently go together, for both are customary instruments of political forces that cannot secure their ends by other means.

In 1966 a Gallup poll indicated that a majority of American citizens doubted the findings of the Warren Commission, yet a majority also did not wish to see the issue of the John F. Kennedy assassination reopened. In those days many sophisticated observers would argue privately that to insist on the truth would put too great a strain on the American political process. Liberals who could recall the McCarthyite witch hunts for conspirators in the 1950s were only too happy not to encourage the so-called "paranoid style" in American politics. The consequences of these accommodations to unreason are much more evident a decade later. The invocation of "national security interests," which helped to suppress the issue in the mid-sixties, is precisely the ground on which to reopen it today.

In 1976, as we look back at our last three presidential elections, we see that the outcomes of all three have been profoundly affected, if not determined, by the bullets which killed the two Kennedy brothers and wounded Governor George Wallace. In each case we have been offered the stereotype, by now almost comic, of the demented loner who lays a self-incriminating trail of evidence. In theory, of course, all these shootings could be unrelated; but they have all met with the same bizarre official response. Time after time disinterested observers have pointed to serious flaws in the official accounts. These critics have been

answered not by serious counterarguments, but with silence, ridicule, harassment and misrepresentation in the most powerful segments of the national media. According to a member of the Warren Commission, the late Representative Hale Boggs, the FBI leaked information intended to discredit critics, including "photographs of sexual activity and reports of alleged Communist affiliations of some authors of articles and books on the assassination."* And as this went on, Martin Luther King and many other leaders—particularly in the black community—have been shot in circumstances which more than once suggest official collusion.

The official deafness to the objections of the critics does not of course prove that all these critics are right. Pioneers on any intellectual frontier must often use rough tools. Some critics have, by careless and imprecise charges, unintentionally made it easier for the national media to treat all of the so-called assassination buffs with condescension or even abuse. This has obscured the existence of a growing and, as yet, unanswered body of painstaking, scholarly research which challenges most of the key official "lone assassin" theories. To retrieve this research from such journals as *Modern Medicine* and the *Texas Observer* is one of the main purposes of this anthology. Another is to let readers see and judge for themselves how the serious work of Sylvia Meagher, to take one example, has been "answered" by a combination of cheap insults and a one-sided press.

It is beyond our ambition to solve the mysteries or even to reconcile the differing interpretations of many of the critics. In some cases, there are even factual errors which have become evident in the light of new disclosures or investigation, but we have not attempted to remove from these generally valuable pieces all of those claims with which we disagree. Our main goal is simply to reflect the range of serious criticism and to suggest starting points for new investigations.

Since 1963, other factors have fostered a growing cynicism and distaste for the current style of our national life: most notably the Indochina war, official lying, the abuse of power and high-level criminal conspiracies surrounding Watergate. Some of the essays

in this collection will argue that these factors are themselves consequences of the bullet politics which has so influenced the White House succession since November 1963. Not all readers will agree. Some indeed may be so disillusioned with the traditional political alternatives in this country as to see little more than a symbolic importance in the national habit of shooting leaders and dissenters.

Either way, whether the politics of assassination is a determining reality or a mere symptom of larger problems, the failure to discuss it has degraded the normal political context of rational discourse. More than one figure in the Democratic Party, which so far has been the chief party of the victims, will admit privately, if not in public, that they fear death as the reward for a successful presidential campaign. The national silence about this fear indicates how deeply it is felt—not that it is ignored.*

This collection begins with excerpts from the criticism of the Warren Report by the courageous first generation of assassination researchers—people like Mark Lane, Harold Weisberg and Sylvia Meagher. Their appeal to reason won them only a popular, unofficial audience, even though most of their objections, far more than could be printed here, remain unanswered and perhaps unanswered today.

The first wave of negative criticism has since been expanded and supplemented in two directions. On the one hand there has been expert research into physical details, such as Dr. Cyril Wecht's painstaking demonstration that the Warren Commission's theory of a single assassin cannot be reconciled with the available physical evidence (see pages 000-000). Other critics have transferred their attention from the events of assassination to their sociopolitical context, such as the intelligence connections of Lee Harvey Oswald and his Cuban contacts, and the police and underworld connections of Jack Ruby. Such researchers contend that in the long run one cannot understand the working of a throttle without studying the working of the whole engine: it is the same with assassination politics.

Since we began to put this book together, events have moved

* See Ron Kessler, "FBI Data on Critics to Boggs," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1975, p. 1.

* A related problem is the neglect of the consequences of the assassinations on policy—both domestically and in foreign affairs. All too little has been written on these important matters.

very rapidly. The tide of disbelief in the multiple-lone-assassins theory has risen dramatically, moving from the underground press into the national media. We suspect it is no accident that those in the highest authority have proven to be most resistant to a reopening of the search for truth. The Presidency is itself in crisis, for the normal pattern of succession simply has not been followed since 1963. Kennedy's assassination, Johnson's failure to seek a second term, Nixon's dirty tricks, the Agnew-Nixon resignations—these events show the Presidency's dysfunction. In this context, to raise questions about the politics of assassination is to touch a raw nerve. This would be true even if the present incumbent were not one of the survivors (and most vocal defenders) of the original Warren Commission.

We expect that the next few months will see the rise of many new stories, as well as the revival of old ones, not all of which will be aimed at disclosing the truth. We have already seen the reemergence of one such old allegation: that Oswald was an agent of Fidel Castro. The dubious sources for this same story in 1963 (see pp. 000 and 000) incline us to view it with extreme skepticism.

In general we are not confident that the current revival of interest in political murders will lead to their rapid solution. Too much is at stake: to raise questions about Dallas is ultimately to raise questions about the whole structure of political manipulation and control in this country. But that is precisely why we consider the subject matter of this book to be important. Although the ensuing articles will do little to identify the true assassins, they will, we believe, tell alert readers more about important covert processes of politics in America. And such knowledge will be necessary if the role of these covert processes is ever to be diminished.

Every true act of skepticism presupposes an act of faith. The questions raised in this book presuppose an act of faith in the people of America, in their ability to demand, discern, and ultimately settle for no less than an adequate accounting of the truth.

July 30, 1975

Peter Dale Scott

Paul L. Hoch

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to express our personal gratitude to all the contributors whose cooperation made this book possible. We are also indebted to a much wider community of critics who have selflessly pursued the truth about assassinations in America. These critics endured a long period in which their views were scorned, their labor went unrewarded, and their reputations were smeared with invective and abuse.

We are also grateful to our agent, Cyrilly Abels, for her help in transforming this manuscript into a book.

In the headnotes which introduce the book's four main sections, we explain our reasons for choosing the particular selections. Our editorial role has for the most part been confined to selection, excoriation, and in one or two extreme instances emendation. We resisted the temptation to add footnotes to question the accuracy of a given interpretation or to update hypotheses. As much as possible, the texts are published as they originally appeared, without editorial insertions, in the belief that the adversary style of the collection will leave few erroneous statements unchallenged. The index will permit interested readers to compare the varying points of view on specific issues.

Finally, we want to acknowledge that the political murders which are the focus of this book are no worse, nor more worthy of study, than the killings at Kent State or Jackson State, or the death by napalm of an anonymous peasant apparently more remote from our lives. To speak of the politics of assassination is to imply a range of questions that is beyond the scope of this volume even to enumerate. Readers who are moved by this anthology to inquire more deeply into the politics of assassination should not forget the wider setting.

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THE ASSASSINATION OF
JOHN F. KENNEDY

The assassination of President John F. Kennedy, closely followed by the nationally televised murder of his alleged assassin Lee Harvey Oswald, stunned and paralyzed America in a way that is difficult to recapture as we look back. There was a seemingly universal sense of wanting this shocking event to be over, wanting the case to be closed. The Dallas police and the FBI could compensate for their failure to prevent the crime of assassination by reassuring us that at least the mystery was promptly solved and justice was speedily rendered when Jack Ruby took the law into his own hands. A broad body of liberal opinion was likewise uncomfortable that Oswald's alleged leftist affiliations might touch off another wave of McCarthyism. It was reassuring to learn that Lee Oswald was a loner, not a joiner. There would be no invidious chain reaction of guilt by association with him. Thus, a national consensus arose very quickly—a consensus both relieved by the Dallas authorities' explanation of things and reluctant to pursue the matter any further.

Less than a month after the assassination, attorney Mark Lane had put together a journalistic defense brief, pointing out that Oswald should have enjoyed the presumption of innocence in the press and that an adversary proceeding would have certainly raised a host of conflicts in the eyewitness testimony recorded by the media. The only publication that would touch Lane's brief was the National Guardian, a rather eclectic paper of the left which

then described itself as a progressive newsweekly. A pattern had already begun. While the leading journals of anti-McCarthy liberalism showed little sustained interest in disputing the official theory, the writers who questioned the "lone deranged assassin" hypothesis were given the support they deserved by courageous but relatively obscure publications such as M. S. Aron's *Minority of One and Liberation*.

The Warren Report, published in September 1964, provided a definitive statement of the official explanation of the events in Dallas. It basically confirmed the conclusions of the Dallas police and the FBI (which those two agencies made available to the public respectively a few days and a few weeks after the assassination) that the assassination was the work of one man, Lee Harvey Oswald, with no evidence of a conspiracy. Among those who had studied the early critiques of the Dallas police-FBI hypothesis, the Warren Report did little to establish the case against Oswald.

The earliest criticisms focused on internal inconsistencies in the pre-Warren Commission case. Some of the points made in the writings of these earliest critics, including Joachim Joesten and Thomas Buchanan, were rebutted in the Warren Report; other points were misrepresented or ignored. The most prominent of the early critics was Mark Lane, who appeared before the Commission on behalf of Oswald's mother. He holds the distinction of being singled out by President Gerald Ford, a member of the Commission, in his book *Portrait of the Assassin* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965, written with John R. Stiles). Ford noted that Lane "stumped Europe, peddling his questions" about the assassination and "harassed the work of the Commission by innuendo and inference."

Upon its publication, the Warren Report was attacked as a prosecutor's brief rather than an impartial study. The Commission also published twenty-six volumes of hearings and exhibits—quickly prompting critics to argue that the Report did not fairly represent the evidence published in support of its conclusions. This wave of criticism was led by Harold Weisberg in *Whitewash: The Report on the Warren Report and by Lane in Rush to Judgment*.

One different approach was that of Edward J. Epstein, whose book *Inquest* (published in 1966) attempted to understand the

workings of the Warren Commission and established that (even by the Commission's own standards) the investigation was restrained by the pressures of time and the complexity of the Commission's relationship with its investigative arms—primarily the FBI and CIA. Epstein's analysis was based on interviews with members of the Commission and its staff (and limited access to their papers). It also brought out new evidence about conflicting official reports of the basic facts of the shooting which had been suppressed from the twenty-six volumes and the Warren Report, such as the FBI's assertion in its Summary Report (contrary to the Warren Report) that the first bullet to hit Kennedy did not pass through his body. After Watergate, Epstein's approach appears quite tame, but his book had a substantial impact at the time of its publication.

The critics then proceeded with their analysis of the evidence in the twenty-six volumes. The Commission hadn't bothered to index this material, but critic Sylvia Meagher produced a subject index to the Report and the Hearings. In 1967 her definitive work on the twenty-six volumes and the integrity of the Commission's work appeared under the title *Accessories after the Fact*. We have chosen to represent the early critical books only by excerpts from Meagher, whose own work includes a distillation of much of the best analysis done by her colleagues. We have deliberately chosen to reprint her work in an area that is less well known, the killing of Dallas police officer J. D. Tippit, in part because this narrowly focused chapter demonstrates the depth and range of the first wave of criticism and also because the Tippit killing has emerged as a central concern of one of the most outspoken defenders of the Report, former Commission counsel David Belin. (We also include a brief exchange between Meagher and Belin.) The critics progressed from an essentially negative critique to an attempt to analyze the evidence with the fairness and thoroughness which the Commission itself had failed to show.

To round out the defense-brief approach, we are including a selection on Oswald's alibi for the assassination from a newly published book by Howard Roffman. Critics now hold differing views on whether Oswald was actually involved in the assassination or in a related conspiracy, but Roffman shows how a competent defense lawyer would have approached the problem of raising

reasonable doubt in the minds of a jury as to whether Oswald was guilty as charged. Our collection does not attempt to resolve the question of Oswald's guilt or innocence, or to reconcile the differing views of even the critics among our contributors. It is wrong to lay the burden of resolving such questions upon those who lack the powers and resources of an official investigation.

Whether or not Oswald was involved, there was serious evidence of a conspiracy to implicate him. Meagher's treatment of some of this material in "The Proof of the Plot" shows that one of the most important leads in the Commission's evidence had not been properly pursued.

As the Commission's files in the National Archives gradually became available, the case against the Warren Commission became overwhelming. Even Albert Neuman, perhaps the only serious critic to endorse the Report's lone-assassin conclusion, faulted most of the Commission's work. Some critics moved into a more positive, but more difficult and risky, undertaking—to try to understand what had actually taken place in Dallas's Dealey Plaza. Harold Weisberg was among the first of the researchers to explore the files in the Archives. His 1967 book *Photographic White-wash: Suppressed Kennedy Assassination Pictures documents how the Commission failed to gather some of the most basic evidence for a reconstruction of the crime*. Richard Sprague collected and studied the photographic evidence. As some of our selections in the section on Dealey Plaza show, a significant part of the critics' effort went into developing and applying technical expertise to do what the Commission had failed to do.

Sylvia Meagher eloquently points out that the most basic and spectacular evidence in regard to the physical details of the assassination, the 8-mm home movie taken by a spectator to the President's motorcade, Abraham Zapruder, raises serious questions not resolved by the Warren Report. That much is beyond doubt. What the film and the physical evidence do show is still subject to debate among responsible critics. Two of our contributors, David Lifton and David Welsh, argue, for example, that President Kennedy was hit from the front as well as the rear, whereas two others, Cyril Wecht and Robert Smith, argue that the medical evidence does not show a shot from the front. But both arguments establish that the Warren Commission's conclu-

sions discount much evidence which would ordinarily be taken very seriously.

Six Seconds in Dallas, by Josiah Thompson, was the first book (1967) to attempt a systematic reconstruction of the details of the shooting. We have selected an excerpt from Thompson's case against the famous single-bullet hypothesis. The critics had no difficulty showing that the Commission failed to make appropriate scientific studies of alternatives to the single-bullet theory, but they were denied access to crucial evidence themselves for many years. The Kennedy autopsy material was unavailable to independent experts until 1972. The articles by Wecht and Smith reflect the first examination of this material by a non-government-sponsored pathologist. (For contrary medical interpretations, see the writings of Dr. John Latimer.) Their case against the lone-assassin hypothesis is cautious, factually conservative and compelling. Stronger allegations, based on the Zapruder film's indication of the timing of shots and of the movements of the President's head (as summarized by David Lifton), cannot be established with comparable certainty at present.

In the meantime, newly available evidence and new investigative tools and methods have permitted the critics to extend the scope of their understanding. The executive session transcript of the Warren Commission's meeting of January 27, 1964—released as a result of a Freedom of Information suit filed by Harold Weisberg—provides an insight into the mechanism of the cover-up in the important matter of Oswald's alleged informant relationship with the FBI. FBI reports on apparent threats against Kennedy and Martin Luther King were also rescued from obscurity in the Archives by Weisberg. These reports (the so-called Milneer documents) provide striking confirmation of earlier evidence of the Commission's failure to give serious attention to hypotheses other than the "lone nut" theory.

Some key evidence remains unavailable. Attorney Jim Lesar's account of his legal efforts to obtain spectrographic test results—basic scientific test data—under a Freedom of Information Act suit reveals how strongly the government continues to resist disclosure.

George O'Toole, meanwhile, has used a new "truth detector"—the polygraph-like Psychological Stress Evaluator—to argue from

a scientific point of view what Lane and others argued as lawyers: that Oswald was innocent.

Our concluding section on the Kennedy assassination contains the observations of the last three Presidents, who backed the Warren Report. The exchange between Sylvia Meagher and David Belin exposes the lack of factual support for his defense of his work on the Commission staff. The latest major defense of the Report—by two of the Commission's staff lawyers, W. David Slawson and Richard Mosk—has a new concession. Though they support the Commission's conclusions and oppose a full reopening of the inquiry, they argue that everything on the assassination in the *National Archives* should be made available to the public "unless its disclosure can be shown to be definitely detrimental to the national security." Though this proposal may still limit disclosure, it is far from the attitude shown by the government to date.

Although there have been indications that our national media may make a large contribution to the mounting public pressure to reopen the investigation of the JFK assassination, certain pitfalls remain. One problem is that sensational charges are often more newsworthy—and more easily understood and communicated—than the subtle discoveries of long-term research. The only way the press will appreciate the significance of the less sensational research is through its own sustained investigation, and it is to be hoped that long-term investigative assignments in this area will be made. Beside this hope is the reminder that powerful sections of the press have tangled with the critics to the point where both sides maintain distrust of one another. We include a recent article by Jerry Policoff which chronicles this negative side of press treatment of the assassination critics.

Finally, we report the greatest controversy suffered thus far by the critics. From the peak of public interest in early 1967 until the case against Clay Shaw faded into nothing some two years later, public attention was focused on New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison. Critics disagree sharply and intensely on the significance of Garrison's investigation, and the definitive study of this phenomenon has yet to be done. It would have to take into account both the strength of the case made by various critics for a conspiracy touching on Oswald's activities in New Orleans and the weight of the forces stacked against Garrison, in the media as

well as in the government. But it would also have to examine the factual weaknesses in his case and particularly the seemingly indefensible prosecution of Clay Shaw. Bill Turner's 1968 pro-Garrison article establishes the factual context in which the Garrison investigation operated (as does Harold Weisberg's book *Oswald in New Orleans*). The selections by Peter Noyes and Sylvia Meagher illustrate the kind of criticism that has been directed at Garrison from within the critical community. The Garrison investigation is a sobering reminder of how difficult it is to get the whole truth about the assassination with anything less than the full powers and resources of the federal government on the side of an open and honest inquiry.

OTHER ASSASSINATIONS

There are many other assassinations which it might have been appropriate to discuss in this section of our collection, but we have limited the consideration to the killings of two figures of national prominence, Robert Francis Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. To have opened the discussion to the problem of assassinations abroad—even to that large subcategory in which CIA involvement has been suspected or alleged—would have so widened the scope of the inquiry as to make it impossible to maintain the same level of concreteness as for domestic assassinations.

Recent interest in CIA activities has focused on the assassinations of Anastasio Somoza (Nicaragua, 1956), Carlos Castillo Armas (Guatemala, 1957), Rafael Trujillo Molina (Dominican Republic, 1961) and Ngo Dinh Diem (South Vietnam, 1963). Comparatively little has been written about the rather high incidence of assassinations in postcolonial Africa, from Patrice Lumumba (Congo, 1961) to Herbert Chitepo (Rhodesia, 1975). The forces behind these killings deserve closer examination.

Restricting consideration to assassinations inside the United States, we might have included the killings of other black leaders, such as NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1963; Malcolm X in New York in 1965; and Black Panther Fred Hampton in Chicago in 1969. These deaths also merit serious scrutiny, and it is to be hoped that our examination

of the assassinations covered here will help to stimulate a wider interest.

Even in the cases of Robert Kennedy and King it was difficult to overcome the widespread reticence about assassinations. Former Congressman Allard K. Lowenstein, who is now writing a book on the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, recently described his own reluctance to examine the assassination issues. Writing in the *Washington Star*, May 4, 1975, attorney Lowenstein disclosed:

Like many others, I tried for a long time afterward to avoid anything connected with the assassination of [Robert] Kennedy. The loss was too staggering, and it was hard enough to move ahead without making matters even more difficult by picking at a scar too close to the heart. Furthermore, the facts seemed obvious, and in the context of those times there seemed no reason to question the obvious.

During my term in Congress, I continued to refuse to listen to questions about any of the assassinations. I believe we all are indebted to those people who researched these questions and kept them alive during that long period before revelations about other matters finally made some of us realize how closed-minded we had been about the assassinations.

Lowenstein went on to summarize the evidence that finally convinced him the RPK case (in which Sirhan Sirhan was convicted as the "lone assassin") should be reopened: (1) The autopsy proved the fatal bullet was fired from a shorter distance than eyewitness testimony establishes for Sirhan's position. (2) Some ballistics experts say the bullets from Robert Kennedy and a wounded bystander don't match. (3) Sound paneling removed from the ceiling of the scene of the crime has not been analyzed to see whether the bullet holes in it are entrance or exit holes, indicating a ricochet—a crucial determination which could establish whether more shots were fired than the eight which were known to have come from Sirhan's gun. (4) Local authorities have made at least two false statements about what eyewitnesses report they saw.

We include here two quite different pieces on the Robert Kennedy assassination. A recent article by Betsy Langman and Alexander Cockburn describes the ballistics problems surrounding

Sirhan's gun. An excerpt from Robert Blair Kaiser's book "R.F.K. Must Die!" analyzes the evidence that Sirhan may have been under posthypnotic suggestion when he shot at Kennedy. Kaiser's study of Sirhan's diary finds strong evidence that Sirhan associated a monetary reward with the killing. A former Time correspondent, Kaiser spent nearly two hundred hours interviewing Sirhan, who later tried to block publication of Kaiser's book when he found he couldn't censor it.

On the Martin Luther King killing we have a list of the key questions pointing to a conspiracy, as summarized by Harold Weisberg in his 1971 book on the case, *Frame-Up*. We also include an article by Wayne Chastain, the only metropolitan newspaper reporter who has ever had an in-depth interview with convicted assassin James Earl Ray. In addition, for contextual purposes, we are reprinting an excerpt from J. Edgar Hoover's COINTELPRO documents on the FBI Counterintelligence Program to prevent the rise of a black "Messiah." Our point is not to imply that the FBI had a hand in King's killing, but to establish the context in which a cover-up was less difficult and King's protection—despite his international stature—was virtually unthinkable. As other reports have shown, the FBI was more concerned with tapping King's telephone and spying on his sex life.*

California Congressman Ronald V. Dellums has recently termed Hoover's concern about a "black Messiah" in the COINTELPRO document a "morbid preoccupation" deserving extensive investigation. Dellums, co-sponsor of a bill to reopen investigation of the Kennedy and King shootings, also recently told a reporter, "I have never for one moment believed these were isolated acts. I have always believed that they were a conspiracy." (San Francisco Bay Guardian, July 12, 1975, p. 7.) He concluded that the killings may involve unrelated conspiracies, or "there may be a thread running through all of them."

* See Victor S. Navasky, *Kennedy Justice* (New York: Atheneum, 1971).

FROM DALLAS TO WATERGATE: THE POLITICS OF ASSASSINATION

The next selections move into the areas of context and consequences of the assassinations. The last two essays on policy argue that the assassination of John F. Kennedy led directly to increased electronic surveillance of American citizens (see also Warren Report, Recommendations, *supra* pp. JJ-JJJ, and Richard M. Nixon's August 22, 1973, press conference, *supra*, p. 000), and was rapidly followed by the resolution of hitherto deliberately ambiguous promises to the Saigon government. Readers are cautioned against drawing the inference that unspecified sinister forces plotted the assassination in order to bring about these consequences. The point is rather that these were the consequences whether they were intended or not—even if the assassination were the act of a demented lone assassin. Unfortunately, this area has attracted far less interest than the mysteries of the assassinations themselves, and it cries out for further exploration.

The first essay in this section argues by analogy from Watergate that we may learn more from studying the Dallas cover-up than from examining the crimes themselves. One of the most frequent objections to the belief that President Kennedy's death was the work of a conspiracy is the simple argument that too many people would appear to be implicated—including the Dallas authorities, the federal investigative agencies, the Warren Commission and all its staff. The argument goes that everyone from Earl Warren on down must have been in collusion with the conspiracy if they kept its secrets. But in the wake of Watergate

we have learned to distinguish the cover-up from the crime. We now know that those who collude in the concealment of truth may falsely believe that they are merely keeping a different secret—particularly in the vaguely defined region of “national security.” We know, too, of the 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 tinks between the agency and the assumed demented leftist. Jack Ruby’s friends in the Dallas police department and the Chicago underworld posed similar embarrassments—prompting evasive testimony from the FBI and others who had secrets to keep which were unrelated to the assassination.

If indeed Lyndon Johnson suspected that Castro’s Cuba was somehow implicated in the assassination (see above, pp. 000-000), what “national security” interests made him reluctant to probe the relationship? The charitable explanation is the desire to preserve the lofty ideals of international détente—symbolized by the first nuclear test-ban treaty signed in the summer of 1963. Another factor may have been the fear of uncovering 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.

The Ervin Committee’s investigations revealed the Nixon White House concern about the CIA’s Cuban scenarios—first when Jack Anderson wrote of an assassination plan in a 1971 column, later when it was feared that investigation of E. Howard Hunt and his Watergate burglars would lead straight back to the CIA’s plots against Castro. When Richard Nixon ordered the curtailment of the FBI’s Watergate investigation June 23, 1972, he alluded to “the Cuba thing” and “the whole Bay of Pigs thing” in the following fateful transcript:

... just say [unintelligible] very bad to have this fellow Hunt, ah, he knows too damned much, if he was involved—you happen to know

that? If it gets out that this is all involved, the Cuba thing, it would be a fiasco. It would make the CIA look bad, it’s going to make Hunt look bad, and it is likely to blow the whole Bay of Pigs thing which we think would be very unfortunate—both for CIA and for the country, at this time, and for American foreign policy. Just tell him to lay off.

Five days later CIA Director Richard Helms instructed the FBI to “desist from expanding this investigation into other areas which may well, eventually, run afoul of our operations.” (House Judiciary Committee, Statement of Information, II, p. 459)

The Watergate experience demonstrates, if nothing else, how “the Cuba thing” constituted such a murky area of intrigue and covert operations that those who entered it had little hope of eliciting full and straightforward disclosures about practically anything. Howard Hunt’s own memoir of the Bay of Pigs expedition shows, even in the brief excerpts reprinted here, the subtle combination of illusion and reality: acknowledging that the assassination of Castro was proposed, denying that it was ever attempted. Hunt’s description of Oswald the Castroite by now only adds to the mystery—pulling the alleged assassin deeper into the web of fabrication and cover stories. The selection from Hunt’s biographer Tad Szulc makes clear that the assassination plots against Castro did not end with the Bay of Pigs in 1961.

It should be emphasized that only the minulest fraction of the estimated six hundred thousand Cuban exiles in this country became involved in assassinations of any description. Moreover, plots against Castro—whose relevance to the Kennedy assassination remains speculative—involved other segments of American society, notably the CIA and its allies in the U.S. intelligence community, the Howard Hughes organization, and high-level Chicago and Las Vegas representatives of organized crime. There are also other relevant intrigues from this era, such as the FBI’s program against the Socialist Workers Party and the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.*

* See also Victor S. Navasky, *Kennedy Justice* (New York: Atheneum, 1971) and Taylor Branch and George Cille III, “The Kennedy Vendetta” (*Harper’s*, August 1975).

The fact remains that several who collaborated in the CIA's anti-Castro operations (notably Frank Sturgis and Cubans close to Howard Hunt's protégé Manuel Artime) are named in Warren Commission documents as sources of mutually corroborating stories (all later discredited) linking Oswald to Castro's intelligence network. Oswald himself repeatedly established contacts with Cubans, in New Orleans (with representatives of the CIA's "Cuban Revolutionary Council"), in Mexico, allegedly in Dallas and Los Angeles (19 H 534, 8 H 242), and even in the Soviet Union (5 H 406-7, 16 H 152, contrast R 271). Jack Ruby also was interested in Cuba.

Horace Sutton's account of the Miami Cuban community completes the picture of a milieu which appears recurrently in the dramas of Dallas and Watergate: from the Odio episode (see pp. 000 and 000) to the man in Mexico (see pp. 000-000). The point is not to accuse the Cuban exiles of plotting the assassination of President Kennedy, but simply to illuminate one of the dark regions whose very existence as a network of intrigue and secrets inhibited the Warren Commission's investigation and made a large contribution to the ensuing cover-up.

This section of our book also asks the readers to indulge their imaginations: Gore Vidal reads Arthur Bremer's diary and asks whether it was ghost-written by a mediocre novelist and sometime spy as pre-planned evidence of yet another lone, demented assassin. A bit whimsical and far-fetched perhaps—but also a reminder of how few questions have really been asked about still one more political shooting which has profoundly influenced all of our lives.

THE ROCKEFELLER COMMISSION AND ITS UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

The CIA came through Watergate relatively unscathed, but it was embroiled in its own scandal within a few months of President Richard Nixon's resignation. The New York Times published a series of reports that the agency had engaged in massive illegal domestic operations. To investigate these charges, President Gerald Ford appointed a commission headed by Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller. The Commission's report, released in June 1975, includes a short chapter on the John F. Kennedy assassination, which is reprinted below.

Various factors (such as the viewing of the Zapruder film on national television) led the Commission to report on the Kennedy assassination, and President Ford (who had served on the Warren Commission) indicated his approval of the new investigation at an April 3, 1975, press conference (see above, p. 000. The question of CIA assassination plots against foreign leaders quickly became the most sensitive area of the Rockefeller Commission's concerns, and helped to revive speculation about assassinations in the United States. Another area of great public concern was the residue of unanswered questions from the Watergate affair, notably those surrounding the activities of E. Howard Hunt and his associates. Finally, the presence of former Warren Commission staff lawyer David W. Belin as executive director of the Rockefeller Commission probably influenced the Commission's ill-advised attempt to shore up the Warren Report. It has also been reported that Belin was influential in persuading

the Commission to investigate assassination plots against Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

Although public interest was undoubtedly heightened by extensive media coverage of allegations that Hunt and his long-time associate Frank (Fiorini) Sturgis were at the scene of the Kennedy assassination, it is regrettable that these charges became the focus of the Rockefeller Commission's treatment of the assassination.

We are including two pieces which were submitted to the Commission in early April 1975. In both cases, Executive Director Belin responded by asking the authors about Lee Oswald's connection with the killing of Police Officer J. D. Tippit. The content of both pieces was ignored by the Commission, at least in its published report. For the historical record, we also include Dr. Cyril Wecht's response to the report, indicating that the thrust of his testimony on the medical evidence was distorted.

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More than twelve years after the assassination of John F. Kennedy—years marked by the violent deaths of Martin Luther King, Jr., Robert Kennedy and other leaders, and by attempts on the life of George Wallace and Gerald Ford—arguments persist about the politics of assassination in America. Following President Kennedy's murder, public invocations of "national security interests" meshed with private cravings for reassurance to stifle objections to the many inconsistencies and omissions in the Warren Commission Report. The government and the media scoffed at so-called "assassination buffs," who suggested that the American public deserved answers to the unanswered questions about the assassination.

Ever since, America has been racked by acts of violence at home and abroad, by remarkable disclosures of abuses of power and of official cover-ups. One result is a widespread disbelief in the truthfulness of official statements. More and more responsible people now acknowledge that much of the work of the assassination critics is well-documented, sincere, plausible, and deserving of attention.

The Assassinations is the first comprehensive guide to the unanswered questions behind the assassinations and the cover-ups. By exposing fact after fact, theory after theory, clue after clue, the editors have compiled an anthology that reads like a thriller—though in the end, readers must assess for themselves what happened and why. Refusing to participate in a witchhunt for conspirators, the editors present a demand for an open and responsible inquiry based on a belief in the American people's ability to demand, discern, and ultimately settle for no less than the truth.