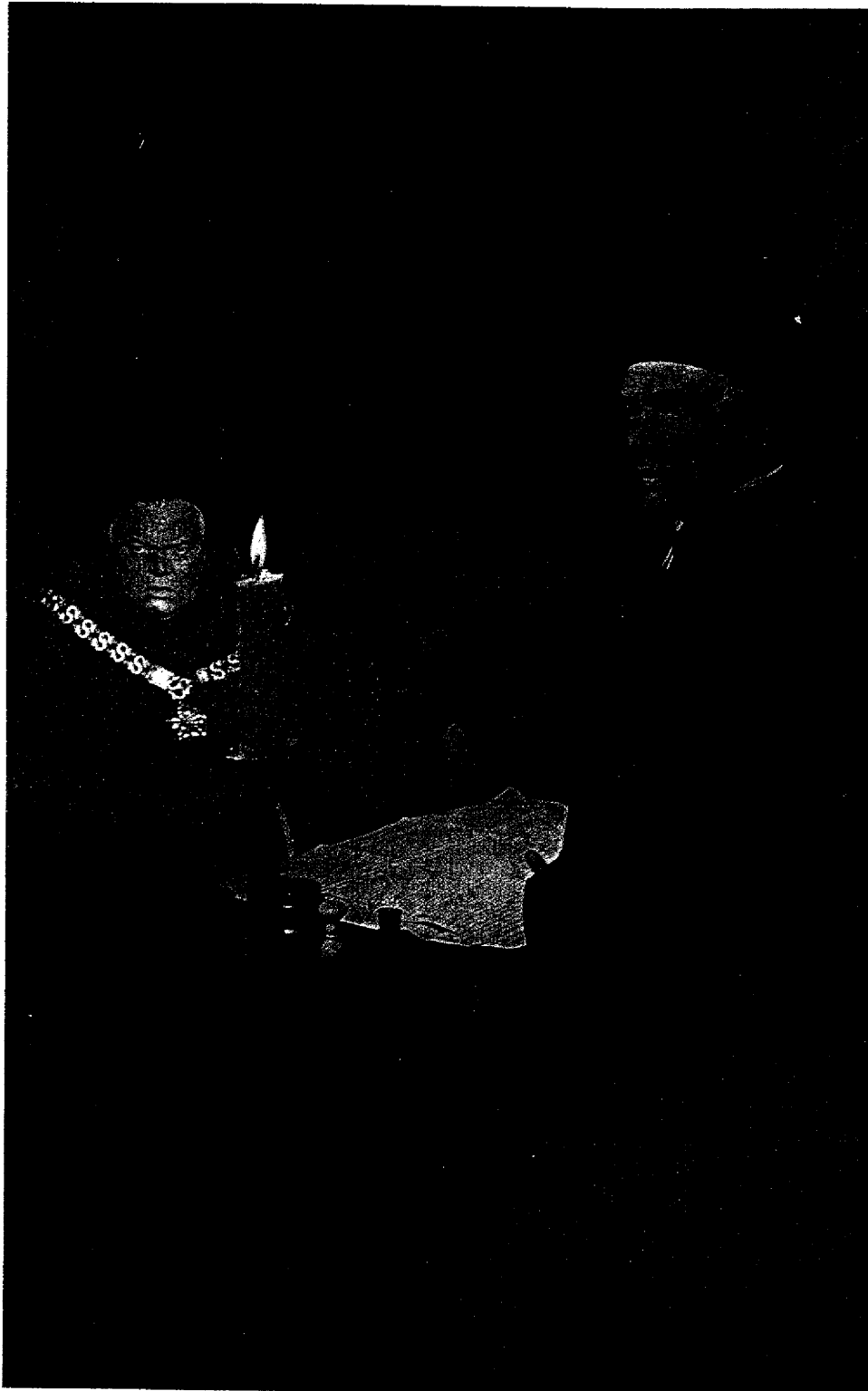


Report

PERSPECTIVE ON THE NEWS



'A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS'

A 'Hero of Selfhood'
And the Lonely Crowd

SEVEN AGAINST SMUT

How a Citizens' Group
Fought Pornography---
Effectively, Positively
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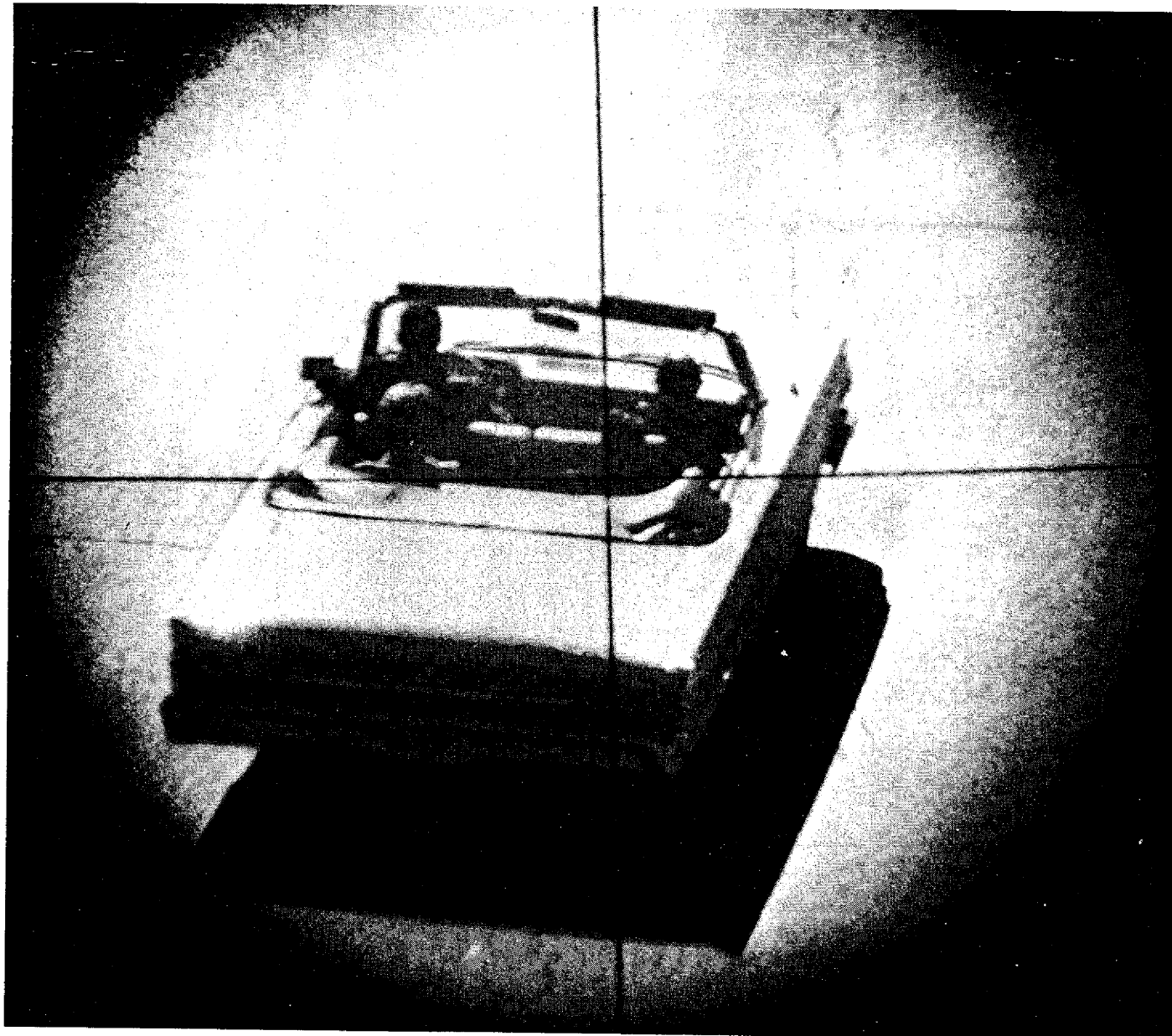
'THE DEATH OF
A PRESIDENT'
Is Manchester's
Oswald Believable?

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'YOU'RE A BIG BOY NOW'



Is Manchester's Oswald Believable?

By DENNIS HELMING

**"Yes, I am a Marxist,"
Oswald admitted weeks
before the tragedy.
That's more than
Manchester admits.**

INSIDE THE AUTOPSY room at Bethesda National Hospital a corps of doctors was examining the lifeless body of John F. Kennedy. Beyond the locked doors stood the President's brave but bereaved widow and his brother, Robert. "Why? Why did it have to happen?" Jacqueline kept repeating. "Why couldn't he at least have been gunned down by a right-winger because of his fight for civil rights? Why did he have to die at the hands of a two-bit Communist?"

Jackie found it difficult to believe. So did the rest of the country. So did William Manchester. Courageously, however, though reluctantly, she did accept the evidence. Insofar as they were given access to the facts, so did

many Americans. But not the author of *The Death of a President*, not the man who spent three years investigating *The Day*, not the person commissioned to force the tragic facts into an authoritative historical account.

Manchester, in the *Look* account, writes: "After three years in the Marine Corps, he (Lee Harvey Oswald) sailed to Russia in 1959 to escape his disappointment in his own country. Thwarted in the U.S.S.R., he returned to the United States in 1962 and then passed through one cycle of frustration after another. He tried to run to Havana, but in Mexico City, the Cubans wouldn't even grant him a visa . . ."

These are the facts Manchester high-handedly dismisses as irrelevant or embarrassing:

- At 15, Oswald became intrigued by

"To understand Oswald's act, it is not enough to

communism after reading a pamphlet sympathetic to the Rosenberg Atom Spies.

- Later, reading Karl Marx's *Das Capital*, the assassin said he felt "... like a religious man opening the Bible for the first time."

- Manchester would lead the reader to believe that Oswald's three-year stay in Russia was merely the product of psychological frustration, an "escape" to nowhere, an insignificant parenthesis. In fact, however, the assassin went to Moscow with the intention of becoming a Soviet citizen and member of the Communist Party.

- On Oct. 31, 1959, the *Washington Evening Star* reported: "Lee Harvey Oswald, a former Marine, of 4936 Collingwood St., Ft. Worth, Texas, turned in his passport at the American Embassy in Moscow and has applied for Soviet citizenship."

- Two weeks later, the *Washington Post & Times Herald* published this dispatch from Moscow: "Soviet authorities have refused to grant Lee Harvey Oswald Soviet citizenship, although they have informed him that he could live in Russia as a Resident Alien."

- In a conversation with a UPI correspondent in Moscow late in 1959, Oswald claimed that he had started "to study Marxist economic theories" as a teenager. "I could see the impoverishment of the masses before my own eyes in my own mother. I thought the worker's life could be better. I found some Marxist books on dusty shelves in the New Orleans library and con-

Manchester's account lays all the blame on Oswald's upbringing by his overly-possessive mother. She should sue.



tinued to indoctrinate myself for five years."

- Although the precise facts are unknown, presumably Oswald supported himself during the years in Moscow with a subsidy from the Soviet government.

- Upon returning to the U.S. with his Russian wife, Marina, and child, Oswald moved to Fort Worth and later to New Orleans where, in the summer of 1963, he became publicly known as the Secretary of the local chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, a Communist-front, pro-Castro organization.

- On August 21, 1963, three months before the assassination, Oswald took part in a panel discussion on radio station WDSU in New Orleans. During the program, moderator Bill Stuckey asked him about his Communist affiliation. Replied Oswald, "Yes, I am a Marxist."

To understand the assassination, one must understand the assassin: his background, character, beliefs, motivations. But not once does Manchester mention Oswald's allegiance to communism.

The author makes no attempt to explore a possible political motive in the assassination. Reasons, however, abounded: Kennedy was following a moderately "hard line" toward Cuba; the President's personal popularity abroad was so great that he was undercutting the appeal of communism in both Red and non-aligned nations; JFK's liberalism and its promises of social reform made totalitarian Marxism, in comparison, appear unnecessarily radical and inhumane.

Apparently, Manchester could not take Oswald's communism seriously. He offers but one explanation for the killing, a simple, simplistic answer: the assassin was sick in mind and spirit, a paranoiac.

On that point there is little doubt, expert or other-wise. Like his mother, Oswald felt persecuted, unwanted, rejected, revengeful. But are not these the emotional and psychological ingredients that make up most Communists? They are driven to remake

President Kennedy applauds his wife a few hours before the assassination.



appeal to his paranoia. Why President Kennedy?"



Jacqueline Kennedy still objects to "The Death of a President," which will be published next month. So will the general public.

society through brute political power, because they read personified evil into capitalistic society. All Communists have a pathological chip on their shoulders.

To understand Oswald's act, therefore, it is not enough to appeal to his paranoia. That does not clarify why Oswald's pent-up hate focused its deadly marksmanship on President Kennedy. Why did he not attack his mother who had succeeded in emasculating him by treating him like a pet poodle? Or his wife, the source of his most recent humiliations and frustrations?

Was he not poor? Kennedy appeared to love the poor. Was not Oswald hungry for compassion? Compassion was the alleged keystone of Kennedy politics. Jack Ruby, another twisted nobody, loved John Kennedy. Why not Lee Harvey Oswald?

The killer was more than that: he was a political assassin. Nine years of communist hate-propaganda had converted Oswald into a conditioned social psychopath, just like Lenin, Hitler, Stalin and Castro. He undoubtedly saw the real world through eyes distorted by unreal images of class or race warfare. But the point is, that such criminal insanity was the bastard child of both mental imbalance and communist ideology.

The communist line draws a dead bead on every institution and leader of the free world. Through a sophisticated propaganda network, it spreads

the virus of hate into the minds of receptive men. In Oswald it induced a fatal cancer. In Manchester it seems to have brought about at least a partial blindness.

For Manchester, it is not significant that Oswald pulled the trigger, but rather that the tragedy took place where it did: in Dallas. The author's own allegiance to leftist, liberal politics leads him to assign the guilt not so much to a person as to an ill-defined atmosphere, mood, environment; and not to a left-wing or communist-tinged environment, but to the right-wing atmosphere of Dallas!

Manchester tries hard to establish a direct link between Dallas' "general atmosphere of hate" and the assassination. Chapter two is an attempt to escalate to new heights of dramatic intensity and metaphysical intuition—all designed to prove the point. Doubtless it is the best chapter in the book, and in the writing career of Manchester. But it does not belong here, for this is not a novel.

It is true that some vocal residents of Dallas harbored little affection for the President, that their detestation of his liberalism was both shrill and sometimes hysterical. It is known fact that the day before the assassination 5,000 handbills appeared on the streets of Dallas accusing the President of "treasonous activities against the United States." A full-page ad, of right-wing origin, that appeared in the Dallas morning papers hours before the assassination was equally extremist. But to claim, as Manchester does, that "Any hater, left or right, could find fuel" in these excesses is to commit an injustice to the facts and to this Texas city.

The ultra-Right objected to Kennedy because, in their judgment, he was too soft on communism. Oswald, on the other hand, hated Kennedy because he was too hard on communism.

For such a crucial omission in the assassination story, the person who should have brought suit against William Manchester is the assassin's mother, Mrs. Marguerite Oswald—not Jacqueline Kennedy. □

Members of the Robert Kennedy family pray at the graveside of the late President.

