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Jim Kobak's

# KIRKUS REVIEWS

200 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10003 (212) 777-4554 Fax: (212) 979-1352

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**Davis, John H.**

**MAFIA KINGFISH:** *Carlos  
Marcello and the  
Assassination of  
John F. Kennedy*  
McGraw-Hill \$18.95  
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A detailed briefing on the life and crimes of Carlos Marcello—the centerpiece of which is a plausible, even persuasive, case for the proposition that the Gulf Coast god-father masterminded the assassination of JFK.

Davis (*The Kennedys, The Bowiers, The Guggenheims*) is not breaking new ground here. He nonetheless offers a wealth of fresh circumstantial evidence (much of which was gathered by the House Select Committee on Assassinations before it went out of existence in 1979) to confirm the long-held suspicions of conspiracy theorists that the mob ordered JFK's death. Tunisian-born Marcello, he explains, was brought to Louisiana as an infant by his Sicilian parents in 1910. A school dropout at 14, he chose a violent apprenticeship in organized crime over the family vegetable business. Thanks in part to the patronage of Lucky Luciano, the never-naturalized Marcello rose quickly through the ranks of the New Orleans Mafia. Shortly after WW II, he became head of an underworld empire that controlled billions of dollars worth of illegal enterprises and, Davis avers, exercised considerable political influence. Harassed and humiliated by JFK's crusading brother Robert, Marcello, according to Davis, took revenge via a professionally plotted hit in which Lee Harvey Oswald (nephew of an active underling) played a less-than-leading role. Investigators were not inclined—or permitted—to probe too deeply, the author argues, because the CIA, FBI, and other parties to the tragedy (including even RFK) had vested interests in a coverup or expedient explanations. The Justice Department finally nailed Marcello in 1981, following a sting operation that yielded additional evidence of his hand in other notorious killings (e.g., those of Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy as well as JFK).

Whether the aging Marcello (now under lock and key in a medium-security federal prison) got away with murders that changed the course of US history remains an open question. In frequently chilling and generally responsible fashion, with his dirt-dishing text backed by 24 black-and-white photos (not seen), Davis provides probable cause to believe he did. (Probable cause is not proof, of course; a convincing case can still be made for the lone-gunner theory, cf. Belin's *Final Disclosure*, reviewed above.)