

More arguments on the assassination

'They've Killed the President!'

The Search for the Murderers of John F. Kennedy.

By Robert Sam Anson.

408 pp. New York: Bantam Books. Paper. \$2.50.

Appointment in Dallas

The Final Solution to the Assassination of JFK.

By Hugh C. McDonald, as told to Geoffrey Bocca.

223 pp. New York:

Zebra Books/Hugh C. McDonald Publishing Co.

Paper. \$1.95.

By DAVID C. ANDERSON

The debate over who killed John F. Kennedy has gone on for 12 years now, and it appears to be turning into a de-

David C. Anderson is an editor of the Times Magazine.

bate—like those over the character of Hamlet or the origins of the universe—that is doomed to go on forever. Yet the fact that clear solutions seem less and less likely, now or in the future, hardly means that further inquiry is futile; in fact, the effort required to make new sense of the sprawl-

ing available record can yield illuminating, if not conclusive results. It is worth doing and worth reading.

In "They've Killed the President!" Robert Sam Anson has brought a steady hand and a capacity for backbreaking research to the task. He believes the Warren Commission report was a cover-up, though probably from benign rather than sinister motives, and he works from that general perspective. His main tactic is simply to assemble all of the arguments, theories and evidence that critics of the commission have advanced over the years, accepting the more reasonable and dismissing the flaky and the soft-headed (most notably those arising from the investigation of Jim Garrison in New Orleans). The over-all impact is remarkable.

Anson sifts through the hypotheses developed to explain the wounds inflicted upon Kennedy, the prime suspect, and was apparently bent on buttressing the initial impression that he shot Kennedy all by himself out of mental derangement. Most murder investigations, on the other hand, begin with the victim. Investigators try to learn who was motivated to kill him, which of them had the means and the inclination to inflict the fatal wounds, and which of them had the chance to do so at the time the murder occurred.

Following that approach, Anson goes on, it is possible to identify two major enemies of the victim: first, the U.S. intelligence community, which resented Kennedy's failure to back up the Bay of Pigs invasion and surely feared the President's wrath over the incident; and second, organized crime, the Kennedy brothers were the most serious threat the Mafia had had to face in years, and Kennedy's foreign policy wound up accepting the existence of the Castro who had kicked the mob out of its lucrative casinos and heroin dealerships in Havana.

Furthermore, these two rela-

tively uncontrollable organizations had already established a comfortable alliance — Government intelligence was not above calling upon criminal experts to provide information or to pull off dirty deeds it deemed in the interests of national security; in return, criminals around the world have received money, arms, even help in conducting the heroin trade. In a few cases, U.S. mobsters who have done favors for the C.I.A. have received immunity from Federal harassment. The chapters that detail the relationship between the C.I.A. and organized crime are perhaps the most striking in Anson's book. Surely here were people with a powerful abundance of motives, means, and opportunities to arrange the murder of Kennedy in Dallas.

Different readers will accept all of this to different degrees, of course, though it is both reassuring and alarming to note that Anson's exhaustive documentation has been assembled from the existing public record or else has resulted from his diligence in perusing documents newly declassified under the Freedom of Information Act. But in any event, Anson is to be commended for doing the work with thoroughness and apparent care. It adds up to a powerful piece of journalistic scholarship that can only prove helpful to a confused public.

"Appointment in Dallas," another assassination paperback headed for big-time sales, is something else entirely. Its authors, Hugh C. McDonald and Geoffrey Bocca, claim to have "solved" the Kennedy case by identifying the gunman as an "oafish-looking fellow whose picture turned up in the Warren report. McDonald, a retired police officer who claims to have participated in European intelligence work for the C.I.A., says he interviewed the man he dubs "Saul" — but does not identify further — in a London hotel. "Saul," so respected McDonald's professionalism as a secret agent, that he proceeded to confess how he had fired the bullets that killed Kennedy.

Unfortunately, McDonald and Bocca offer very few reasons for us to believe a word of it, and a lot of reasons for us not to — most particularly, the fact that McDonald has published the book himself and, at \$1.95 a copy, could profit handsomely if a lot of people buy his story. ■