

political book notes

Public affairs books to be published in September

Acting Out: Coping with Big City Schools. Roland Betts. Little Brown, \$8.95.

The Adirondack Park: A Political History. Frank Graham. Knopf, \$12.95.

America For Sale. Kenneth C. Crowe. Doubleday, \$10.

The American Occupation of Germany: Retreat to Victory. Edward N. Peterson. Wayne State, \$18.95.

The Assassination of Robert F. Kennedy. John Christian, William Turner. Random House, \$10. Turner and Christian challenge the conclusion that the slaying of Robert F. Kennedy in June 1968 was simply the random, irrational act of a lone assassin named Sirhan Sirhan. "There has to be more to it," Ted Kennedy said to Sander Vanocur on the flight carrying RFK's body back to New York.

The authors maintain that indeed there was more to it. Starting out with a wildly implausible theory right out of *The Manchurian Candidate*, they proceed by a combination of hard digging and some not-too-unreasonable speculation to chip away at the reader's initial skepticism. The theory, which has been raised and contested in the ten years since the tragedy, is that Sirhan was "hypnoprogrammed" to assassinate Robert Kennedy and to block out of his memory all recollection of those who programmed him.

During Sirhan's trial it emerged that he was, in fact, an easily hypnotizable subject and had probably been hypnotized many times in the past. His attorney suggested that at the time of the killing Sirhan was in a trance—but a self-induced trance. For different reasons, neither the defense nor the prosecution wanted the idea of conspiracy introduced: the prosecution had its man and didn't want the waters muddied; and for the defense, evidence of conspiracy would demolish the case for Sirhan having been temporarily off his rocker.

In any unproven charge of conspiracy, a coverup is an essential part of the scenario. The villain Christian and Turner indict is the Los Angeles Police Department, and here the fabric stretches thin. The authors,

for example, unable to obtain from any of several public schools he has attended the photograph of a boy linked to Sirhan, darkly hint that the LAPD got there first and removed the photos. It strains the credulity, too, to be offered the hypnoprogramming thesis and the claim that the shots that killed RFK were fired by someone other than Sirhan.

Despite such excesses of zeal, *The Assassination of Robert F. Kennedy* is a major work of reportorial investigation and will rekindle the controversies involving the wave of political shootings in recent years.

—Leonard Reed

Beyond Boom and Crash. Robert L. Heilbroner. Norton, \$6.95. The impending crisis of capitalism, long an article of faith to all but the most revisionist socialists, has become a familiar theme in the popular culture of capitalism. One has only to scan popular literature such as Paul Erdman's *The Crash of '79*, the financial advice columns of *New York* magazine, or even serious business magazines such as *Fortune*, *Forbes*, and *Business Week*, to read economic predictions that make Karl Marx read like a copywriter for Mobil. Today's American capitalist appears less than optimistic about the survival—much less the growth and prosperity—of our economic system.

In this brief (112 pages) tract, Robert Heilbroner argues that "another crisis of capitalism is upon us" and predicts that this latest crisis may be the last.

Echoing many younger radical economists, Heilbroner maintains that our economic system depends largely upon United States dominance over the world capitalist economy, if not the entire world economy. Several events during the last decade shattered American dominance without creating a new dominant capitalist power to replace us as the kingpin of the world economy. 1968 saw not only the beginning of American defeat in Indochina, but also the first run on the American dollar in the world money market. With the initiation of the Arab oil embargo in 1973, 25 years of almost unbroken economic expansion came to a halt in North America and Western Europe.