

failures, like those of the editors of all the Pentagon Papers, none of whom filled in the deliberate gaps, as all easily could have from newspaper morgues or, as ~~Mr. Johnson~~ can tell you, from files like mine. HW

Kennedy without the charisma

Cold War and Counterrevolution
The Foreign Policy of John F. Kennedy.
By Richard J. Walton.
Viking, 250 pp. \$7.95

Reviewed by GERALD W. JOHNSON

A little more than eight years ago John F. Kennedy, President of the United States, met death in circumstances so horrifying that for a long time anything like a critical appraisal of his statecraft would have seemed ghoulish. Meanwhile his adorners have had their say in several thousand pages, and now the inevitable counterattack is shaping up. Richard J. Walton's salvo is not the first blast of that assault, but it is in some respects the best aimed, and its shattering effect is considerable.

Even to a reader who thinks it rather overdone, this *Gerald W. Johnson is a long-time commentator on the American scene.*

Please return. I hope you can keep your eye peeled for when this book is remaindered or comes out in paperback. Don't lend me yours if you get one, for I will want to mark it up as I read it. My plans remain unchanged. This book is after the one I'll return to when I finish with PM. What JFK really turned into has to be destroyed, so I think there will be more like this.

blasting attack is not altogether regrettable. After all, the décor of Camelot did include a good deal of tinsel, and to have the red plastic ribbons and shredded aluminum foil removed is a service to truth in history. Walton rips away the junk with a strong and ruthless hand, but he is not notably selective. He tears down some drapes that were of real silk, and consigns to the dustbin some trappings that were, at least, 10-karat gold.

He charges Kennedy with having been a cold war hawk and a counterrevolutionary, supporting the charges with evidence all the more formidable because it is almost all selected from public statements by Kennedy himself, and the writings of his friends and admirers. Every lawyer knows that to prove your case by the testimony of hostile witnesses is a forensic triumph of the first order, and Walton must be given credit for a remarkably skillful effort along that line.

But has he really proved anything that wasn't already pretty well established? Unless he was a master hypocrite, which not even Walton asserts, Kennedy had swallowed the "Communist conspiracy" theory, hook, line, and sinker. But in 1960 so had all Americans except a hard-headed minority to whom it seemed evident that the statorian following of Communist orators might be anything except futile, undercover conspiracy—disorderly conduct certainly, lunacy probably, demonic possession perhaps, but not conspiracy. Then, to the extent that we opposed the extension of communism by force, we were all counter-revolutionary.

Granting that this president was, like most Americans, conspiracy-obsessed, and, like practically all Americans, counterrevolutionary, the question arises, was he anything

else? He was, if we accept Walton's judgment that

John Kennedy was a symbol of youth, of hope, of change in a world that desperately needs change. He was a symbol of enormous value in a dreary world

but discounts it all by asserting that "a symbol cannot endure unless it is based on substance." Agreed, but there is "the substance of things hoped for," which is the def-

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inition of faith, according to the Apostle. Many believe that a statesman who can revive faith in the minds of a despairing people, faith in the existence of better things, although they are not seen, has accomplished a work of such durability that the sum of his follies and errors cannot destroy it utterly.

Walton ends his summary of Kennedy with the words, "Cuba, Berlin, Vietnam—these are his monuments." Well, that is one opinion, doubtless a sincere one. But there is another, equally beyond proof, but equally credible, which is that faith and hope, although imponderable, intangible, and invisible, are in truth more substantial than the pyramids and more enduring monuments. □