

# McNAMARA FEARED

# New Manchester

## RED PLOT

# Disclosures

By BELMAN MORIN

*Associated Press*

Fears of an international plot to overthrow the United States government prompted Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara to alert every American military base around the world the minute he heard that President John F. Kennedy had been shot in Dallas, William Manchester says.

"By every readable signal the situation was very red," Manchester writes in his book, "The Death of a President."

The much-disputed book contains 350,000 words of text, plus diagrams, appendices and a list of sources. The price is \$10.

McNamara "kept his head and made all the right moves" even before he learned that Kennedy was dead, Manchester says. The worldwide warning told American military commanders, "This is the time to be especially alert."

### 'WILD RUMORS'

President Johnson is quoted in the book as saying "there might be war" if Americans became aroused by suspicions that Soviet Premier Khrush-

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shev and Fidel Castro had conspired to kill Kennedy.

It was the "wild rumors" about a conspiracy that brought the Warren Commission into existence, Manchester says. The commission eventually concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald — and Oswald alone — assassinated the President.

Johnson had difficulty persuading Chief Justice Earl Warren to head the inquiry, Manchester says, because Warren opposed "extra-curricular activity" by Supreme Court justices.

Manchester quotes Warren as saying: "The President told me how serious the situation was. He said there had been wild rumors and there was the international situation to think of. He said he had just talked to Dean Rusk, who was concerned. . . . He said that if the public became aroused against Castro and Khrushchev there might be war."

#### RANKIN PRAISED

Manchester agrees with the commission's finding. But he says its "real work" was done by the General Counsel, J. Lee Rankin, and the 14 assistant counsels. As for the members of the commission, Manchester writes, ". . . the lustrous names of the seven appointees were for the public consumption."

Manchester also is critical of actions of Secret Service agents before the assassination and imme-

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diately after the first shot struck Kennedy. He makes these points:

- On the night before the tragedy "nine agents of the White House detail . . . were out on the town. They started with beer and mixed drinks at the Fort Worth Press Club. . . .

- At various times they were joined by three agents of the 12-to-3 shift—who were officially on duty, assigned to guard the President's bedroom door. . . ."

- A jet airplane pilot is grounded if he fails tests that measure his reflexes. "However, presidential bodyguards were not required to take" these tests.

- When the first shot was fired, "most of the hunters in the motorcade identified the sound immediately as rifle fire, but the White House detail was confused."

- Two agents were in the front seat of the presidential car. "They were in a position to take evasive action after the first shot, but for five terrible seconds they were immobilized."

#### KENNEDY NOTE

Manchester summarizes his indictment in the words, "The central fact was that the Secret Service had failed."

A publishers' note on the

title page says, "Harper & Row wishes to make it clear that neither Mrs. John F. Kennedy nor Sen. Robert F. Kennedy has in any way approved or endorsed the material appear in this book."

This reflects a bitter controversy which ranged for months between Manchester and the Kennedys. Last December, Mrs. Kennedy called the manuscript "tasteless and distorted" and brought suit to block publication. She demanded revisions and deletions. Three former aides to the Senator said, after reading the manuscript, "We were talking about 144 changes."

Manchester replied that the reasons for demanding changes were "political" and constituted "an attempt to suppress vital facts."

#### BUYERS WAITING

Their acrimonious exchanges, erupting over a period of several months, received front page reporting in newspapers from coast to coast. This, coupled with Look magazine's four-part serialization of the book, gave Manchester's story an unprecedented degree of advance publicity.

Perhaps as a result, booksellers report a large volume of advance orders.

Harper & Row said the first printing runs to 600,000 copies. There are indications that a second printing will appear almost immediately.

Six per cent of the net receipts on the first 100,000 sales will be retained by the publishers, they said.

#### LIBRARY TO BENEFIT

An undisclosed part of the earnings accruing to both Manchester and the publisher has been earmarked for the Kennedy Library.

Literary agents estimate the book may earn around \$3 million.

Manchester believes — and states as fact — that Oswald went insane on Nov. 21, 1963, the night before Kennedy was assassinated. The author says Oswald's reason crumbled as the result of a quarrel with his

Russian wife, Marina, from whom he was semi-estranged.

She had been living in Irving, a suburb of Dallas, in the home of Mrs. Ruth Paine, a friend. Oswald lived in a Dallas rooming house. He visited his wife and children on weekends.

Manchester wrote that on the night of Nov. 21, Oswald appeared to be watching television on Mrs. Paine's home. "In fact," the author says, "he was going mad."

#### STUCK TO STORY

Oswald appeared sane, however, to the police and other investigative officers who interviewed him after the assassination. The transcript of these interviews, published in the Warren report, shows that Oswald told the same story to each of them.

He answered certain questions but said he would not answer others until he could have an attorney with him. And he specified the attorney, "a New York lawyer whom he did not know" but who had defended some persons accused "of a conspiracy against the government."

Secret Service inspector Thomas J. Kelley quoted Oswald as saying, "I have my own views on the president's national policy . . . but because of the charges I do not think I should comment further."

U.S. postal inspector H. D. Holmes found Oswald was "quite alert and showed no hesitancy in answering those questions which he wanted to answer, and quite skillful in parrying those questions which he did not want to answer."

#### MATTER OF OPINION

Manchester says in his foreword he "felt entitled to record my opinions" and was "forming judgments."

But he does not pinpoint the passages in his book where fact leaves off and "opinion" or "judgment" begins.

He says that Mrs. Kennedy, contrary to McNamara and other federal officials, "hoped" a conspiracy had taken her husband's life. The book says, ". . . for then there would be an air of inevitability about the tragedy; then she could persuade herself that if the plotters had missed on Elm St. they would have eventually succeeded elsewhere."

Manchester does not say whether Mrs. Kennedy told him this. He does not tell the reader whether it is fact or his judgment.

Manchester condemns Dallas

in some long passages and finds a connection between the political and psychological climate of the city and Oswald. Evan Thomas, an editor who worked on the book, said in a letter, ". . . the palpable fact that the author wants so badly to condemn Oswald as a product of the Dallas-Birch sickness seems to me to intrude to the point of suspicion-making."

#### OBJECTIONS RAISED

The Warren Report said, regarding the atmosphere in Dallas, the commissioners could not "judge what the effect of the general political ferment in that city might have been, even though Oswald was aware of it."

Several persons objected to

William Manchester's "The Death of a President" will be reviewed by author-critics Gore Vidal and Alastair Cooke in the April 9 issue of the World Journal Tribune's Book Week.

Manchester's account of their actions on the day of the assassination when they saw the serialized portions of his book in Look.

The President's military aide, Maj. Gen. C. V. Clifton, obtained from Harper & Row a correction of what the author had written about him. Manchester wrote that Clifton, telephoning from Dallas, first asked the White House to notify his wife, and the wife of Kenneth O'Donnell, a top Kennedy aide, that they were not injured. Next, he asked to speak with the executive secretary of the National Security Council.

In the Look serial, Manchester had said, "The general's order of priorities was staggering. Only after wives had been reassured could he deal with the possibility of a plot against the United States."

#### CORRECTION MADE

This has been corrected in the hard cover book. It says Clifton asked that the wives be notified in "a latter, second call."

Clifton's name appears in Manchester's list of sources, indicating that the author interviewed him.

Another discrepancy also came to light after the Look articles appeared. When John-

son was sworn in as president, "a single major Kennedy aide." Manchester wrote, the photograph of the ceremony did not show the presence of a "single male Kennedy aide."

The writer depicted O'Donnell as pacing up and down the corridor of the plane with his hands pressed against his ears, as though to shut out the sound of the oath-taking.

O'Donnell, however, told the Warren Commission he was present at the ceremony. And the Boston Globe published a photograph of the ceremony showing O'Donnell standing close to Mrs. Kennedy.

In the hard cover, the phrase has been changed to read not

But D'Donnell was a major figure in Kennedy's entourage.

The book recounts many episodes.

Manchester says Mrs. Kennedy overrode objections to her plan to mark her husband's grave with an eternal flame. He quotes Sargent Shriver, her brother-in-law, as saying, "Some people might think it's a little ostentatious."

Robert Kennedy arrived late for Johnson's first cabinet meeting and Manchester says the president was convinced that Kennedy did it to humiliate him. He says Kennedy "denies this."