

A City Indicted By William S. White

Dallas Is Manchester's Chief Target

NOW THAT the Kennedy family-sponsored book on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy is at last appearing in reasonably responsible form — in type, at any rate, rather than in selected and anonymous leaks—some conclusions can be drawn.



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The book so long heralded as "beautiful" and "sensitive" and a major work of American literature turns out to be a pedestrian, if incomparably savage, exercise by author William Manchester in the sort of yellow journalism that was a great social problem 50 years ago.

The principal victim of installment No. 1 is not Lyndon B. Johnson, though Manchester does take preliminary cuts at the President. Rather, it is Dallas, the scene of the tragedy.

Manchester levels at the entire city an emotionalized indictment; it is a place seething with "presidential hate" with a "history of political violence." The factual basis for this, so far as there may be one, rests upon two incidents. In the first of these, about two dozen right-wing extremists—in a city of three quarters of a million people—jeered and jostled the Lyndon Johnsons in a Dallas hotel in the 1960 campaign. In the second, a handful of hysterical women spat at the late Adlai Stevenson.

THERE IS NOTHING new in this. Though the assassin of President Kennedy, Lee Oswald, was neither

a Texan nor a right-winger but a Marxist indoctrinated both in Moscow and Castro Cuba, the more extreme among the Kennedy cultists have long sought to embed it in folklore that some ultra-conservative "climate" in Dallas anyhow was responsible for this ghastly tragedy.

IT CAN BE SUPPOSED that Dallas will survive this unexampled attempt at guilt by geography. All the same, the mental processes of Manchester, or more probably of those who gave him his information, can hardly fail to raise honest question as to who it is that really hates whom.

His treatment of President Johnson is in several instances a classic use of the smear term. For one illustration, President Kennedy's casual associates in Texas are presented, and rightly so, as decent people.

As to President Johnson, however, those around him become "members of his tong." A tong, of course, is a Chinese gang and in common usage a criminal gang as well.

Johnson's "Tong" on the occasion thus cited by Manchester was made up of brutal, smoke-filled room henchmen, indeed. One of these was Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson. Among others was a gentle and excessively shy young secretary, Marie Fehmer.

The long and short of it is that this is not so much a book as a bitter assault upon Texans who had always supported President Kennedy as well as those who had opposed him; upon a whole city which had the sad lot to form the unwitting locale of a left-winger's brutal act of murder; and upon a man who succeeded to the heavy obligations of the Presidency in a somber hour for all this Nation's people.