

Events of Kennedy Assassination Become a Play in West Germany

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AACHEN, West Germany, Nov. 10—A play about the assassination of President Kennedy, called "Dallas—November 22d," opened at the tiny Borderland Theater here last week.

The play, based on the report of the Warren Commission, was written by Felix Lützkendorf, a former writer of screenplays for Nazi propaganda films.

Although the work received some favorable reviews, the producers have come under attack for making a commercial production of the events leading to the murder and because of the background of the playwright.

Heinz Menzel, a Swiss who directed "Dallas," acknowledged that staging such a play was in questionable taste. "It is rather soon after the tragic event," he said yesterday.

"But the theater is, after all, a business enterprise. We have to show what people are interested in and the German people are extremely interested in President Kennedy. He is their hero."

Dialogue From Report

Mr. Menzel rejected complaints about the playwright's background, however. "What Lützkendorf did in the past has no relevance to his present work," the director asserted.

"Dallas" is not a stage play in the traditional sense. With its dialogue drawn entirely from testimony before the Warren Commission, it is another example of the "documentary" drama that has become increasingly popular in West Germany. Heinar Kipphardt's "The Oppenheimer Hearings" and Peter Weiss's new play based on the Auschwitz trial, "The Inquiry," are others of this form that have found popularity here.

Mr. Lützkendorf describes his work as a "scenarized report."

The playwright selected episodes relevant to his own dramatic purpose, Mr. Menzel explained. That purpose, the di-

rector said, was to find some sort of moral explanation for the events that drew Lee Harvey Oswald to his fateful collision with President Kennedy in Dallas.

Mr. Menzel added that the playwright had found Oswald an intelligent idealist whose guilt must be shared by society at large.

An American who saw the production did not draw this conclusion. The "drama," a series of confrontations between a shouting Oswald and the people he came in contact with—his marine captain, the American consul in Moscow, a Cuban diplomat, a Soviet official, and above all, Marina Oswald—portrayed the oft-repeated psychological theories.

Portrayal Is Sympathetic

"My mother never cared about me," Oswald cries in one scene. As played by Klaus Wenneken, Oswald emerges as a rather sympathetic and only moderately mixed-up young man.

A great point is made of how Marina, played as a suffering slattern by Hannelore Schoenfeld, continually questioned Oswald's manhood.

But Oswald's motives remain unconvincing. What is suggested is that different twists of fate in Oswald's career could have changed history. If Oswald had been granted citizenship by the Soviet Union, if his suicide attempt had succeeded, if the United States consul had refused re-entry, if the Cubans had let him in their country . . .

Following the last speech in "Dallas," Oswald picks up his rifle and the stage goes dark. Three shots ring out and then a picture of President Kennedy is flashed on a screen. The picture slowly fades as a recorded bugler blows taps.

The United States Embassy in Bonn cooperated in producing "Dallas" by providing pictures of President Kennedy and marine uniforms used in the production.