

TWO MAJOR BOOKS ON THE KENNEDY ASSASSINATION

Nagging doubts on the 'crime of the century'

OSWALD: ASSASSIN OR FALL GUY?
by Joachim Joesten. Marzani & Munsell, New York, 158 pp. (plus 17-page documentary section). \$3.95.

WHO KILLED KENNEDY? by Thomas G. Buchanan. Secker & Warburg, London (available from Guardian Buying Service), 192 pp. \$4.50.

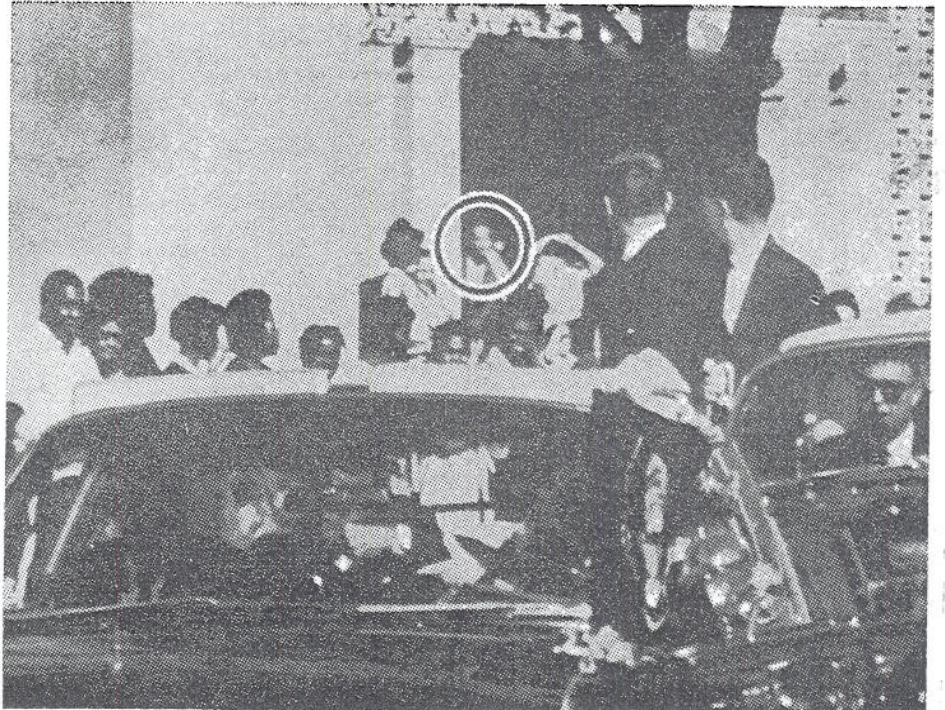
JOESTEN AND BUCHANAN are dangerous men. They have produced prototypes of what probably will become a virtual literature devoted to the exposure of inconsistencies, contradictions and lies emanating from Dallas and Washington that have sufficed posthumously to convict Lee Oswald as the "lone and unaided" assassin of President John Kennedy. They are dangerous because if Oswald was not the killer, as both books postulate, who was? What might be the effect on the U.S. at this juncture in history if, as the authors suggest, it could be proven that a "dark conspiracy" and not a lone, disturbed individual was responsible for assassinating America's 35th President in Dallas, Texas, Nov. 22, 1963?

As one who has been involved in the NATIONAL GUARDIAN'S campaign to uncover the facts about the Oswald-Kennedy affair and is familiar with most of the available material on the subject, I found Joesten to be the more penetrating, diligent and comprehensive reporter, less inclined—perhaps because he has assembled more data—to the tangential speculation that permeates Buchanan's otherwise superb book.

Neither author believes Oswald was the man who killed Kennedy. Buchanan, however, speculates that Oswald was implicated in a vast plot to kill the President and was indeed the killer of officer Tippit—the Dallas policeman who was allegedly slain by the 24-year-old former Marine as the latter fled from the assassination scene. Joesten concludes that Oswald was a "fall guy," innocent of the assassination and, in fact, of Tippit's murder.

BUCHANAN'S *Who Killed Kennedy?*, much of which first appeared in the French weekly *L'Express* and other publications abroad, is either in print or scheduled for publication in 19 countries. A U.S. edition is expected to appear in January.

Buchanan devotes a lengthy portion of his book to an historical analysis of the assassinations of three American Presidents—Lincoln, Garfield and McKinley—concluding that each killing was politically motivated. He demonstrates persuasively that Lincoln was the victim of an elaborate, reactionary plot; that Guiteau murdered Garfield because he believed, at least in part, that this was necessary to project the Stalwarts into power (a vaguely rightist branch of the Republican Party to which Guiteau and Vice President Arthur belonged); and that Czolgosz, who shot McKinley, "had been inspired entirely by his [anarchist] philosophical position."



THE PHOTO TAKEN THE MOMENT KENNEDY WAS SHOT
If Oswald was in the doorway, he was not the assassin

The virtue of the analysis is this: In each of the murders—as currently in the Kennedy case—the assassin was considered to be deranged and motivated by various personal grievances, none of which was profoundly political. Buchanan thus develops an historical perspective in which to interpret the apparent conclusion from official sources in Washington that Oswald was a madman whose alleged action was one of personal vengeance and/or a desire for notoriety.

UNFORTUNATELY, it seems to me, Buchanan has overstated his case by making it appear most unlikely for a mentally unbalanced individual even to consider murdering the President. He estimates that there are a half-million "incipient psychotic or potentially regressive cases who remain at liberty" in the U.S. and that, on the basis of population figures, the statistical chances are only 1 in 400 that a murder will be committed by a member of this group.

Noting quite correctly that if Oswald had not been slain "no one would be calling him insane except, perhaps, his own defense attorney," Buchanan then states: "When an investigating agency declares that it can find no motive for the President's assassination but the murderer's insanity, it does not mean that no such motive can be found. It simply means the investigation was a failure." Such generalizations do not help to build the argument that Oswald was quite sane—an argument that this reviewer also holds.

The author analyzes convincingly the machinations used to convict Oswald: "Any inquiry as grave in its potential implications as the Kennedy investigation

normally might be expected to begin with a great variety of theories, which would be explored and then rejected . . . when new evidence was gathered which appeared to contradict original beliefs. But what distinguishes the Kennedy investigation" from usual criminal cases "is that the reverse has taken place. The basic tenet that Oswald was the sole assassin is the only constant element in the whole case—it is the evidence which keeps continually changing to conform to that hypothesis."

BUCHANAN DEVOTES 22 pages to a devastating refutation of many of the official theories advanced to determine Oswald's guilt. Most of these contradictions (they appear also in Joesten's book) have been published in the *GUARDIAN*, so it is unnecessary to recapitulate them here. Suffice to say that compiled in one book they should convince even the most intransigent that the state's case against Oswald could not hold up in court.

At page 102, Buchanan announces that "we pass now from the realm of proof . . . into speculation. It would be astonishing if all the elements in the hypothesis that follows were correct, in their minutest detail. I make no attempt to claim this. They are based on probabilities . . ."

The remaining 90 pages concern Buchanan's fascinating thesis that Kennedy's murder was engineered by "a Texas millionaire named X, a man whose height, weight, age and physical appearance I ignore . . . He considered Kennedy to be pro-Communist, and he sincerely thought that Kennedy's assassination would, in some way, serve the interests of the U.S." Mr. X, Buchanan

states, was stimulated by a "fear of the domestic and international consequences of the Moscow Pact: The danger of disarmament which would disrupt the industries on which the plotters depend and of an international detente which would, in their view, have threatened the eventual nationalization of their oil investments overseas." They also feared that Kennedy would reduce their lucrative tax allowance on vast oil holdings.

"Most of all, though, he looked on the plot as a manner of relieving his own personal and fatal boredom . . ." Buchanan guesses. "Mr. X had no more worlds to conquer in the State of Texas; he was anxious to find out if there was any limit to his power."

IN ADDITION TO MR. X, according to Buchanan's thesis, the conspiracy included the police official who ordered Oswald's arrest just after the shooting when there was no reason to suspect him; an assassin who fired at the Presidential motorcade from an unguarded railroad bridge; the assassin who fired at least two shots from the Texas School Book Depository; Oswald, who murdered Tippit; an "accomplice" (Tippit), who was meant to murder Oswald (the minor conspirator who was to have been saddled with the responsibility for the assassination); a specific policeman and a detective and "municipal and federal police investigators—many of them. These men are not linked in any way with the assassination, but they are accessories after the fact."

Buchanan stipulates that his hypothesis is based on "probabilities." I would be inclined to define them as "possibilities"—perhaps even excellent possibilities, but, at this point, I do not believe they justify the certitude with which the author propounds his thesis. There is not enough evidence to point the accusing finger.

JOESTEN'S BOOK is divided into two sections—the first to the assumption that Oswald was an "impossible assassin"; the remainder to his being a "perfect fall guy." While Joesten, too, is speculative in his second section, his guess-work is clearly labeled as such and he has assembled—apparently after a meticulous investigation of his own—an impressive array of evidence to support his theory. Joesten has also compiled a great deal of information that even the most interested devotee of the Oswald-Kennedy affair may have overlooked.

Did you know that "Oswald was not and never has been formally charged with the assassination of President Kennedy?" Or that Dallas Sheriff Decker announced over the police radio five minutes before the assassination that something had "happened" near the School Book Depository? Is it common knowledge that the only eye-witness to the Tippit shooting said the murder took place at 1:06 p.m., at which time, according to Joesten, Oswald could not have been less than a mile away?

Joesten, who had the advantage of having read Buchanan's book before publishing his own, disputes his fellow skeptic regarding the Oswald-Tippit sequence: "Since he did not have some of the information I now have on the Tippit slaying, Buchanan accepts the shaky story put out by the Dallas police about Oswald the 'cop killer.' Starting out from this false premise, Buchanan goes on to

imagine a conspiracy in which Oswald figures as an accomplice, alongside of Tippit . . . I doubt this. Oswald . . . had probably nothing to do with the plot against President Kennedy's life. His role in the matter was limited to that of sacrificial goat." Joesten feels, however, that "Tippit's murder will be the link that will solve the assassination."

REGARDING THE "PLOT to kill Kennedy," the author says he believes "there was a conspiracy . . . but I make no attempt to guess at its extent or try to fit the vast number of details into a coherent whole." Later, he indicates that the "conspiracy" may have included "some officials of the CIA and FBI as well as some army figures such as General Walker, and reactionary oil millionaires."

Joesten makes an extremely strong case for Oswald being a minor CIA-FBI undercover agent, the strongest presented thus far. It is because of his surreptitious role, says Joesten, that Oswald fled from the book building after the assassination, a seemingly inexplicable action if he was innocent. Joesten makes this assumption: Knowing he would be a prime suspect because of his public image as a rabid Communist sympathizer, Oswald was in great fear of being exposed as an undercover agent in a national controversy. He feared also that the federal agencies would not acknowledge him as one of their men, leaving him to extricate himself from the local police.

"Both the CIA and FBI intensely dislike having one of their undercover men get entangled with local police officials," the author comments. "It means awkward explanations, the 'blowing of cover,' and, often a degree of ridicule from local police . . . To be arrested, except as part of a plan [means] the agent has bungled in some way." Oswald, a very minor agent who, in Joesten's words, might well have bungled a previous assignment in the Soviet Union, could not afford the risk and fled, assuming the murderer would be captured before long.

THIS DOES NOT, of course, explain how it was that the police broadcast a description of a man resembling Oswald just minutes after he had left the Depository when, as Buchanan notes, they had no reason at all to have done so—unless a police officer was out to frame him. This is one of the reasons Buchanan insists Oswald was implicated in the slaying.

After reading both books, this reviewer is as much in doubt of Oswald's actual role as before. Conspirator? Fall-guy? The one fact both authors agree upon most strongly, however, is that Oswald was "an impossible assassin," and this, I think, is the most crucial aspect.

Neither book pretends to be the "final word." This, as Chief Justice Warren inadvertently let slip, may never be revealed and cannot with finality even be hinted at until critics have an opportunity to read the Warren Commission report on the assassination, scheduled for next month. It is understood that the American edition of Buchanan's book will include a critique of the report. One hopes that Joesten, too, will comment on the report in a revised issue. Mark Lane, to whom Joesten dedicated his book, is awaiting the commission report before committing his research to a publisher and probably will be in print at the beginning of the next year.

In my opinion, Joesten and Buchanan have performed an enormous public service, regardless of any defects. Both books are warmly recommended to those who cannot accept a packaged, almost prefabricated, solution to America's "crime of the century."

—Jack A. Smith

(Both books offered on pp. 7 & 8)