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JFK's Death -- A Fanciful, European Version

WHO KILLED KENNEDY? By Thomas G. Buchanan; G. P. Putnam's Sons; \$4.95.

Reviewed by
Mel Wax

THOMAS G. BUCHANAN, an American who writes for *l'Express*, Paris, rushed into print with this one soon after the shooting a year ago, cashing in on the tragedy with a version many Europeans, apparently, still believe—i.e. that President Kennedy's death was not the work of one man alone, but an intricately-planned execution, sponsored by right-wingers, and involving at least half a dozen people, including perhaps, the Dallas police, the CIA, the FBI, oil millionaires, Lee Harvey Oswald, Jack Ruby, Policeman J. D. Tippit, and various John Doe's.

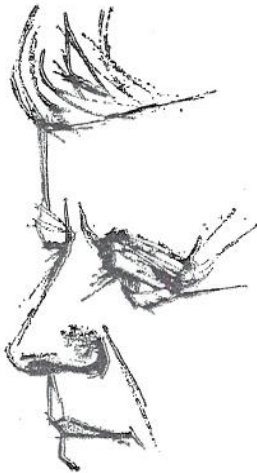
Buchanan's book has been published in 19 countries; never before in America. The American version was drastically revised, and an attempt made to square Buchanan's fanciful thesis with obvious contradictions of the Warren Report finding that Oswald acted alone, for motivations of his own tormented personality, and that neither the right nor the left, the police nor the CIA, Ruby nor Russia, had anything to do with the assassination.

The conspiracy thesis is titillating, but there is no solid evidence to support it. What Buchanan does is repeat the early rumors, identify some questions that are not completely answered—and perhaps never will be—and conclude at least six men played an active role in the Dallas shooting, and many more might have masterminded it behind the scenes.

He recites conspiracy evidence for previous Presidential assassinations—Lincoln, McKinley and Garfield. He talks about Dallas' paranoia,

the disaffection of oil men for Kennedy, the mysterious (CIA?) sources of Oswald's money, and the contradictory statements of Henry Wade, Dallas's hot-tempered district attorney.

He repeats the old canard



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about the first shot coming from a railroad overpass, in front of the Kennedy car and not from the Texas School Book Depository Building, behind it.

The Warren Commission said: "The shots that entered the head and neck of the President and wounded Governor Connally came from behind and above. There is no evidence that any shots were fired at the President from anywhere other than the Texas School Book Depository Building."

Buchanan, who was not present at the shooting, repeats statements attributed to people who were, including many that were later revised when the witnesses talked to the Warren Commission.

Any reporter who has covered shootings, riots, or any happenings remote from the mainstream of daily experience, knows how inaccurate

the average observer is, how prone he is to change facts to fit otherwise unexplainable events, and how unreliable is even the most highly trained witness. It should also be noted that in times of great stress people do not always act coolly and rationally.

Thus, when the first policeman in the textbook building saw Oswald calmly drinking a coke in the second floor lunchroom, it is entirely possible, I believe, that he should accept Oswald's statement: "I work here," and go charging up to the sixth floor, where the shot was fired.

If the policeman were less excited, less worried about an assassin escaping, he might have paused to analyze Oswald's statement, to question him, to ask him how he happened to be the only unconcerned person in Dallas at that particular moment in history. The fact that he didn't does not make him a conspirator.

Buchanan's thesis is not persuasive; his book is not factual, and his conclusions are without foundation. I do not question for a moment the right of Putnam's to publish such flimsy work, but I wonder at the judgment.