

AMS BUDGET (530)
MANCHESTER
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AMHERST, MASS., JAN. 7 (AP)-THAT TENSION CAN DEVELOP BETWEEN A WRITER AND HIS SUBJECT WAS A FACT KNOWN TO WILLIAM R. MANCHESTER LONG BEFORE HE SUBMITTED HIS PROSE TO THE EDITING OF MRS. JOHN F. KENNEDY'S FRIENDS.

FOUR YEARS AGO, SPEAKING AT A WRITER'S CONFERENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS HERE, MANCHESTER SAID:

"NO ONE KNOWS BETTER THAN THE NOVELIST HOW DEEPLY PEOPLE CHERISH ILLUSIONS. IT'S RISKY FOR HIM AND EVEN RISKIER FOR HIS SUBJECTS. SOME AUTHORS PERSUADE THEMSELVES THAT THE CUSTOMERS ARE RIGHT."

BE THAT AS IT MAY, IT WAS MANCHESTER THE HISTORIAN, NOT MANCHESTER THE NOVELIST, WHO SUDDENLY FOUND HIMSELF AT ODDS WITH A SUBJECT, AND EMBROILED IN A PUBLIC DISPUTE.

THAT DISPUTE MADE WILLIAM MANCHESTER A NATIONAL FIGURE OVERNIGHT. AFTER 20 YEARS AS A PROFESSIONAL WRITER, AFTER THREE NOVELS AND THREE BIOGRAPHIES, HE IS A MAN KNOWN NOT FOR WHAT HE HAS PUBLISHED, BUT FOR A SINGLE UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPT, "THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT."

FROM HIS PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, MANCHESTER HAD NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT HIS AUTHORIZED VERSION OF THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE ASSASSINATION OF JOHN F. KENNEDY WOULD CREATE TENSION WITH THOSE WHO COMMISSIONED IT.

HE HAD SATISFIED MENCKEN.

H.L. MENCKEN, WHOSE WIT HAD PUNCTURED THE EGO OF MANY A FAMOUS WRITER, CHOSE MANCHESTER TO WRITE HIS BIOGRAPHY. HE TURNED MANCHESTER LOOSE ON ALL HIS PERSONAL PAPERS. THE FINISHED PRODUCT, DOWN TO AND INCLUDING THE TITLE--"DISTURBER OF THE PEACE"--WON MENCKEN'S UNQUALIFIED APPROVAL.

FURTHER, IF MANCHESTER'S "ROCKEFELLER FAMILY PORTRAIT" GENERATED ANY HEAT, ONLY HE AND THE ROCKEFELLERS KNEW ABOUT IT.

THE SUBJECT OF HIS THIRD BIOGRAPHY, "PORTRAIT OF A PRESIDENT," WAS JOHN F. KENNEDY. IT WAS THIS BOOK--ONE REVIEWER CALLED IT "ADORING"--THAT LED MRS. KENNEDY TO SELECT MANCHESTER TO WRITE THE STORY OF THE ASSASSINATION.

BUT MRS. KENNEDY DIDN'T LIKE MANCHESTER'S USE OF DETAILS, WHICH SHE HAD PROVIDED IN TAPE-RECORDED INTERVIEWS. THEY WERE, SHE SAID, TOO PERSONAL, TOO INTIMATE.

THERE HAS BEEN NO SUGGESTION THAT THE KENNEDY FAMILY FARES BADLY IN THE BOOK; IN FACT, ALL WHO HAVE READ IT SAY THE KENNEDYS COME OFF VERY WELL INDEED.

THIS WAS TO BE EXPECTED. WILLIAM MANCHESTER WAS, AND IS, AN UNABASHED ADMIRER OF JOHN F. KENNEDY.

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THE DEPTH OF THIS ADMIRATION WAS OUTLINED BY MANCHESTER IN A COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS HE DELIVERED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS HERE IN 1965. HE SPOKE ON KENNEDY AND THE AMERICAN PUBLIC'S REACTION TO THE ASSASSINATION.

HE PRAISED KENNEDY'S ELEGANCE, WIT AND SOPHISTICATION, BUT SAID THEY "WERE LARGELY CAMOUFLAGE."

SAID MANCHESTER:

"HE REMAINED APART FROM THE IDEOLOGICAL STYLESETTERS; HE DECLINED TO JOIN THE BLAND WHO LED THE BLAND. THE ONE ILLNESS WHICH NEVER AFFLICTED HIM WAS THE CLOYING NARCISSISM WHICH CLOTS THE MODERN IDIOM.

"HE NEVER FELT VICTIMIZED. HE NEVER FELT ALIENATED. THAT WAS LEFT TO HIS ASSASSIN.

"DUTY, DEDICATION AND DEVOTION LAY AT THE CORE OF HIM, AND IF THOSE WORDS SOUND QUAIN, THE FAULT LIES WITH US AND NOT WITH THEM."

AT THE CORE OF HIS SPEECH WERE THESE WORDS:

"BUT THOUGH A MAN MAY SEEM LARGER THAN LIFE, HE IS NOT REALLY. EACH OF US HAS HIS OWN DARK STAR. EVEN THE BRIGHTEST OF US--WHICH HE WAS--IS SHADOWED BY ANOTHER SELF, THE NEGATIVE WHICH COMPLEMENTS THE POSITIVE POINT. THROUGHOUT LIFE WE ARE IN CONSTANT DIALOGUE WITH THIS OTHER SELF, SOMETIMES BATTLING IT, SOMETIMES LOSING.

"IT IS A MEASURE OF THIS MAN'S (KENNEDY'S) STATURE THAT HE FOUGHT THESE PRIVATE STRUGGLES SO SUCCESSFULLY THAT MOST OF HIS COUNTRYMEN WERE UNAWARE THERE HAD BEEN ANY CONFLICT. THAT VICTORY WAS A TRIUMPH OF ONE MAN'S WILL. AND, INDEED, IT WAS A REMARKABLE TRIUMPH."

AND, ON STILL ANOTHER OCCASION, MANCHESTER SAID:

"I STILL WAKE UP AT NIGHT AND HEAR THE STUTTER OF THE DRUMS ON PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE. I STILL HEAR A SILENT HYMN OF GRIEF WITHIN."

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