

Manchester Book Says Schlesinger Conferred With Aides on '64 Replacement for Johnson

By EDWARD C. BURKS

William Manchester says that Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. began conferring about the replacement of President Johnson as the 1964 Democratic candidate within 24 hours after the Kennedy assassination.

The fourth and final installment of Mr. Manchester's "The Death of a President" in Look magazine, due on newsstands today, says that before Mr. Johnson served a day Mr. Schlesinger, the historian who was a member of President Kennedy's inner circle, was talking about Robert F. Kennedy, then the Attorney General, as the candidate in 1964.

Mr. Manchester wrote that Mr. Schlesinger conferred with John Bailey, the Democratic National Chairman, and asked if it would be possible to keep the nomination from Mr. Johnson in 1964.

Mr. Schlesinger said yesterday in a telephone interview that Mr. Manchester's account was a "melodramatic distortion of a wholly academic conversation."

Diary Notes Quoted

Mr. Schlesinger continued:

"The entire reference in my diary notes to my talk with John Bailey on Nov. 23, 1963, is as follows:

"I talked to John Bailey this morning. I asked him whether, regardless of merits, it might be technically possible to beat Johnson at Atlantic City. John said that it might be technically feasible, but the result would be to lose the election for the Democrats.

"The trouble is that the Democrats seem likely to lose the election anyway. I fear that either Rockefeller or Nixon could beat Johnson in the big industrial states. But I suppose that Johnson is astute enough to recognize this, too, which means that he may be driven to an aggressive liberal program."

Mr. Schlesinger said his question to Mr. Bailey "was unaccompanied by any urging that President Johnson be replaced, or by any expression of concern about his qualification, or by any supposition that he would be superseded by Robert Kennedy in 1964."

Mr. Bailey could not be reached either at his home or office in Hartford yesterday.

Friction Grows

Look installment also says that misunderstanding and friction between Johnson and Robert Kennedy, and between their supporters, during the first days in Washington after the assassination.

Other Points Made

Other points made by Mr. Manchester in the installment were these:

President Johnson told Dr. Kenneth Galbraith, an adviser and intimate of President Kennedy of his plans to address Congress, saying: "I want to come down very hard on civil rights, not because Kennedy was for it but because I am for it. Keep in mind that I want a liberal policy because I'm a Roosevelt Democrat."

Mr. Johnson was convinced that Robert Kennedy had arrived late for his first Cabinet meeting to humiliate him. Further the new President that the late arrival while he was speaking had ruined the effect of his remarks.

President Johnson made a tentative decision to have a "Texas commission" investigate the assassination.

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara confirmed to a journalist friend of the slain President that Mr. Kennedy had planned to make him Secretary of State if he won a second term.

Robert Kennedy, urged by Mrs. John F. Kennedy to see that the coffin was not open—"It's the most awful, morbid thing"—first disagreed with her, saying: "It can't be done, Jackie. Everybody wants to see a head of state." But after viewing the body, Robert Kennedy ordered the casket closed because he objected to the cosmetics applied by the undertakers.

"Harvard Lunch"

Mr. Schlesinger is reported to have taken up the 1964 election again the day after his talk with Mr. Bailey during a luncheon that he arranged. Mr. Manchester, calling it the "Harvard lunch," said it was attended by Mr. George Bundy and Dr. Galbraith, who, like Mr. Schlesinger, had been recruited by President Kennedy from the Harvard faculty.

Later, according to Mr. Manchester, Dr. Galbraith wrote in his journal:

"Arthur [Schlesinger] was in a rather poor mood. He was reacting far too quickly to the chemistry of the moment and was dwelling on the possibility of a ticket in 1964 headed by Bob Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey. This of course is fantasy, unless of course Johnson stumbles unbelievably or even then."

Mr. Schlesinger is quoted as having conceded some months later that the Government would have been paralyzed if everyone had behaved in those first days as he did.

Mr. Schlesinger said yesterday:

"What Mr. Manchester describes as the 'Harvard lunch' took place the same day. Mr. Bundy was not present. Various persons not identified with Harvard—Walter Heller, William

Walton and others—were present. My notes record no conversation at this luncheon regarding President Johnson and Robert Kennedy in 1964."

Regarding the Johnson-Robert Kennedy relationship, Mr. Manchester wrote:

"It was understandable that Johnson would blame much of his frustration on Robert Kennedy. The Attorney General was symbolic of the past he had to overcome. It was also unfair. A study of Bob Kennedy's movements that day reveals that virtually all his time was pre-empted by funeral preparations.

"A satisfactory solution of the situation was clearly impossible; the need for the Government to proceed was at odds with the Kennedys' grief. The President was being thwarted by something larger than any individual."

Relationship 'Damaged'

The relationship from the time of the 1960 convention battle between Mr. Johnson and John F. Kennedy, Mr. Manchester says, "had been repeatedly damaged by misunderstandings that could usually be traced to this or that 'aide.'"

Mr. Manchester says that Sargent Shriver, President Kennedy's brother-in-law, interested in an orderly change of Government, tried to bring together the "loyalists" and the "realists" but was baffled when he ran into what he called "a lot of flak."

The "loyalists" like Mr. Schlesinger, according to Mr. Manchester, were "swept up in the mightiest current of emotion in their lives" and were motivated by the desire, above all, to show respect toward the murdered President.

The "realists" like Kenneth Galbraith and McGeorge Bundy, Mr. Manchester continues, concerned with the institution of the Presidency, "played a valuable and difficult role — and history may award them the higher grade."

The installment is sympathetic in its treatment of President Johnson. Although he is portrayed as being somewhat nervous, moody or hesitant during those days before the funeral, he is described as having made decisions to insure continuity of the Government while showing deep concern for Mrs. John F. Kennedy.

There is no indication of any tension between Mrs. Kennedy and her husband's successor. Mr. Johnson is quoted as having said to an acquaintance:

"Jackie has been just great. She said she'd move out [of the White House] as soon as she could, and I said, 'Honey, you stay as long as you want.'"

As President Kennedy's body was borne by caisson through Washington, Mrs. Kennedy is

quoted as having said to Mr. John: "Oh, Lyndon, what an awful way for you to come in."

Since a plot against the Government was still suspected, the new President is reported to have been advised not to walk behind the caisson bearing President Kennedy's body at the funeral.

But Mr. Johnson is quoted as having said, "Lady Bird told me I should do it so I changed my mind."

President Johnson's plans for a Texas Commission, Mr. Manchester says, met with "horror" by the then Deputy Attorney General, Nicholas de B. Katzenbach, who went immediately to Abe Fortas, the Washington lawyer closest to President Johnson.

Mr. Katzenbach described the Johnson idea as a "ghastly mistake," Mr. Manchester writes, and was told by Mr. Fortas that the President also intended to release the forthcoming report by the Federal Bureau of Investigation on the assassination the moment it was ready. Mr. Katzenbach reacted glumly to this news, according to Mr. Manchester, because he believed the report should be channeled through the Attorney General's office.

There are poignant references to Mrs. Kennedy's having her children write "a letter to daddy" to place in the casket, a description of how Caroline held John's hand to help him "scribble up and down" and the astonishment of Mrs. Kennedy when she saw the photograph of the 3-year-old boy's smart salute at his father's funeral.

She is said to have told the boy, "John, you can salute daddy now and say good-by to him" because she remembered how the boy loved to play soldiers with his father. But she missed the salute, and in the past, his saluting had been rather clumsy or comic, Mr. Manchester says.

"Somehow the mood and meaning of the day had reached the President's son" for this salute, Mr. Manchester wrote.

There is also a first publication of Mrs. Kennedy's letter on White House stationery to Nikita Khrushchev, then Premier of the Soviet Union 10 days after the assassination.

"You and he [President Kennedy] were adversaries," she wrote, "but you were allied in a determination that the world should not be blown up."