

The Man Who Wrote About Assassinating De Gaulle

by Jean M. White

(Excerpts below from interview by White of Frederick Forsyth, author of "The Day of the Jackal," a novel "which meticulously plots a professional assassin's attempt against the life of ... de Gaulle.")

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Forsyth, the reporter [Reuters, Paris] turned novelist, left nothing to chance. In addition to a professional assassin, he also consulted a passport forger and an underground armorer.

..... The forger was recommended to Forsyth by a mercenary whom he met in Biafra. In his job, the mercenary needed several false identities and paid up to 200 pounds for a name and face.

..... [The professional killer] is an amalgam of three persons that Forsyth knows.

One is the professional assassin, "a man who told me he feels no more emotion in killing a person than in 'stubbing out a cigarette,'" Forsyth says.

Then there is an Englishman I know, lean, charming, but with a hidden ruthless streak. And there also is an undercover agent, who is a superb chess player and meticulous plotter of moves."

..... The armorer, who specializes in guns for the international underworld, was Forsyth's consultant on the weaponry for the assassin's task. A gun such as that used by the Jackal does exist. The armorer showed a rough form to Forsyth.

"As a kid in the country, I had used a .22 to kill rabbits and pigeons. I didn't know too much about guns but now I do. For the assassin's job, it had to be collapsible, light, easily concealed to be carried across borders.

[No quote marks at beginning of this paragraph.] The prototype was a Browning .229, bolt-action. The barrel had to cut back to about 10 inches and yet have enough accuracy to hit a man's head at about 150 yards. It's the rifling in the barrel, the corkscrew action, that gives accuracy to a rifle and cutting back the barrel reduces this accuracy.

"The underground armorer told me the rifle could do it. Then there was the explosive bullet - not a dum-dum. A hole is bored in the slug; a droplet of mercury dropped in; it is resealed. It explodes with devastating effect when it hits a target."

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