

“In the Coils of the Spider”

THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT

*A review of the many inconsistencies and mysteries
involved in the investigation of the assassination of President John
F. Kennedy. The reaction of a stunned world: Was it a conspiracy?*

by Eric Norden

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*“Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood! . . .
A curse shall light upon the limbs of men;
Domestic fury and fierce civil strife
shall comber all the parts of Italy;
And Caesar’s spirit, ranging for revenge
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,
Shall in these confines with a monarch’s voice
Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war.”*

—Julius Caesar, Act III, Scene I

When the mighty fall, they do not fall alone. The sniper’s bullet that snuffed out the life of John F. Kennedy on a bright autumn noon in Dallas, Texas has shaken the United States of America to its moral and political foundations. As the fabric of John Kennedy’s life shattered and dissolved into nothingness, the continuity and stability of American political life suffered a wound as grave, and perhaps as irrevocable. The murder of John Kennedy was a personal, human tragedy of monumental proportions; his death may portend disaster for all men. If John Kennedy were an ordinary man, it would be possible to restrict our reaction to his death to grief. But the nature of his office and the circumstances of his death deny us even this solace. As Chief Executive of the United States Kennedy represented a set of ideas, values and policies which were as much a target of the assassin’s bullet as his person. To understand the implications of his death for the nation and the world, we must first consider who would wish to destroy these policies, and why. The motivations of Kennedy’s assassin can lead us to the assassin himself.

Kennedy was killed either by a lone madman or by an organized conspiracy. If the first, the damage is limited to Kennedy, his immediate family, and the human sensibilities of all men who recoil from the senseless waste of their brothers; if the second, a simultaneous blow has been struck at the whole abstract fabric of American society.

If indeed the act was a conspiracy, what forces in America are likely to have been behind it? Three main groups felt themselves, rightly or wrongly, sufficiently threatened by Kennedy and his policies to resort to the ultimate treachery: the ultra-right, the racists, and the die-hard militarists, within and without the Pentagon. These three groupings are not entirely separate; they are often interlocked, and all were united in bitter opposition to Kennedy and his policies. The ultra-right, because they saw in Kennedy's liberalism, tepid as it was, a vital threat to their privilege and power; the racists, because his support of racial integration, halting as it too was, endangered their entire power structure in the South; and the militarists, because Kennedy's steps toward a [nuclear test ban treaty](#) and a détente in the Cold War, though equivocal, seemed to them a betrayal of America's military and political interests in the East-West struggle. All three, to a varying degree, had a motive, at least in their own minds, for fearing and hating John Kennedy; and it would require a highly cultivated sense of naïvete to doubt that such fevered minds would freely envision the subjugation of races and the nuclear annihilation of whole peoples and yet shrink from the death of one man, however highly placed. The motive was surely there; the question remains, was the will?

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The life and death of Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin, is, to borrow Churchill's description of the Soviet Union, a mystery wrapped in an enigma. Press accounts of Oswald's alleged role in the murder of the President, his whereabouts, at the time of the killing and afterwards, his possession of the murder weapon and his background and motives are all so replete with contradictions and inaccuracies that it is difficult to assess Oswald's true role, if any, in the President's assassination. When the F.B.I. report on the tragedy and the findings of the special Presidential commission are made public, certain specific points may be cleared up; but it is highly doubtful that any official report will conclusively establish the whole truth of the assassination and its aftermath.

*In the coils of the spider, the web of a death
Ungodly, entangled thou diest.
Oh me, I lament thy unkingly bed,
With a sudden stroke of sharp
Two-edged treachery felled and slaughtered,*

— Agamemnon by Aeschylus

Even on such a basic question as the type of gun used to kill the President, there is no unanimity of press or police opinion. First reports from the scene quoted police as describing the murder weapon as a German Mauser. Dallas Police Captain Patrick Gannaway reported on the day of the assassination that a Mauser rifle was found on a fifth floor landing of the Texas Textbook Depository, the building from which Kennedy was believed shot. Ed Wallace of the N.Y. *World-Telegram & Sun* reported a day later that "the rifle which killed the President was a 7.65mm Mauser, a military weapon made in Germany long before World War Two, first produced in 1891, and made

obsolete by other Mauser models adopted in 1895 and 1909.” According to Wallace, “the older Mauser was a highly accurate military weapon, and the rifle used yesterday may have been chosen because it had passed through many hands and tracing ownership would be made more difficult than weapons of later manufacture. . . .” (N.Y. *World-Telegram & Sun*, Nov. 23, 1963.) A United Press International dispatch dated November 23 was equally unequivocal on the make and caliber of the murder weapon. “Police also found the imported rifle with the telescopic sight which fired the fatal bullet into Kennedy’s brain . . . The 7.65 (roughly 30-caliber) bolt action Mauser German army rifle with four-power sniperscope was found tucked among books . . .” On November 24, the *New York Post* referred to the assassination weapon as “the high-power 7.65 Mauser rifle which fired two 2½-inch long bullets into the Chief Executive . . .”

Initial reports from Dallas appeared unanimous as to the type of rifle used in the assassination. But within two days of the first announcement by Dallas police that the rifle used to kill the President and left behind in the Textbook Depository was a German Mauser, the story abruptly changed. Dallas authorities began referring to the murder weapon as an Italian Mannlicher-Carcano. Captain Will Fritz, head of the Dallas police homicide bureau, said the rifle was Italian and “of an unusual, undetermined caliber.” (N.Y. *Times*, November 23, 1963.) Was the discrepancy a result of the near-panic that swept over police and press alike within the first frantic hours of the President’s death? Or could it be that a gun had to be supplied which could be readily traced to Oswald? The *New York Herald-Tribune* reported on November 24, 1963 that “it was Mrs. Oswald who told police early yesterday that her husband owned a rifle that was the same as the Italian 6.5 Mannlicher-Carcano used to shoot the President.” The *New York Times* reported on November 25 that “the bullets were fired by a 6.5 mm. Italian made Mannlicher-Carcano rifle . . . the rifle was traced to Oswald.” Was the fact that Oswald owned an Italian rifle the reason why the first, minutely-detailed descriptions of the weapon as a German Mauser were dropped, and the weapon characterized henceforth as a Mannlicher-Carcano?

Even if we accept the murder weapon as a Mannlicher-Carcano, another question arises. How could the gun in question, a Model 1938, 6.5-mm. bolt action rifle, be operated quickly enough to fire three shots into the President’s car within five seconds? The rapidity of the shots led most observers at the scene of the assassination to assume that an automatic weapon had been used. A Mannlicher-Carcano must be laboriously loaded with one shell at a time into the chamber before firing, unless a charger, or clip, is first loaded with six cartridges and then inserted into the action of the rifle, thus permitting more rapid firing. There is no indication from Dallas authorities that the alleged murder weapon was equipped with such a charger, in which case it would have been impossible for the assassin to snap off three shots at the President and Governor Connally in such rapid succession. While there has been little speculation on this problem in the United States, the European press openly doubts that a Mannlicher-Carcano could have been used as the assassination weapon. The Italian newspaper *Corriere Lombardo* of Milan wrote on November 26 that if the Model 38 Mannlicher-Carcano were used and that if more than one shot were fired “there must have been a second attacker.” In France, *Paris Jour* declared flatly that a non-automatic rifle could not have been

used to pump two bullets into the President and one into Texas Governor John B. Connally within a matter of seconds. In Vienna, Hubert Hammerer, the Olympics champion shot, stated that the initial shot could have come from a bolt-action weapon, but according to a Reuters dispatch, he did not believe that one man could have fired three shots in a few seconds with the weapon used. There is thus considerable doubt that the weapon held by the Dallas police was, or even could have been, the weapon used to assassinate President Kennedy.

Apart from the make and operation of the murder weapon, doubts have been raised that Oswald was a skilled enough marksman to pick off the President and Governor Connally with such deadly accuracy. Ed Wallace of the N. Y. *World-Telegram & Sun* reported that “gun devotees cannot agree that marksmanship was the fatal ingredient in the chemistry of Lee Harvey Oswald. He used a strange gun; there is no evidence he had done any practicing; he was an unstable figure on a mission that would shake the nerves—and the trigger finger—of a much cooler man.” According to the *World-Telegram & Sun* analysis: “The shots which killed the President and wounded the governor of Texas, were fired from a range of 75 to 100 yards. There were six people in the open automobile, into which three shots were fired at chosen, moving targets. Only two people an assassin would want to kill were hit—and in vital parts of their bodies. Slightest variation in sighting, the precise instant of trigger pull, movements of the rifle and movements of the intended victims, conditions of light and shadow, uniformity of ammunition used—these and countless other conditions and variables could have changed the deadly moment to produce misses, or minor wounds. Oswald, since the age of 13, had been a mentally disturbed person; he had been growing progressively more explosive and less stable. Accuracy with a rifle and pistol depends almost entirely upon an individual’s ability to overpower and control his nervous system.” (December 4, 1963.)

Oswald’s whereabouts at the time of the murder and immediately afterwards are ambiguous and fraught with contradictions. Police said that he was seen in the Texas Schoolbook Depository Building, from which the assassin fired, at 12:45 P.M. (The President was shot at 12:31 P.M.) But Mrs. R. C. Roberts, who works at the rooming house where Oswald lived, several miles from the scene of the assassination, said he dashed in at 12:45 P.M. Oswald himself claimed to have been in the Texas movie theatre in Oak Cliff, four miles from the Textbook Depository Building, from before the shooting until his arrest. Equally confusing is a report that Oswald was seen seated in a cafeteria in the Textbook Depository Building, immediately after the assassination. R. S. Truly, head of the book depository, told the New York *Herald Tribune* that right after the shots were fired “I rushed into the building with a policeman. He thought the shooting came from the roof and we ran up the stairway. On the second floor he stuck his head into a snack bar we have and saw Oswald sitting at one of the tables. ‘Does this man work here?’ the policeman asked. I said, ‘Yes, he does,’ and we continued up the stairs.” (N.Y. *Herald Tribune*, Nov. 27, 1963.) If anything is certain about the reports of Oswald’s whereabouts during the President’s assassination, it is their uncertainty.

Equally disturbing are the circumstances surrounding Oswald’s alleged shooting of Dallas Patrolman J. D. Tippit. Not only is there an apparent lack of eye-witness accounts conclusively identifying

Oswald as Tippit's murderer, but there is confusion, at least in press reports of the slaying, as to where and how Tippit died. First reports on the policeman's death say he was shot by Oswald as he attempted to arrest the alleged assassin in the Texas movie theatre. The N. Y. *Herald-Tribune's* account of Oswald's capture states that he was "dragged screaming from a movie theatre in Dallas' Oak Cliff suburb where police say he shot a policeman . . ." According to the *Tribune* report, "Police got a call that a man answering the description of the suspected assassin had entered the Texas Theatre. Patrolman J. D. Tippit and M. N. MacDonald followed. . . . They spotted the slim, balding, 5 foot, nine-inch man crouched near a red-lighted exit door. They yelled. Patrolman Tippit fired once. Oswald fired once and Patrolman Tippit fell dead. Patrolman MacDonald then rushed Oswald and they struggled. Oswald was subdued." (N. Y. *Herald Tribune*, November 23, 1963.) But like so much else in the Oswald case, this story too was shortly to be changed. A report later the same day in the N. Y. *World-Telegram & Sun* reported Tippit's death in this manner, later to become the officially-accepted version: "Patrolling in Oak Cliff was Officer J. D. Tippit, 38, and father of three. He was about five blocks from the Texas Theatre. . . . It was near 1 P.M.—the time Kennedy was pronounced dead—but the exact time is not known. Tippit fell to the street, shot twice. How he accosted his slayer is not known." (N. Y. *World-Telegram & Sun*, November 23, 1963.) One explanation for the contradictions in the two stories would be pure human error, though the *Herald-Tribune* report, if false, is so detailed as to indicate mendacity rather than inaccuracy. Another explanation could be that the Dallas police force, in its haste to obscure the real circumstances of Tippit's death, issued two contradictory cover stories before finally settling on one. If the latter, it might be significant that early radio and TV news reports of Tippit's slaying said that an unidentified secret Service man was wounded with him. With him—or by him?

* * *

*"Foul whisperings are abroad: unnatural deeds
Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds
To their deathpillows will discharge their secrets."*

—Macbeth, Act V, Scene I.

Questions as to Oswald's exact role in the assassination of the President do not end with his whereabouts and activities on the day of the murder. Grave doubts inevitably arise about the whole pattern of his recent actions, doubts that have the gravest implications for the peace and security of the United States and the entire world. Was Oswald carefully groomed by powerful forces for his role as assassin of the President? Was he an innocent scapegoat for the real murderers? Or was he, as so many of us would wish to believe, merely an isolated madman acting on his own in a shadow-world of twisted passions? Events in his recent past may well provide a clue.

On June 25, 1963, Lee Oswald applied for a passport in New Orleans for travel to Europe, including the Soviet Union. Passport applications warn that it is illegal for a member of the Communist Part

either to apply for or make use of a passport. The applications also require the applicant to swear that he has not been a member of a Communist organization for 12 months or “ever sought or claimed the benefits of the nationality of any foreign state.” On the basis of what we now know of Lee Harvey Oswald, it would seem a foregone conclusion that his passport application would be denied. Not only was he reported to have publicly stressed (perhaps, over-stressed?) his alleged Communist associations and sympathies, but he had attempted to become a Soviet citizen in 1959, after his much-publicized “defection” to the Soviet Union. In November, 1959, he wrote out an affidavit in Moscow, declaring “I affirm that my allegiance is to the Soviet Socialist Republic.” Though denied Soviet citizenship, he stayed and worked within the Soviet Union for three years, before returning to the U.S. with the cooperation of the American Embassy in Moscow. Nevertheless, despite this record and despite the explicit provisions of the passport application requirements, Oswald was granted a passport—and in record time. Reported in the *New York Herald-Tribune* on November 26, 1963: “The passport was issued one day later. It still isn’t clear how it was processed so rapidly.” Armed with this passport, Oswald traveled to Mexico on September 26 and attempted to obtain visas to Cuba and the Soviet Union. He approached both the Russian and Cuban consuls in Mexico City, but stormed out in anger when informed that a period of three to four months would have to elapse until his visa could be cleared by the Cuban and Soviet Foreign Ministries. For some reason, Oswald seemed desperately eager to get to Cuba and/or the U.S.S.R. And for some reason time was of the essence.

*“What need we fear who knows it,
When none can call our power to account?”*

—Macbeth, Act V, Scene I.

If, indeed, powerful forces were behind the assassination of the President, and if they had carefully selected Oswald as their instrument, what better way of both diverting suspicion from themselves and destroying any reduction of Cold War tensions than by having their tool return from Cuba or Russia to murder the President of the United States? The tenuous link between Oswald and Communism so carefully constructed over the years would then be unbreakable. At the best, relations between Washington and the Socialist nations would hit a new low, and at the worst an invasion of Cuba or “hard” actions in Europe and Asia would be precipitated. In one swift blow, the forces of war would have eliminated the President who frustrated their plans and irrevocably destroyed his policies as well. This possibility did not escape Cuban authorities. The Cuban Foreign Ministry stated on November 26th that the Oswald application for a visa to Cuba “was among details confirming our suspicion that the Kennedy assassination was a provocation against world peace perfectly and minutely prepared by the most reactionary sectors of the United States. It is evident that these sectors planned beforehand to involve Cuba and the Soviet Union in these events.” Had Oswald been granted his visas, world peace may well have died under the same sniper’s bullet that killed John Kennedy.

Another intriguing aspect of Oswald’s trip to Mexico is a report that his activities there were

scrutinized by a “federal agency.” William M. Kline, Chief of the U.S. Customs Bureau’s investigative services in Laredo, Texas, stated on November 25 that Oswald’s movements were watched at the request of “a federal agency at Washington.” (N. Y. *Post*, November 25, 1963.) Eugene Pugh, U.S. agent in charge of the Customs office on the American side of the bridge at Laredo, Texas, said that Oswald had been checked by American Immigration officials on entering and leaving Mexico. Mr. Pugh admitted to the N. Y. *Herald-Tribune* that this was “not the usual” procedure. He said Americans were not required to check in with Immigration when crossing the border, “but U. S. Immigration has a folder on Oswald’s trip.” (N. Y. *Herald-Tribune*, November 26, 1963.) Pugh’s statements, according to the N. Y. *Post*, “made it apparent that at least one federal agency was aware of Oswald’s movements.” (N. Y. *Post*, November 26, 1963.)

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If Oswald was shadowed in Mexico by an unnamed federal agency, why was he not under surveillance in Dallas, also? Are there forces in Washington whose interest in Oswald was more than investigative?

The interest of the unnamed “federal agency” apparently was not restricted to Oswald’s stay in Mexico. Dallas Police Chief Jesse Curry indicated that the F.B.I. had knowledge of Oswald’s presence in Dallas before the assassination, but did not inform the local police force. He said that the F.B.I. interviewed Oswald on November 16th, only six days before the President’s death. “It is customary for the F.B.I. to notify local police when someone with a subversive background arrives in the area,” Curry said. (N. Y. *World-Telegram & Sun*, November 23, 1963.) Chief Curry later backed down somewhat on his original statement, stating “I do not want to accuse the FBI of withholding information.” (N. Y. *Herald-Tribune*, November 24, 1963.) Gordon Shanklin, F. B. I. agent in charge at Dallas, denied that his agency had interviewed Oswald before the President’s visit (N. Y. *Times*, November 25, 1963). His denial was apparently unconvincing. Commented the London *Daily Telegraph*: “There is going to be a tremendous outcry in Congress about the fact that the F. B. I. apparently knew about Oswald’s presence in Dallas, but failed to report it to the local police.” (November 25, 1963.) On November 29, John D. Harris, in a Hearst Headline Service report from Dallas to the N. Y. *Journal-American* reported: “The F.B.I. interviewed Lee Harvey Oswald, accused slayer of President John F. Kennedy, as late as September of this year . . . The September interview took place in the nearby community of Irving . . . The other two sessions were in Fort Worth in 1962 after Oswald’s return from his defection to the Soviet Union, and in New Orleans last summer . . . The F.B.I. declined comment on these reports.” (N. Y. *Journal-American*, November 29, 1963.) David Wise, Washington Bureau Chief of the New York *Herald-Tribune* confirmed the *Journal-American* report on December 3.

Lee Oswald was under surveillance by a “federal agency at Washington” during his trip to Mexico to obtain visas to Cuba and the Soviet Union. He was interviewed by the F.B.I. in Dallas, according to

Chief Curry, within four days of the shooting, when the F.B.I. knew of the President's visit and must have known that Oswald worked in a building overlooking the route of the proposed Presidential motorcade. And yet nothing was done to alert local authorities to the presence in Dallas of such a volatile political personality, to put him in "protective custody" during Kennedy's stay in Dallas, or to inform the Secret Service, whose job it was to compile lists of known agitators who might cause trouble during a Presidential visit. The F.B.I. appears to be guilty of either an incredible dereliction of duty, or something far more sinister. Is the hand that reached out from Washington to insure Oswald a passport, to trace his travels in Mexico, and perhaps to guide him in even more shadowy activities, also the hand that felled John Kennedy?

*"How many ages hence
Shall this lofty scene be acted over,
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!"*

—Julius Caesar, Act III, Scene I

If there is indeed a possibility that the strands of treachery were spun in Washington, an explanation at least provides itself to the question of how the alleged assassin Lee Harvey Oswald could have known in advance of the route the President's motorcade would take through Dallas. Oswald accepted a job at the Texas School Book Depository on October 15th, weeks before the planned Presidential motorcade was made public. If his alleged assassination of the President was more than the impromptu gesture of a deranged individual, Oswald must have chosen his place of work with some definite knowledge that it would give him a good view of the Presidential car. It was announced on September 28th that the President would visit Dallas, but at first it was thought there would be no motorcade.

Detailed plans for the Presidential stay in Dallas were not made until a few weeks before the visit, and the parade route itself was not published until November 21st, the day before the assassination. If the murder of the President was a prearranged affair there must have been an advance leak on the Presidential plans to the conspirators. If the accused assassin, Oswald, was acting on his own, it must have been an incredibly spur-of-the-moment decision, unlike all previous assassinations in U.S. history which, even when carried out by obviously deranged individuals, were detailed and long-thought-out affairs. The building itself, so perfectly suited for an attempt on the passing Presidential car, would seem to indicate the existence of more than a coincidental convergence of chance factors. In a dispatch from Dallas to the N. Y. *Times* on the day of the assassination entitled "Ambush Building Chosen With Care," it is stressed that "The building in which President Kennedy's assassin hid today could hardly have been more suited to the use made of it. . . . The Texas School Book Depository is a seven-story brick building that looms above the route Mr. Kennedy's motorcade took through Dallas. It is . . . set back and above the street on which Mr. Kennedy's car was traveling. The killer fired a high-powered rifle from the southeast corner window of the sixth floor. Jack C. Cason, president of the Depository, said someone could have hidden on that floor for several days without being discovered." (N. Y. *Times*, November 23, 1963.)

While the Secret Service could not check every room in every building overlooking the Presidential motorcade, it is surprising that a building so strategically placed on the Presidential route was not even given a cursory check. (The N. Y. *Post*'s Dallas correspondent reported on November 25th that "there is still no indication of what, if any, advance security arrangements were made about the textbook warehouse from which the fatal bullets were fired.") Certainly it would have been simple, since the building was barred to unauthorized persons, to obtain a list of its employees and check them against the names of known political agitators or mentally disturbed persons. But no such precaution was taken. As remarkable as the F. B. I.'s failure to inform local authorities of Oswald's presence in Dallas is the failure of the Secret Service to discover him through its own intelligence service, the Protective Research Section, whose function, according to Robert J. Donovan, author of "The Assassins" (Harper & Brothers, 1955) "is to spot the assassin or potential assassin before he appears." According to Donovan, "agents accompanying the President on trips or preceding him on the advance detail which is the harbinger of every Presidential journey out of Washington carry photographs of . . . suspects and would, upon seeing them, bar them from the President's presence . . . Often when the Secret Service has reason to be concerned about a person—a mental case for example—in a city the President is to visit, it will ask his family to keep him home while the President is in town. A local policeman will be posted outside to make sure the promise is kept. When such a voluntary arrangement is not possible, local police, at the behest of the Secret Service, will keep the person under surveillance until the President has departed." According to the N. Y. *Times* of November 23rd, the Dallas police gave Secret Service agents "a list of known agitators who might cause trouble. The agents studied their pictures and habits. Buildings along the route were checked." (N. Y. *Times*, November 23, 1963.)

Secret Service agents had "a list of known agitators who might cause trouble." But they knew nothing of Lee Harvey Oswald, a man of erratic background and dubious activities who worked in a key building on the Presidential route. "Buildings were checked" but not the one offering probably the best shot at the President along the route. All precautions were taken, and no precautions. The minnows were safely netted, but the shark (or sharks) remained free.

"An attack upon the King is considered to be parricide against the State, and the jury and the witnesses and even the judges are the children. It is fit, on that account, that there should be a solemn pause before we rush to judgment."

—Thomas Erskine, in his celebrated defense of Hadfield.

The blackest aspect of the whole fantastic Oswald case is the behavior of the Dallas police force. Police authorities pulled out every stop in their campaign to convince the world that Oswald was the assassin, engaging in a campaign of official smear, innuendo and vilification almost without parallel in Western juridical history. Oswald was denied the elemental civil rights of any prisoner. He was questioned for three days without being permitted the basic rights of legal counsel, while police

officials handed out every kind of unsubstantiated allegation of his guilt to a voracious press. When the time came to transfer him to the Dallas county jail he was displayed like a chained animal to press and television photographers and completely unprotected from the assassin's bullet that cut him down in the heart of Dallas police headquarters. Both his treatment while alive and the circumstances of his death imply the gravest dereliction of duty by Dallas police, if not active police complicity in a premeditated campaign to first defame and then destroy Oswald. Whatever the motives of the Dallas police, they bear a direct, legal responsibility for Oswald's death.

The question of Oswald's outrageous treatment by Dallas police authorities does not bear upon his role, either active or passive, in the plot against the President. The almost obscene haste of the police to indict and convict Oswald before the eyes of the world must stand on its own as a shameful page in the annals of American jurisprudence. It is no less reprehensible if caused by the frantic haste of police authorities to get themselves "off the hook" for the President's death; if motivated by deeper and more sinister motives it may well indicate an organized effort to silence Oswald before he could implicate his accomplices, perhaps in high places.

Though the evidence against Oswald was almost entirely circumstantial, Dallas police did not hesitate from the day of his capture to present his guilt as conclusive and irrefutable. One of the police department's favorite gambits in its public campaign against Oswald was to stress his alleged leftist political activities as a causative factor in his assault on the President. Bob Considine of the Hearst Headline Service reported one day after the assassination that the Dallas police department "rests its case as of now on these points," and enumerates a number of points tying Oswald to the murder, concluding with the statement that "In addition to his efforts of several years ago to obtain Soviet citizenship, he has subsequently been active in the Fair Play for Cuba movement and was arrested in New Orleans for passing out Communist literature." Considine's dispatch was titled, appropriately enough, "Marksman Castro 'Red'". This attempt to substantiate a charge of murder on the basis of the accused's alleged political beliefs continued up to and beyond Oswald's own assassination. Within hours of the President's murder, Captain Will Fritz, head of the Dallas police homicide bureau, who supposedly knew nothing of Oswald before the murder, "identified Oswald as an adherent of the left-wing Fair Play for Cuba Committee." (N. Y. *Times*, November 23, 1963.) Dallas Police Chief Jesse Curry quoted Oswald on November 23rd as having told police that he was "a member of the Communist Party" and that he was apparently "proud of being a Communist." (New York *Times*, Nov. 24, 1963.) The police chief also "disclosed that a substantial amount of Communist literature has been found in Oswald's room. He did not specify what the literature was." (N. Y. *World-Telegram & Sun*, Nov. 23, 1963.)

The categorical denial of the Communist Party that Oswald had "any association" with the party did not dampen the fervor of Dallas police in dragging red herrings across the trail of the President's assassination. The campaign continued even after Oswald's death. On Nov. 26th, Dallas County Assistant District Attorney Bill Alexander announced that police had "uncovered" Communist Party letters mailed to Oswald among his belongings in the rooming house where he lived, "all of them

written to Oswald in a warm and friendly way,” according to Alexander. The Assistant District Attorney deepened the sinister implications of the discovery by revealing the incredible fact that, according to Scripps-Howard reporter Seth Kantor, “the letters were written on Communist Party of America stationery.” (N. Y. *World-Telegram & Sun*, Nov. 26, 1963.) Alexander concluded that the letters proved Oswald to be “an active worker in the Communist cause.” (N. Y. *Post*, November 27, 1963.) The police throughout seemed more interested in driving red nails through Oswald’s coffin than in uncovering the actual facts of the President’s murder.

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From the moment of Oswald’s arrest, the police were frantically anxious to convince public opinion that he, and he alone, had shot the President. The New York *Journal-American* reported one day after Kennedy’s death, that “there appeared to be no question in the mind of Dallas police that they had their man.” (November 23, 1963.) On November 24, the *Journal-American* reported that, “in face of an unusual reticence on the part of F.B.I. and Secret Service men to acknowledge that the manhunt for the murderer of Mr. Kennedy is finished, Dallas Police Department Homicide Chief Captain Will Fritz said: ‘This case is cinched.’ . . . Chief of Police Curry told reporters, ‘This man killed the President . . . Oswald has shown no intention of making a statement, but there’s no question that he did it.’” According to the *Journal-American* report, “The alleged assassination weapon has been in Washington at the F.B.I. laboratories since late Friday. Police Chief Curry said tonight he was not concerned by the fact that the F.B.I. had not returned a ballistics report. ‘We understand that it will be favorable when it comes,’ the Chief said.”

The police did not change their line after Oswald’s murder by Jack Ruby. Captain Fritz said on November 24th, “We don’t know of anyone else who was involved in it, and as far as we are concerned the case is closed.” (N. Y. *Herald Tribune*, November 25, 1963.) According to the N. Y. *Times*, “Chief of Police Jesse Curry said he felt certain now that Oswald was the President’s murderer.” (Nov. 25, 1963.) United Press International reported on November 25th that “as far as Dallas police were concerned, the Oswald case was closed.” Norman Poirier reported from Dallas to the New York *Post* on November 25th, that District Attorney Henry Wade “said flatly that the file of evidence against Oswald provided an air-tight case.” Wade added, “I have sent men to the electric chair with less evidence.” (A horrifying thought.)

The incredible assertion that the case against Oswald was closed by his murder and the inexcusable failure of police to protect Oswald within police headquarters, sent a wave of shock through a nation numbed by a surfeit of tragedy. Commented the N. Y. *Times* in an editorial titled “Spiral of Hate”:

“The Dallas authorities, abetted and encouraged by the newspaper, TV and radio press, trampled on every principle of justice in their handling of Lee H. Oswald. It is their sworn duty to protect every prisoner, as well as the community, and to afford each accused person full opportunity for his

defense before a properly constituted court. The heinousness of the crime Oswald was alleged to have committed made it doubly important that there be no cloud over the establishment of his guilt . . . After two days of such pre-findings of guilt, in the electrically emotional atmosphere of a city angered by the President's assassination and not too many decades removed from the vigilante tradition of the old frontier, the jail transfer was made at high noon and with the widest possible advance announcement. Television and newsreel cameras were set in place and many onlookers assembled to witness every step of the transfer—and its tragic miscarriage. It was an outrageous breach of police responsibility—no matter what the demands of reporters and cameramen may have been—to move Oswald in public under circumstances in which he could so easily have been the victim of attack. The police had even warned hospital officials to stand by against the possibility of an attempt on Oswald's life.” (November 25, 1963.)

In a moving indictment, Scripps-Howard columnist Richard Starnes wrote on November 26th:

“Our credentials as a civilized people stand suspect before the world, of course, but the real depth of the disaster that has befallen us cannot yet be measured. In its 188th year, the republic has fallen upon unspeakably evil days, and great mischief is abroad in the land. It remains to be seen whether more convulsions will rack us before it is over . . .”

The first wave of hysterical public condemnation of Oswald was beginning to be replaced, in some quarters at least, with a sense of shock and doubt.

Legal authorities were among the first to speak out against the treatment of Oswald by Dallas police. On November 27th, the Bar Association of San Francisco decried the role of both the police and news media in prejudging Oswald's case. The Bar Association issued a statement declaring that “We believe that television, radio and the press must bear a portion of the responsibility which falls primarily on the Dallas law-enforcement officials. Both press media and law-enforcement officials must seek to protect the rights of accused persons against the damage to them, and consequently to our system of justice, which can come from revealing information concerning the accused at times when the revelation might inflame the public.” (N. Y. *Times*, November 28, 1963.) In a letter to the N. Y. *Times*, seven teachers of the administration of criminal justice at the Harvard Law School issued a blistering attack against the entire handling of Oswald by Dallas authorities. “From Friday, November 22, through Sunday,” the letter read, “the shocking manner in which our processes of criminal justice are often administered was exhibited to ourselves and to the world . . . Precisely because the President's assassination was the ultimate in defiance of law it called for the ultimate in vindication of law. The law enforcement agencies, in permitting virtually unlimited access to the news media, made this impossible. Not only would it have been virtually impossible to impanel a jury which had not formed its own views on those facts which might come before it, but much of the information released, such as statements by Mrs. Oswald, might have been legally inadmissible at trial . . . For the fact is that justice is incompatible with the notion that police, prosecutors, attorneys, reporters, and cameramen should have an unlimited right to conduct *ex parte* public trials in the

press and on television . . . the lamentable behavior of the Dallas law enforcement agencies and of the communications media reflect a flaw in ourselves as a society.” (N. Y. *Times*, December 1, 1963.)

* * *

The failure of the Dallas police to give adequate protection to the most valuable prisoner in the world has many significant implications. How was Ruby able to penetrate the extensive security precautions of the Dallas police and get close enough to Oswald to fire the fatal shot? Were the police in league with Ruby to eliminate Oswald? And if so, was it because he was innocent and they had no case that would stand up against him in court, or because he was guilty of at least some degree of involvement in the plot against the President and might implicate the other conspirators? Did Ruby and Oswald know each other? While it is too early to give conclusive answers to any of these questions, certain facts do present themselves.

For one thing, Dallas police were not lax in taking security measures to bar unauthorized persons from the police station. Scripps-Howard correspondent Seth Kantor reported from Dallas on November 25 that “Each of us newsmen had been carefully checked—we showed our credentials—before being allowed into the basement driveway area . . . the precautions taken by Dallas police appeared to be thorough.” (N.Y. *World-Telegram & Sun*, November 25, 1963.) Ruby could not just casually have slipped into the police station basement through the cordons of police guards. If he was there, he was there with the knowledge and approval of the police themselves.

Dallas police had every reason to expect an attempt on Oswald’s life. The Police Department had received specific information from federal authorities of death threats against Oswald. Stuart H. Lorry of the N.Y. *Herald Tribune* reported from Washington that “just two hours before Jack Ruby gunned Lee Harvey Oswald to death in a basement garage in Dallas Police Headquarters, the FBI warned both the police and the sheriff in Dallas of an anonymous threat on the life of the man charged with the assassination of President Kennedy . . . ‘We passed the information along to the local authorities,’ the (F.B.I.) spokesman said. ‘We don’t know what happened after that.’” (N. Y. *Herald Tribune*, Nov. 26, 1963.)

Knowing this, why was Oswald not transferred to the county jail at another time, without the knowledge of the press or general public? To insure his safety, he could have been smuggled out of the police station late at night. The decision to transport Oswald to the county jail in an armored car, while ostensibly for his safety, nevertheless exposed him to increased danger because the vehicle’s roof was too high for it to be driven into the basement and Oswald had to walk some distance through the milling crowds of newsmen to reach it. The New York *Post*’s Dallas correspondent reported on November 25: “Had police used a patrol wagon, this procedure would have eliminated the long walk through the lines of television cameramen and reporters who had been alerted, as had the city, the nation, the world—and Ruby—as to the precise time of Oswald’s appearance.” Even

using the armored car, however, the *Post* pointed out, “Oswald could have been escorted through the basement, not only with guards at his side but walking in front of him as well as behind him.” It appears that through procedures allegedly designed to protect Oswald, the Dallas police did everything possible to expose him to the assassin’s bullet.

Dallas police argued that Ruby was probably admitted to police headquarters because as a “police buff” he was known and liked by the guards. But, asks the New York *Post*, “if they knew him well—and they did—they also must have known that he had a temper famous for its violence and that he had been twice arrested on charges of carrying concealed weapons. In circumstances as plainly explosive as these how did police allow entrance to a man who was considered something of a troublesome character and who was, to say the least, not always a model of stability?” (N. Y. *Post*, November 25, 1963.) It is obvious that Jack Ruby was in the Dallas Police Station basement at the moment of Oswald’s transfer by more than chance.

What motives did Jack Ruby have for shooting Oswald? The story that he offers, and that seems to find favor with the Dallas police, is that he acted out of personal, “patriotic” passion to avenge the murder of the President and “the suffering of Mrs. Kennedy and the little ones.” Even a brief study of his background renders this version unlikely. A petty hoodlum with ties to Chicago and Los Angeles gangs and a record of union racketeering, he had never before evidenced any noticeable degree of super-patriotism. Despite his professed devotion to President and Mrs. Kennedy, he hadn’t even bothered to witness their motorcade through Dallas. “Patriotic he wasn’t, a police buff he was,” a UPI dispatch of November 25 quoted Herbert C. D. Kelly, once part owner of the Carousel Club in Dallas. According to Kelly, “Ruby wasn’t interested in politics. I doubt that he even voted.” Ruby was about as likely a candidate to “avenge” the assassination of the President as Joe Valachi.

If a patriotic motivation is ruled out, it is still possible that Ruby was seized by a sudden uncontrollable rage when he saw Oswald, and committed his act on the spur of the moment. A study of his actions in the preceding days makes this explanation, too, extremely unlikely. Ruby had showed up at a previous news conference at the police station that followed the killing of the President, almost as if to “case” security measures in the police headquarters. According to a report in the N. Y. *World-Telegram & Sun* of November 25, “Police are investigating the possibility that Ruby’s movements in the hours following the President’s death could have been planned movements—including a ‘dry run’ early Saturday during the Oswald confrontation with reporters.” Further lessening the possibility that Ruby’s act was unpremeditated is the fact that he came to the police station armed with the murder weapon. (Interestingly enough, a snub-nosed .38—the same gun with which Oswald was alleged to have killed Patrolman Tippit, and on which no ballistics results have been forthcoming from Washington.)

The most likely explanation is that Ruby killed the accused either because Oswald was innocent of any complicity in the assassination or because Oswald had to be silenced before he could implicate anyone else involved in the murder of the President.

* * *

If Oswald was killed because he was innocent, Ruby could only have been put up to the act by the Dallas police. If they had arrested the wrong man in the panic after their initial failure to protect the President, and then gone far out on a legal limb with statements that he was definitely guilty, one way out for them would be to arrange for the “elimination” of the embarrassing suspect by someone not directly involved with the force—such as loyal “police buff” Jack Ruby. Promises that Jack Ruby would be released on a verdict of temporary insanity would have been easy to make (if not so easy to keep). This explanation of Oswald’s murder is rather unlikely, not because such a plot is beyond the Dallas police (for proof of that, one need only study their actions of the past weeks) but because too many factors point to Oswald’s involvement in some way with the death of the President, if not in the actual role of the assassin at least in a subsidiary capacity. But in the interest of fairness, as well as to dispel some of the public hysteria and hyperbole surrounding Oswald’s part in the death of the President, it is necessary to point out that the evidence against him (all of it circumstantial) is hardly conclusive. In an interview with the New York *Journal-American*, Emile Zola Berman, the noted trial lawyer, was asked to set forth the challenges that could be made by Oswald’s defense counsel to the charges of the Dallas prosecutor. The *Journal-American* first presented the evidence against Oswald and then Mr. Berman’s comments:

“EVIDENCE: Ballistic tests prove that the rifle on which Oswald’s fingerprints were found was the weapon that killed President Kennedy.

COMMENT: This only proves that he had handled the rifle, not that he killed the President. His fingerprints were on it because the rifle belonged to him. No one can tell whether the fingerprints were recent or a week old. We are not told whether there were other fingerprints on the rifle too. Some other person may have used the rifle to shoot the President and concealed his fingerprints.

EVIDENCE: His palm prints were on a box in the room of the building where he worked and where the assassin fired.

COMMENT: Since he worked in that room it is only natural that his palm prints would be found on boxes and other objects located there. This in no way connects him with the murder.

EVIDENCE: Serial numbers of the rifle traced it back to Oswald.

COMMENT: Conceding that he owned the murder weapon the question is did he use it to kill the President? Mere ownership doesn’t establish that he committed the crime. . . .

EVIDENCE: Oswald was in the building before and immediately after President Kennedy was killed.

COMMENT: Oswald worked in the building. He was identified by the manager of the company he worked for as an employee there. He had a perfect right to be there. This negates any idea that he had sneaked into the building and was there for some nefarious purpose.

EVIDENCE: He was an expert marksman.

COMMENT: This proves that he could have done it. But having the skill to commit a crime doesn't prove that you did it.

EVIDENCE: A neighbor who drove Oswald to work on the day of the assassination said that he carried an oblong package. Police say it was the rifle.

COMMENT: On what basis do the police make that inference? The neighbor didn't see what was in the package. It was mere speculation that it contained the rifle." (N. Y. *Journal American*, Nov. 26, 1963.)

In Dallas, the word "evidence" is used rather loosely. On November 24th, Dallas District Attorney Henry Wade said that Oswald's palm print was found on the murder weapon, but even this was denied by the FBI. The Scripps-Howard correspondent in Dallas reported on Nov. 25 in a dispatch entitled "FBI Disputes DA On Rifle Palm Print" that "there is a behind-the-scenes rift today between the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Dallas District Attorney Henry Wade. . . . Wade said Oswald's palm print was found on the metal of the rifle which killed the President. Federal authorities have confided that no reliable print was found on the murder weapon when it was flown to Washington for laboratory study." According to the Scripps-Howard correspondent, the exploded story of the palm print was "the most conclusive piece of evidence" against Oswald that Wade had presented. (N. Y. *World-Telegram & Sun*, November 25, 1963.)

Wade presented a similar bit of "evidence" the same day. He reported that his men had found a map in Oswald's room marking the route President Kennedy was to take the day he was killed. According to a report in the N.Y. *Journal-American*, "The map reportedly was in such detail that it charted the path of the bullet which murdered the President." (November 25, 1963.) But this "map" was soon dispatched to the criminological limbo where so much of Dallas police "evidence" found a final resting place. The first note of discord was reported in a United Press International dispatch from Dallas on November 25, which stated that "some confusion developed over the reported finding of a map in Oswald's room showing the path of the assassination bullets. Wade said that such a map had been found. The police said they knew nothing about it." If the Dallas police could not protect the life of the President of the United States, if they allowed his alleged assassin to be slain in their own police headquarters, if they were incapable of observing the most elementary rule of due process, at least they are imaginative.

While the possibility that Ruby killed Oswald because the Dallas police knew that only in death

could they make their charges against him stick exists and cannot be totally disregarded, it seems more likely that Ruby shot Oswald to seal his lips forever on the actual circumstances of the President's assassination. While a conclusive link between Oswald and Ruby has not yet been established, there are indications that the two knew each other. An employee of Ruby's night spot, the Carousel Club, has definitely identified Oswald as being in the club a week before the assassination of Kennedy. The two men live within blocks of each other in the Oak Cliff suburb of Dallas. And, most significant of all, Mrs. Marguerite Oswald, the accused assassin's mother, revealed on December 1st that the night before her son's murder F.B.I. men showed her a photograph of Ruby and asked her to tell whatever she knew of him. The *New York Times* reported that Mrs. Oswald "insisted that on the night of November 23, about 17 hours before Ruby shot her son, an agent from the Federal Bureau of Investigation showed her Ruby's photograph." According to the *Times* report, "Mrs. Oswald contended that the episode . . . indicated that the authorities had advance knowledge that Ruby might attempt to kill Oswald." The F.B.I., according to the *Times*, "would officially make no comment on Mrs. Oswald's charge. It was understood, however, that Federal agencies had acknowledged that she had been shown a photograph that night for identification, but spokesmen would not disclose whether it was that of Ruby." Informed that the F.B.I. would not confirm her account, Mrs. Oswald declared "I cannot be mistaken. I will never forget that photograph. I will never forget that face." (*New York Times*, Dec. 2, 1963.)

Much remains to be known of the relationship between the two men. But what we do know indicates that Oswald was murdered, not in a flush of patriotic fervor or mad rage, but in the cool calculating manner of the professional killer. The bullet that tore into Lee Oswald seems to have been intended not to punish, but to silence, him.

* * *

The American press has, of course, been cautious about postulating the existence of a political conspiracy which killed the President and then eliminated his alleged assassin. Such a conspiracy, to be successful, would have to enjoy support and protection from powerful forces both within and without the government, a thought entertained with comfort by few Americans. But unpleasant facts will not disappear by ignoring them. And if the posture of the American press in discovering and examining all the facts in the murder of the President and Oswald has resembled the ostrich more than the eagle, the European press has shown no such reticence. More sophisticated, more analytical, and more objective than the American press, it has examined the assassination with a cold, appraising eye, and its conclusions have not been reassuring.

In France, *Paris-Jour* carried an article entitled "Oswald Cannot Have Been Alone In Shooting" (November 27, 1963.) The Dallas correspondent of *Paris-Presse* reported from Dallas on November 27th that the F.B.I. had evidence that Oswald had an accomplice beside him at the window who helped him to fire. According to *Paris-Presse*, Dallas Patrolman J. D. Tippit was shot to allow the

other man to get away. *Liberation* wrote that “there is no doubt that President Kennedy fell into a trap. He was the victim of a plot. And in this plot it is evident that the Dallas police, protectors of gangsters like Ruby, played a role you can only describe as questionable. They created a defendant, then allowed one of their stool pigeons to kill him.” Ruby’s role was closely scrutinized in the French press. “The behavior of this dubious person at the time of the assassination remains unexplained,” *France Soir* said on November 27th. The conservative *Le Monde* declared on November 25th its “serious doubts” about the Dallas police and their role in permitting Oswald’s murder.

In Great Britain, even the most conservative newspapers were deeply critical and suspicious of the circumstances surrounding Oswald’s treatment by Dallas authorities. The London *Daily Telegraph*’s Dallas correspondent reported that “it is recalled by officials, at last and only too well, that world opinion as much as American is not fully satisfied about this terrible affair. This has resulted in an elephantine attempt on the part of the local authorities concerned to cover up for one another.” (November 26, 1963.) On November 27th, the London *Daily Mail* said that “facts can be produced that a right-wing plot against the President had caused his death.”

In Germany, the *Hamburger Echo* declared on November 26 that Oswald’s murder in Dallas raised suspicions that “would make Kennedy’s assassination a gang plot.” The *Frankfurter Abendpost* said Dallas Police Captain Will Fritz’s declaration that the case was closed was “pitiful” and asked, “What was closed? Nothing.” The *Berliner Morgenpost* of West Berlin reported that U.S. authorities were checking to see whether Oswald was murdered to prevent him from talking and said “it is possible that Ruby silenced Oswald to cover the men behind the plot.” (November 26, 1963.)

In Austria, Vienna’s conservative *Neues Oesterreich* commented on November 25th that “Oswald can no longer talk, even if he wanted to, even if he was forced to. Was this the purpose of his death?” Another Viennese paper, the independent *Die Presse* examined the Oswald murder and asked, “What if he was only a victim of that spiral of panic among police who, after having become guilty of negligence in protecting Kennedy’s life, might have been driven to find a murderer at once and at all costs and pronounced Oswald guilty?” (November 25, 1963.)

The reaction of the Soviet press to the Kennedy assassination was one of grief and shock mixed with deep apprehension that the act was part of a carefully planned plot to heat up the Cold War by shifting the blame for the President’s death to the Soviet Union and Cuba. *Pravda* commented on November 24th that the murder of the President and the arrest of Oswald were being deliberately used to “stir up anti-Soviet and anti-Cuban hysteria.” A Washington dispatch to *Izvestia* said of Oswald and his killer, “One of the most important questions is: were not these two men linked in one plot? And were not people from the Dallas police mixed up in this plot?” (November 25, 1963.) A Tass dispatch from Washington declared that “all circumstances of President Kennedy’s tragic death allow one to assume that this murder was planned and carried out by the ultra right-wing, fascist and racist circles, by those who cannot stomach any step aimed at the easing of international

tensions, and the improvement of Soviet-American relations.” (November 25, 1963.)

The Eastern European press was also alarmed that the assassination of the President augured a new anti-Communist crusade in America. The East German news agency ADN charged on November 25th that the men behind Oswald’s murder could be found “in the same extreme right-wing circles who ordered the murder” of the President. *Trybuna Ludu* in Poland charged that the arrest of Oswald and his identification as a Communist was similar to the conviction of Van der Lubbe on charges of starting the Reichstag fire in Berlin in 1933. (November 26, 1963.)

Suspicious of a plot against the President were echoed throughout the world. The Indian daily *The Patriot* in New Delhi said “it looks now as though Oswald, who was silenced so quickly, was only an agent . . . The ease with which a night-club keeper with a criminal record could get access to a prisoner in police custody and shoot him suggests collusion . . . Obviously the effort of the Dallas authorities . . . was to insinuate that Oswald was connected with Communism and the Soviet Union . . . This, taken together with the Dallas police chief’s haste in declaring that the ‘case had been closed’ with the killing of Oswald points to the existence of influences bent on changing Mr. Kennedy’s policies at whatever cost.” *The Patriot*, an organ of the left-wing faction of the ruling Congress party, was voicing suspicions held by even the most conservative Indian political leaders. Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, a close associate of Gandhi and founder of the Swantantra (Freedom) Party, the main Conservative opposition grouping in India, expressed his anxiety over events in America in an interview on November 27 with the New York *Times* New Delhi correspondent, Thomas F. Brady. Rajagopalachari told Brady that neither Southern segregationists nor the “lunatic left” would possess the kind of money required to “facilitate a shooting like that done by Ruby and give him confidence of subsequent protection.” But, he declared, the “lunatic right” might well command such financial authority. In reporting Mr. Rajagopalachari’s analysis of the Dallas events, *Times* correspondent Brady pointed out that the Indian leader spoke only as one who “advocates not only ‘less Socialism in India’ but also closer alignment with the United States.”

Throughout Europe, Asia and the Middle East, suspicion was widespread that Kennedy had been assassinated in a right-wing political plot whose authors were still unknown. Those U.S. newspapers which most vocally resent such charges as a slur on the national integrity would express their outrage most effectively by disproving them.

*“A people’s wrath voiced abroad bringeth grave
danger, no less than public curse pronounced.”*

—Agamemnon by Aeschylus.

Lee Harvey Oswald may have been destined from the first as a Judas goat to lead what remains of the American Left to destruction at the hands of an enraged populace. The identification of Oswald, a man of hazy allegiances and ambiguous background, as pro-Communist was no accident: it was intended to launch a new wave of anti-Communist hysteria, plunge the Cold War into a new freeze

and, in the process, divert attention from the perpetrators and planners of the President's murder. If Oswald had succeeded in traveling to Cuba or Russia before his attack on the President, the shots in Dallas may well have had as fatal consequences for world peace as those fired at Sarajevo.

A vicious anti-Communist campaign has already started as a result of Oswald's arrest, though his subsequent murder by Jack Ruby has robbed it of considerable fire by planting doubts about the whole affair in the mind of even the most obtuse patriot. In the first few days after Kennedy's death, a concerted attempt was made by a segment of the U.S. press, spearheaded by the Hearst papers, to link Oswald to the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, and through FPFC directly to Castro.

In an article on FPFC entitled "Group Hid Behind Non-profit Veil" in the New York *Journal-American* on November 23, Walter K. Lewis charged that "The psychotic impulses that aided Lee Harvey Oswald, alleged assassin of President John F. Kennedy to pull the trigger of the instrument of death, may be strongly woven into the fabric of the organization he headed in Texas and which inspired his alleged action." (The fact that Oswald had nothing to do with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee outside of requesting and receiving some of its literature under an alias did not bother the *Journal-American*, any more than the fact that there was no Fair Play for Cuba organization in Texas for Oswald to head.) With customary responsibility, the *Journal-American* concluded by saying, "Whether the shot of infamy fired by Oswald had Castro's personal blessings on it only history will tell." On November 24 the *Journal-American* ran an article entitled "Demand Made to Outlaw Fair Play for Cuba Group" by Mike Pearl, quoting the statement of Rep. Frank Becker (R., N.Y.) that "it is about time the Attorney General's office investigated this organization and its members for the purpose of outlawing them or placing their names before the Subversive Activities Control Board." Pearl quoted Sen. Olin D. Johnston (D., S.C.) as promising swift action against the Fair Play for Cuba group. "We are doing everything possible in connection with this group," he said. "As soon as the Internal Security Subcommittee meets I am going to demand that the F.B.I. and Justice Dept. look into the matter." The same day, Rep. Joseph R. Pool (D., Texas) attacked the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and declared that "I certainly think that this group should be placed on the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations . . ." U.S. Senator Jacob J. Javits, a "liberal" Republican, commented that "I would say from what I know at this time that the FPFC is a pretty dangerous little outfit." On November 27 Rep. Albert W. Watson (D., S.C.) proposed that the House Committee on Un-American activities investigate the group, and introduced a resolution that would direct HUAC to investigate the "background, composition and activities" of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. (*N.Y. Times*, November 27, 1963.)

On November 29, an editorial in the New York *Herald Tribune*, in a brilliant display of verbal gymnastics, attempted to tie Castro to the Kennedy assassination on the grounds that pro-Castro rebels in Venezuela do not eschew violence in their campaign against the Betancourt Government. Commented the *Herald Tribune*: "On the one hand, Fidel Castro disclaims any association with President Kennedy's assassination by disavowing any association with Lee Harvey Oswald, an alleged member of the pro-Castro Fair Play for Cuba Committee. On the other hand, even if he were

not involved in the foul deed at Dallas, he is demonstrating every day, though behavior of his agents in Caracas, that he is perfectly capable of political assassination.”

In Washington, the investigations analyst for the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, Robert C. McManus, attacked FPFCC and urged a new crackdown on the Left. “I have long believed that Congress should meet the terms of the Communist Manifesto head-on, make a declaration that the Cold War is a real war, and create a new set of laws which would designate anyone giving aid and comfort to the enemy as an enemy of the United States.” (N.Y. *Journal-American*, Nov. 24, 1963.)

* * *

Oswald’s role as a lightning rod to draw the public’s bolts of wrath upon the heads of the Left was meeting with success, so much so that responsible figures in the Washington Establishment were becoming alarmed lest a tidal wave of neo-McCarthyism sweep the nation. James Reston reported in the New York *Times* on November 26, 1963 that “one of the things President Johnson is said to be concerned about is that the pro-Communist background of Lee Oswald, the man who is accused by the Dallas police of assassinating President Kennedy, may lead in some places to another Communist hunt that will divide the country and complicate the new President’s relations with Moscow.”

The more that is revealed about Oswald’s actual political background, the more murky it becomes. Far from being pro-Communist, he appears to have been a bitter critic of Soviet life. According to the N. Y. *Times* of November 23, Oswald became “disillusioned with life under Communist rule” while within the USSR. On November 29, the *Times* reported that Oswald, in a radio interview in New Orleans in the summer of 1963, expressed bitter opposition to the Soviet Union. On November 29, it was learned that Oswald had been writing a book on his stay in Russia in which, according to a UPI dispatch of that date from Fort Worth, he “criticized everything he found in the Soviet Union” and hinted that he “was working as a United States Secret agent.” On November 30, 1963 the New York *Herald Tribune*, in an article entitled “The Oswald Enigma: His Anti-Soviet Book,” reported that “Lee Harvey Oswald, variously described as a Marxist, pro-Communist and Communist, was writing an anti-Soviet book a year before he was seized as President Kennedy’s assassin.” According to the *Herald Tribune* account, Oswald was “bitterly critical of everything he had found during his travels” in Russia, and “hinted that he had gone to the Soviet Union as a U.S. secret agent.”

If Oswald really did have ties to U.S. Intelligence, much that is cloudy in the Dallas events would become clear, including perhaps the ambiguous role of the F.B.I. in the whole affair. But the implication that men in high places in Washington may have known, approved and even planned the tragic death of the President portends as much danger to the peace and security of the world as to the stability of the American polity.

If the facts of the President’s murder and its aftermath are ever fully revealed, it will not be as a

result of the plethora of official government investigations now taking place. While the special Presidential commission established by President Johnson to investigate events in Dallas is headed by a great jurist and a firm supporter of human rights, Chief Justice Earl Warren, his influence alone will not be enough to dispel the smoke-screen of contradictions, lies and distortions laid over the assassination by powerful forces in the government and press. As Scripps-Howard columnist Richard Starnes wrote in a column entitled "Truth Won't Out," on December 3, "realism instructs us to expect little from the special commission created by President Johnson to investigate the death of his predecessor." According to Starnes, "no member of the commission has any competence as an investigator, nor does any have access to a disinterested investigative staff. The commission will be almost wholly dependent upon the facts made available to it by the Secret Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Dallas Police Department. In a sense, of course, the special commission is investigating the role played by each of these agencies, and it is manifestly naive to expect these cops to bear witness against themselves or, indeed, each other." After a searching analysis of events in Dallas and the failure of the F.B.I and Secret Service in their representative security functions, Starnes concludes by asking, "Will the presence on the panel of Allen Dulles, erstwhile headmaster of the Central Intelligence Agency, assure us that the truth of Oswald's sojourn in the Soviet Union will ever be known? The Russians suggest they suspected him of being a spy. Can any realistic person ever believe any tentacle of the nation's elephantine espionage apparatus will own up to ever having Oswald on its payroll? Can we expect the F.B.I. to explain why Oswald was not under close surveillance? How many would-be defectors to Russia did they have to watch that day in Dallas when the President's widely heralded visit was scheduled? It is not in the nature of bureaucracies to destroy their carefully-nurtured fables of omniscience. It would be well to bear this in mind, and to remember that the findings of the Warren Commission will depend wholly on what is told by these agencies." (N. Y. *World-Telegram & Sun*, December 3, 1963.)

If the death of the President was a well-organized conspiracy to change the military and political direction of the United States, dark days are ahead for our country. People of good will everywhere will hope that some less calamitous explanation for the weird and terrible events in Dallas will present itself in the coming weeks and months. But if the President was indeed struck down to frustrate his aim of a limited detente in the Cold War and to plunge East-West relations into a new maelstrom of suspicion and fear, his death may be the prelude to far more terrifying events. Americans can best avenge the slaying of John F. Kennedy by searching out those behind the murder, whoever and wherever they may be, and by making sure that the policies and vision the President's enemies sought to destroy do not go to the grave with him. Let us determine to lock from our lives forever the cruelty and treacherous arrogance that erupted in Dallas, so that November 22nd need not mark, as the assassins may well have intended, the portal to a nuclear hell.