

DALLAS

In 1963, Dallas, Texas was a fast-growing modern city of nearly three-quarters of a million persons. Only a little more than a hundred years prior, John Neely Bryan, the founder of Dallas, built a small one-room log cabin on the banks of the Trinity River; now a city of skyscrapers rose above the flat lands around this site.

Dallas was one of the leading centres of political conservatism in the United States, and such noted right-wing personalities as oil billionaire H.L. Hunt and Major General Edwin A. Walker made their home there. In recent years the bitterness of the extreme right-wing political elements in Dallas had exploded into acts of violence directed against prominent governmental figures. In 1960, for example, during the election campaign, an unruly crowd physically assaulted Senator Lyndon B. Johnson and his wife in the lobby of the Adolphus Hotel.

A similar attack occurred on October 24th, 1963, less than a month before President Kennedy visited Dallas, and aroused considerable concern on the part of those charged with security precautions for the President's coming trip to the city. In that incident Adlai Stevenson, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, was jeered, jostled and spat upon by hostile demonstrators outside the Dallas Memorial Auditorium Theatre when he emerged after addressing a meeting on United Nations Day. The local, national and international reaction to this outbreak of violence was strong, and it provoked condemnation of the demonstrators from Dallas officials and newspapers. During November the Dallas papers conveyed pleas from civic leaders that citizens should not

persons as possible, however, a motorcade through the downtown area of the city was arranged.

Secret Service agents chose a 10-mile route which, after leaving the airport, wound through a portion of suburban Dallas and then through the downtown area along Main Street. When the motorcade reached the western end of downtown Dallas, it would pass through an attractively landscaped area known as Dealey Plaza before entering the Stemmons Freeway, which led to the Trade Mart. In Dealey Plaza, the motorcade would turn north from Main Street into Houston Street and, after one block, south-west into Elm Street.

On the north-west corner of Elm and Houston Streets stood a seven-storey orange brick warehouse and office building—the Texas School Book Depository. West of the Book Depository Building, the Elm Street roadway sloped gently down for a distance of about 400 feet, converged with Main and Commerce Streets, and passed beneath a railroad bridge known as the Triple Underpass. On the north side of Elm Street, about midway between the Book Depository and the Triple Underpass, a grassy knoll overlooked the street. A concrete pergola and a wooden fence prevented spectators in the plaza from seeing into the car parks and the railway yards on the knoll.

In addition to choosing the luncheon site and the motorcade route, the Secret Service was responsible for planning security measures for the trip, arranging the timetable for the President and taking preventive action against anyone in Dallas considered a threat to the President. To supplement its

home of a friend in Irving, a suburb of Dallas.

Four years earlier, Oswald had gone to the Soviet Union and had remained there until June 1962. Shortly after his return to Texas, he was interviewed twice by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and in the next seventeen months the F.B.I. continued to show an interest in his political activities in Dallas and New Orleans. During this time Oswald was active on behalf of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and subscribed to left-wing newspapers. On November 4th, 1963, less than three weeks before the President's visit, an F.B.I. agent learned that Oswald was working in the Book Depository Building. But his name was not passed on to the Secret Service by the F.B.I., and since it was not in the Secret Service's own files, Oswald was not among the local people under surveillance on the day of the assassination.

As the President's visit drew nearer, right-wing hostility in Dallas increased. On November 21st, a handbill sharply critical of President Kennedy was circulated on the streets of the city. (See Jackdaw Exhibit 2.) Fashioned after the "wanted" posters issued by the police, it displayed two photographs of the President and carried a series of inflammatory charges.

The author of the handbill was eventually identified as Robert A. Surrey, a 38-year-old printing salesman who had been closely associated with General Walker in his political and business activities for several years. On the morning of the assassination, a hostile full-page advertisement surrounded by a heavy black border appeared in *The Dallas Morning News*. It was signed by one

demonstrate or create disturbances during the President's visit.

President Kennedy's visit to Texas on November 22nd, 1963, had been under consideration for several months before it occurred. During the first week of November, Secret Service agents began to make advance preparations for the trip. An important purpose of the President's visit to Dallas was to speak at a luncheon given by business and civic leaders; the site eventually selected was the Trade Mart, a handsome new building not far from the airport. In order to permit the President to be seen by as many

own limited files, the Secret Service depends largely on local police departments and local offices of other federal agencies which advise it of potential threats immediately before the visit of the President to their community.

On October 16th, 1963, a new employee began work at the Texas School Book Depository. Lee Harvey Oswald, a former Marine just two days short of his twenty-fourth birthday, was hired to fill book orders. During the week Oswald lived in a rented room in Dallas; on week-ends he visited his Russian-born wife Marina and their two young daughters who were staying at the

Bernard Weissman and purported to be sponsored by "The American Fact-Finding Committee". Weissman later said that the committee was formed "strictly for the purpose of having a name to put in the paper". The funds needed to pay for the advertisement were collected from three wealthy Dallas businessmen, including a son of H. L. Hunt, by a local co-ordinator for the John Birch Society—an extreme right-wing political group. When President Kennedy saw the advertisement on November 22nd, he is reported to have shown it to his wife with the comment, "We're really in nut country now."



Governor and Mrs. Connally (in front) rode with President and Mrs. Kennedy in the President's limousine.

Associated Press