



Dallas 1963

WANTED
FOR
TREASON

MAN intended treason against the U.S. Constitution which he swore to uphold. He has been lawfully registered. He has supported the Communist Party of the U.S. and its agents. He has illegally invaded a foreign State with federal troops. He has consistently supported the Supreme Court's Anti-Christian rulings.

5. He has illegally invaded a foreign State with federal troops.

6. He has consistently supported the Supreme Court's Anti-Christian rulings.

U.S. over to the communist controlled United Nations.

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BILL MINUTAGLIO and STEVEN L. DAVIS

our enemies (Russia, Yugosla-

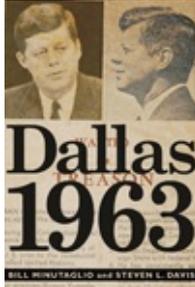
DALLAS 1963

BILL MINUTAGLIO
and
STEVEN L. DAVIS



T W E L V E

NEW YORK BOSTON



[Begin Reading](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

[Photos](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

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*For Bud Shrake, Shel Hershorn, and Gary Cartwright, who opened the doors to
Dallas 1963 & to Francesco Xavier, who looked for the American Dream*

America's leadership must be guided by the lights of learning and reason or else those who confuse rhetoric with reality and the plausible with the possible will gain the popular ascendancy with their seemingly swift and simple solutions to every world problem.

—JOHN F. KENNEDY,

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY IN DALLAS, NOVEMBER 22, 1963

Dallas, the city that virtually invited the poor insignificant soul who blotted out the life of President Kennedy to do it in Dallas.

—A LETTER RECEIVED BY DALLAS MAYOR EARLE CABELL,

DATED NOVEMBER 22, 1963

President Kennedy has something important to say to each of us in his death... He says to all of us that this virus of hate that has seeped into the veins of our nation, if unchecked, will lead inevitably to our moral and spiritual doom.

—MARTIN LUTHER KING JR., NOVEMBER 26, 1963

AUTHORS' NOTE

DALLAS 1963 is not meant to address the many conspiracy theories surrounding the murder of President Kennedy. Our aim is to introduce and then connect the outsize characters and the singular climate in a city that many blamed for killing a president.

Our book begins in early 1960 and ends in late 1963. A product of years of research, the work is informed by access to thousands of pages of archival material, thousands of documents released to the authors by the federal government, along with oral histories, local police reports, eyewitness accounts, interviews, newspaper and magazine accounts, unreleased photographs, dissertations, and film footage. The narrative is constructed with an acute eye toward accountability, toward documenting all the sources in the hundreds of footnotes. The book has been carefully scrutinized by several independent readers to detect and erase any unintended suggestions of political bias.

In the end, *Dallas 1963* is an exploration of how fear and unease can take root, how suspicions can emerge in a seemingly orderly universe. How, as Flannery O'Connor wrote, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*.

How no one—including a doomed president—could have understood the full measure of the swirling forces at work in a place called Dallas.

*Bill Minutaglio & Steven L. Davis
Texas, 2013*

PRELUDE

On a perfectly languorous Southern California day in September 1959, the bald-headed and bellicose leader of the Soviet Union seems to be bursting out of his skin. Things went so well with Frank Sinatra, but this is no good... no good at all.

Nikita Khrushchev can't get into Disneyland.

Until now, his history-making tour of the United States has been a delicate balance of mirth and diplomacy. He met with President Dwight Eisenhower and he spoke to a group of senators, including John Kennedy of Massachusetts, who has been busy plotting his chances for the presidency. He visited New York City, where over three thousand policemen protected him from the mostly curious, but occasionally angry onlookers.

Then he traveled the country—and it was great fun reaching out to clasp hands with a grinning Sinatra on the movie set for *Can-Can*. He even ogled Marilyn Monroe at a star-studded Hollywood luncheon, although another actor, Ronald Reagan, refused to meet with him, saying, “I believe that to sit socially and break bread with someone denotes friendship, and certainly I feel no friendship for Mr. Khrushchev.”¹

Khrushchev laughed while listening to Shirley MacLaine speaking Russian and then merrily rebuffed her teasing entreaties to dance. Days into his two-week trip, he seemed almost amused with America, with people scrambling to catch a glimpse of him. And perhaps he also sensed what some reporters were suggesting as they filed their stories about the first-ever visit to America by a Soviet head of state. That despite his wide smile, his five-foot-tall fire-hydrant physique, he carried a careening air of impending danger... maybe violence.

Right now Khrushchev is glowering. His aides are huddling, quietly conferring and then relaying the same bad news to him over and over again: He is not going to be allowed into Disneyland. The police have said they cannot guarantee his safety. Someone already hurled an overripe tomato at him during his Los Angeles motorcade. Worse could happen. Khrushchev, frowning and fuming, is incredulous that he could be killed inside an American theme park.

“I have been told I couldn't go to Disneyland,” he sneers. “Why not? What is it? Maybe you have rocket-launching pads there?”²

In Dallas, businessmen in their long, fine Neiman Marcus woolen overcoats stop at the Commerce Street newsstand to pick up copies of the morning paper. In the many weeks following the Soviet leader's visit, they have grown accustomed to scanning the headlines for more unnerving news about the snarling Russian bear—and about the

thousand other howling uncertainties that once seemed so far removed from the city gates.

With papers folded and tucked under their arms, shivering men troop along the dark, chilly downtown streets toward the humming oil companies, the quietly efficient insurance firms, and the wood-paneled bank towers. Overhead, there is at least one reassuring glow: a fiery red Pegasus—the giant, rotating, neon sculpture that serves as the city’s sentinel atop the majestic Magnolia Oil Building.

But for the last several weeks the calm, the soothing confidence often found inside some parts of Dallas, has become as elusive as smoke.

The *Dallas Morning News* reads like a litany of unease. Back in the Soviet Union, Khrushchev is making ominous claims about his nation’s power: “I am emphasizing once more that we already possess so many nuclear weapons... should any madman launch an attack on our state or on other socialist states, we would literally be able to wipe the country or countries that attack us off the face of the Earth.”

And in the United States, Richard Nixon and John Kennedy are beginning their sharp-edged joust for the presidency. For some, the future of the world might just be at stake. Nixon has already stood up to Khrushchev in Moscow at their “Kitchen Debate.” He is even hinting he will be more muscular than President Eisenhower when it comes to confronting communists. But Kennedy seems more deliberative, even cautious, when dealing with the Soviet menace—he says that only peace will breed freedom abroad.

“There are no magic policies of liberation,” Kennedy insists. “This is no longer an age when minutemen with muskets can make a revolution. The facts of the matter are that, no matter how bitter some feelings may be, or how confident some are of a victorious war for liberation—freedom behind the Iron Curtain and world peace are inextricably linked.”³

At almost the exact same time, a lean young ex-soldier named Lee Harvey Oswald is being personally welcomed by the mayor of Minsk and rewarded with both an apartment and a job. Oswald has left everything that he once knew in Texas so he can begin a new life in the Soviet Union. As the first U.S. Marine to ever defect to the Russians, Oswald expects that he will now be regarded as an important person, that he will finally receive the respect he deserves. Maybe, too, things will become more logical and clear in the Soviet Union than in his corner of Texas.

In the cozy shambles of Sol’s Turf Bar downtown, more Dallas businessmen swap theories over pastrami sandwiches and cold bottles of Lone Star beer. A nervous electricity is in the air—scrambling chatter about Eisenhower losing Cuba to the communists, atomic weapons and Soviet rockets to the moon, civil rights protesters, Red China, Supreme Court orders for Dallas to integrate its schools, and the presidential jockeying by Kennedy, Nixon, and Lyndon B. Johnson.

But there is something else building in the conversations—and not just the ones held downtown, but also those in the houses of worship, the sprawling mansions, and the universities across Dallas. In key corners of the city, an urgent confederacy of persuasive, often powerful men is forming. Ministers, publishers, congressmen, generals, and oilmen are meeting—at first informally, and then by clear design—and

coming to the same conclusions: Dallas and America are in danger. The East Coast liberals, the big-city Catholics, and the government-loving socialists are sapping the faith and eroding the bedrock of the Republic, weakening the country in the face of a very clear communist onslaught. It isn't paranoia. It is *real*—and too many people are turning a blind eye to the threats.

The members of this small, strong-minded set of citizens are hastily reinforcing each other—and insisting that Dallas should be the staging ground for the battles to protect the United States against all this unraveling, all this unholy unthreading of American traditions.

It is unlike anything in the history of the country: A handful of people in a seemingly staid city begin to set the stage for one of the greatest tragedies in American history. And on that stage will appear Dallas's most famous residents: the richest man in the world, the leader of one of the largest religious congregations in the country, a once revered military general, one of the nation's influential publishers, and the most ideologically rigid member of Congress—all joining forces in what seems to them nearly a second Civil War, a righteous crusade to define and defend all that America stands for.

Marooned in an outpost of super-patriotism, their first, cautionary discussions begin to morph into a cacophony of anger. And with it comes the beginning of a feverish march led by this citizen army... a march that will begin in earnest in the first days of 1960 and that will only subside, temporarily, in the bleak, waning days of November 1963.

As 1960 looms, several Southern states and cities—including Dallas—are still brazenly defying the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board* decision, refusing federal orders to integrate schools.

Everyone knows that just three years earlier, the governor of Arkansas ordered the men in his National Guard to surround a high school in the state capital of Little Rock and block nine Negro students from joining two thousand white ones. The troops were reinforced by a mob waving Confederate flags and lustily singing "Dixie." Residents rushed to stockpile guns and bullets. A car loaded with dynamite was stopped just one block short of the home where the black children and their parents were meeting. The governor had even issued a warning to the nation: "Blood will run in the streets."⁴

Finally, an anxious President Eisenhower unleashed "Operation Little Rock"—sending in an occupying army of battle-hardened federal soldiers led by Major General Edwin Walker, a tall, stiff-backed World War II hero who had grown up on a two-thousand-acre Texas ranch. Walker's men dogtrotted through Little Rock's streets, forcibly dispersing the civilians with bayonets clipped to the ends of their M1 rifles. Four platoons provided cover as the Negro students were escorted up the front steps of the school. The tense standoff came to an immediate end. Walker had broken down segregation in the soul of the South. Instantly, the national press praised him as a shining example of how Americans will fight for what is right.

But what wasn't reported in the dispatches from the domestic front lines was Walker's aching, private anguish in the wake of the history-making moment—and the way the uncompromising Texan saw America spiraling out of control as it lurched

toward 1960.

Walker, like General Robert E. Lee before him, forever wanted to be loyal to the Union. But in the weeks and months after Arkansas, building toward the dawn of the new decade, he was increasingly worried that his country was becoming divided in stark, absolute terms. In Lee's time, the abolitionists were the enemy. In Walker's time, it was the integrationists—and the liberals who blindly refused to believe that the United States was in grave danger of being undermined, even attacked, by the Soviet Union.

Walker had made a career following orders, but now, for the first time, he is deeply regretting his devotion to duty. He begins vaulting from ambivalence, to skepticism, to a sense of outrage.

And by 1960 he is becoming gratefully aware that he is not alone.

There are other super-patriots beginning to realize that so many of their countrymen are dulled to the wicked threats from inside and outside the nation. That carefully masked conspiracies are snaking into and through the United States, and accommodating and unsuspecting politicians in Washington seem clueless. Too many good, ordinary Americans have become complacent while a rash of socialist ideas are taking root and metastasizing like a cancer. From Social Security to fluoridated water to membership in the United Nations. And then there's the greatest threat of all: racial equality, spread by "communist" proponents like Martin Luther King Jr.

Walker makes discreet inquiries and soon learns that at least one group, the John Birch Society, also believes there is a bona fide conspiracy—not an ensemble of coincidences, but an organized effort that reaches the highest levels of government.

A dramatic, even frightening, thought blinks in Walker's mind: that even Dwight D. Eisenhower himself, the president of the United States, has lost his way, and is falling prey to the enemy—unknowingly becoming a "conscious, dedicated agent of the Communist Conspiracy."⁵

A burning idea persists with Walker: Eisenhower used federal troops—and used him—to forcibly integrate America. Walker had been used, by his own commanders, to unleash the very kinds of government-ordered social programming that would undermine the nation. In a stunning moment, Walker makes a fateful choice: He will abandon his abject loyalty to his superiors, including the president of the United States.

By 1960, the Texan has enlisted in the John Birch Society—and he feels welcome, at home, part of a spiritual awakening. The highly decorated general writes to the Birch Society founder: "I can foresee your movement... equal only in magnitude to Christ's teaching through the Apostles to heathens."⁶

In time, his devotion to the movement, to protecting America, will lead him directly to Dallas. And he will be far from alone.

By the dawn of the 1960s, more and more super-patriots will come from around the nation to Dallas—as if they have been summoned to join a war.

1960

JANUARY

Over the brisk winter holiday, mailmen in Dallas are bundled against the biting winter chill as they place a series of carefully signed and rather unexpected cards into the mailboxes of the city's most influential residents—men living on the exquisitely manicured, tree-lined streets that filter north of the tall downtown buildings.

The front of the card features a crisp photograph of an attractive young family: A handsome, vigorous-looking man is seated in a comfortable chair, book-lined shelves visible behind him. His face is creased into a charming smile, and his posture projects an easy and sanguine confidence. Perched on his lap is his ebullient daughter, peering down at an open book. Standing behind him is his elegantly attired wife, leaning over her well-dressed husband and child. Her manner seems more reserved, nearly brooding. A strand of pearls frames her long neck. She is very attractive but appears as remote as a silent screen star.

The portrait of this young family radiates a sense of dynastic ease, of a kind of practiced and inherited status. On the inside of the card is the raised, gold-embossed Great Seal of the United States: the fierce eagle clutching an olive branch in one talon and thirteen arrows in the other.

Below the seal appears a message: "Wishing you a Blessed Christmas and a New Year filled with happiness. Senator and Mrs. John F. Kennedy."

Each of the cards has been signed in the same careful handwriting: "Best—Jack."

Many of the people in Dallas are startled at the impressive, personalized card. Most of them have never met Kennedy. Many have never ventured into the Kennedy orbits on the East Coast—nor would they ever want to. In the powerful parts of Dallas, there is a mixture of old Southern families and the nouveau riche. And now, in the last few years, the oil money is flowing furiously into this New South city—sometimes seemingly despite men like Kennedy, despite the Northeastern establishment, despite the long and controlling reach of Washington.

Alongside the older mansions, there are newer thirty-room Taj Mahals where even the toilets are made with gold leaf. The most lavish store in the city, Neiman Marcus, specializes in making millionaires' dreams come true—it is preparing to debut its newest gift idea: His and Hers airplanes. People are flying out of Dallas's Love Field to New Orleans for lunch at Antoine's, or to Lake Tahoe to mingle with Frank Sinatra at the Cal Neva Resort. Or to Las Vegas to play poker with Benny Binion—once the most celebrated purveyor of illicit pleasures to the rich in Dallas, now their host at the famous Horseshoe Casino.

But just a few minutes from the mansions in Dallas, there are also clusters of

falling-down shacks, with no running water, settling into the gumbo-soil bottomlands. The city's schools, country clubs, and stores are still perfectly segregated... and bonded, through membership and memory, to ominous things that few speak about by name.

With the grand holiday cards from Kennedy in hand, the recipients place calls to friends. They learn that many others have received the very same greeting from Kennedy, not just in Dallas, but all over the country. Some must wonder if it is giving Kennedy some measure of satisfaction knowing that his cards are being talked about in a city like Dallas... in a place like Texas.

The Lone Star State is often like some rogue nation playing by its own political rules, as if it is about to secede and become its own country again. At the family retreat in Hyannis Port, at the place where the Kennedys feel most unfettered and clear-minded, Dallas probably seems at times like a place worth conceding, a place where there is more than just the usual political resistance to everything a Northern Catholic might embody. Some who have never been to Dallas summon up the easy stereotypes: *It is where Bonnie and Clyde came from. Where big oilmen drive huge cars. A distant city populated by gun-slinging cowboys and snake-handling preachers.*

Even if they don't succumb to those cartoon caricatures, the key advisers in the Kennedy inner circle surely share something: a raw sense of Dallas as an outpost for people particularly disconnected to the Kennedy family's very personality, religion, and principles. And John F. Kennedy himself no doubt knows that it will take far more than a soothing family photograph and a handsome, gilt-tinted holiday card to even begin to erode distrust in a place like Dallas.

One thing is clear this January. Kennedy is watching his major rival for the presidential nomination, Lyndon B. Johnson, the crafty Master of the Senate, the Texas boss who has gone below deck to run the Democratic Party machinery during the Eisenhower presidency. No one in party circles knows more about Texas, about Dallas, than Johnson. No one but Johnson has done more to help empower the men who really run things in Texas. For months now, Jack and his brother Bobby have watched and waited for the tall, clever Texan to make his move.

There are certainly windows of opportunity for Johnson. There are coalescing, angry forces in Dallas and throughout the South. There are governors, senators, and mayors still rallying to resist so many things: the revolutionary integration edicts ordered by the federal government, by the Supreme Court, by political forces in the North... as if a modern version of the Civil War is unfolding. But Johnson is coy, refusing to announce his plans. He is both cunning and wary—and wondering if the nation is really ready for a president from the South, from that alternately celebrated and reviled place called Texas.

While Johnson wavers, Kennedy decides to push forward.

He has been visiting every state in the nation. And he and his team have decided to mail those holiday cards, to have him personally sign thousands of them and send some straight to Dallas, straight to the heart of the American resistance.

On January 2, 1960, people in the city open their ultra-conservative morning

newspaper and see the big story: John Fitzgerald Kennedy has announced that he is officially running for the White House.

Inside those three-story mansions with the curving driveways in the exclusive quarters of the city, people now understand exactly what Kennedy's lavish holiday greeting was all about. Later in the day, they are meeting, over coffee and eggs delivered by white-gloved black waiters in the private clubs downtown, and talking about the card—especially in light of the news.

It is both foolish and flattering: *Kennedy wants Texas*.

The Reverend W. A. Criswell, the burly and square-jawed pastor of the sprawling Dallas First Baptist Church, knows that the Lord God Almighty is providing him with a special blessing on this brisk initial Sunday in January 1960.

A brazen bigamist, the craggy and philandering Dallas oil mogul H. L. Hunt, is bowing before him and whispering in his unusually soft and cottony voice that he is ready at last to accept Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior... and Wallie Amos Criswell as his spiritual leader. Criswell looks down, staring at the large, oval-shaped man with the baby-soft skin and the snowy, thinning hair. It is a holy marriage—between the leader of the largest Baptist church in the world and the richest man in America.

At age fifty, Criswell weighs two hundred pounds and has short, slightly curling hair parted close to the middle of his large head. He has a broad face, thin lips, and narrow but piercing eyes. He prefers a dark tie, a white shirt, and a gray three-piece suit. Like the seventy-year-old Hunt, he emerged in a part of the nation where there was nothing even remotely akin to inherited wealth—where a desperate, hungry man usually only prospered by muscling his way forward without waiting for benevolent figures in Washington to lend a hand.

Criswell was born into wretched poverty near the sluggish Red River and the barren Texas-Oklahoma border, where tornadoes routinely scrape away at people's lives. Baptized in an old galvanized tub, he found his calling under flimsy revival tents, and waving his dog-eared Bible in dusty, hardscrabble villages like Muskogee and Mexia. People say he acquired a holy gift for bridging the Bible to the real world, for linking God's ancient words to today's headlines, for using the Bible as a literal tool to make sense of the news events people hear on the radio or see in the *Dallas Morning News*.

Lately, when he sits inside his expansive, book-lined office in his sprawling brick church, he remains obsessed with liberals and socialists in the Northeast—how the men in Washington want to change traditions, push integration. Too, he has deep, lingering suspicions about Roman Catholics—about whether they would be more devoted to the pope than to the American Constitution.

But when Criswell closes the door to his office and writes his fiery sermons, he knows one thing: He doesn't want to risk the kind of agonizing, national blowback he endured the last time he attacked some big sea changes in America.

Four years ago, the governor of South Carolina had insisted the nationally famous Dallas preacher come give a speech to the state legislature, and Criswell erupted in full-throated roar against integration and those Northern socialists: "The NAACP has got those East Texans on the run so much that they dare not pronounce the word

‘chigger’ anymore. It has to be Cheegro! Idiocy... Foolishness! Let them integrate! Let them sit up there in their dirty shirts and make all their fine speeches. But they are all a bunch of infidels, dying from the neck up! Let them stay where they are... but leave us alone!”¹

The lawmakers were mesmerized as Criswell rocked on his feet and raised both of his hands to the heavens:

“They are not our folks. They are not our kind. They don’t belong to the same world in which we live... There are people who are trying to force upon us a situation and a thing that is a denial of all that we believe in.”

The news about his blistering rebukes reverberated around the country, and some of the fallout was disastrous. Baptist preachers hissed that he had gone too far—even if he was saying what many of them believed. But in Dallas, the mysterious oilman H. L. Hunt listened and heartily approved. Hunt and Criswell both knew that the growing civil rights movement was just a way for soft-willed intellectuals and liberals to supercharge socialism, and open the door to a steadfast campaign by communists to infiltrate America. Hunt admires the way Criswell attacks the enemy. He’d like to entrust his soul and his money to the preacher who says:

“Communism is a denial of God... communism is like a kingdom of darkness presided over by a prince of evil... the greatest challenge the Christian faith has ever faced in 2,000 years of history.”²

Hunt can feel it. Criswell really understands who is leaving America so vulnerable: “The leftists, the liberals, the pinks and the welfare statist who are soft on communism and easy toward Russia.”³

Evening is coming on, the January light is playing off the chilly waters of the Potomac River, and inside the House of Representatives chamber Congressman Bruce Alger can see his colleagues pushing out of their chairs and beginning to drift toward drinks and dinner with lobbyists. Still, this is something that the lawmaker from Dallas has to do, even if there is not a full audience.

The smoothly handsome and impeccably dressed Alger steps to the front of the House chamber. Some people say the Princeton-educated, forty-one-year-old could have been a movie star, that he bears a striking resemblance to the actor Gary Cooper. His shined hair is combed to perfection, and he walks with a straight, easy gait.

Confederate General Robert E. Lee’s 153rd birthday will pass entirely without notice in the House of Representatives if not for Alger, the lone Republican in the Texas delegation and one of the most passionate conservatives in the nation. Invoking personal privilege, Alger begins a speech—his mellifluous voice rising and praising the legend and memory of the Confederate leader.

This should play very well in certain parts of Dallas. The city was once the national headquarters for the Ku Klux Klan. The city’s famous Magnolia Building, once the tallest in the state and adorned with that giant sign of a glowing red Pegasus, was opened by a Grand Dragon of the KKK. A Dallas minister named R. E. Davis—someone well known to Dallas police—is claiming to be the new Imperial Wizard of the Original Knights of the KKK. He is saying ominously that he will combat integration and that “this Republic was founded by and in violence.”⁴ The current

mayor of Dallas, R. L. Thornton, was named for Robert E. Lee and had once been an unabashed KKK member. There are two towering Confederate monuments to General Lee in Dallas, including one that is the tallest public structure in the city. There are statues of Confederate legends Stonewall Jackson and Jefferson Davis—and all-white public schools named for rebel heroes. The Confederate cemetery in the heart of the city is always carefully tended.

Now Alger's heartfelt ode to Lee echoes in the lonely chamber. He doesn't care if there is no one to listen. This speech is, really, for the people who put him in Congress—the people who *run* Dallas. Alger's ode to Lee floats across the emptying room:

“A great soldier... a loyal Southerner... a noble American... and a Christian gentleman.”⁵

After Alger finishes his speech, he heads to the airport. When his plane finally touches down in Dallas, he is greeted, as always, by a small army of adoring homemakers and young wives who have taken a sudden interest in politics. Alger seems so personally appealing. He seems fully aware of those unseen threats lapping at Dallas.

Immediately, the *Dallas Morning News* issues an editorial thanking Alger:

It was fitting, though ironical, that a Republican—Bruce Alger of Dallas—was the only congressman to get on his feet and salute Gen. Robert E. Lee on his birthday.

Fitting, because Lee fought for the rights of the states. By resisting big government in Washington. So is Alger.

*Where were the Democrats—the so-called party of the South? Courting the support of... the NAACP?*⁶

At home, Alger is often regarded as a folk hero despite the fact that he has never passed a single piece of legislation. He has introduced doomed bills to withdraw from the United Nations, to break off all diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, to privatize the federal government. He opposed the civil rights bill of 1957, condemning it as placating “the troublemakers of the NAACP who seek to incite race hatred and discontent which did not exist.”⁷ And, finally, he cast the lone vote against a federal program to provide surplus milk, free of charge, to needy elementary school children.

The congressman was assailed across the country, but the leaders of the *Dallas Morning News* rushed to his defense: “Here we are telling ourselves that we must strain every nerve and conserve every penny to meet the assault upon our way of life by the Russians and the spend-it-all folk in Washington come in crying about the milk-hungry children.”⁸

Alger has other stalwarts in Dallas. The billionaire Hunt sends out a mass letter racing to the support of the Dallas lawmaker: “His acumen, integrity and courage rate him as one of the 5 or 6 truly great men among the vanishing good men in Washington.”⁹

But it is the prosperous stay-at-home wives waiting for him at the Dallas airport that really form the soul of Alger's political vanguard. They constantly spring to his

side, excitedly host luncheon forums and fund-raisers in their homes, work for hours on phone banks, and parade door-to-door with his yard signs. Dozens, sometimes hundreds, routinely appear at his public events, applauding wildly. To some skeptics in Dallas it is almost too much—and some are quietly speculating about what inspires so much passion. There are even rumors about his marriage, about why the congressman and his wife have recently separated.

Now, in the city after his Capitol Hill salute to Robert E. Lee, Alger simply goes from one January appearance to another, engulfed by the well-dressed women who have braved the winter weather to welcome him back. As they listen, perched on the edges of their seats and clapping, they hear him hammer home what they know to be true: *There is something poisoning the hallways of power in Washington. There is a cancer. Washington is filled with blind men, liberal men: “the most liberal since the heyday of the New Deal.”*¹⁰

Towering over the women, he lowers his head to tell them he has more work to do in Washington. And often, before he leaves the city to go back to Washington, Alger will do something else: drive downtown and take the elevator to the top floor of an office tower on Commerce Street for a closed-door meeting with his high-ranking backers from the Dallas Citizens Council—the group of fifty or so wealthy white businessmen who meet to chart the city’s fate, decide the next mayor, and map out the increasingly twitchy matter of race relations... and how to keep what is happening in Alabama, in New York, anywhere else where protests have occurred, completely out of Dallas.

Alger probably knows that there are people in Dallas who have another name for these men, many descended from the city’s founding families, who hold his political fate in their hands: Some call the group the Dallas *White* Citizens Council—leaning in to whisper the word *white*.

As waiters move in and out of the room with tumblers of cool beverages, Alger relays the news from the front lines in Washington: Insiders in the nation’s capital are beginning to worry that the Democrats are becoming increasingly soft on civil rights, and that there is something even worse—the Catholic, Jack Kennedy, is beginning to outflank his major rivals for the presidential nomination.

The aging publisher negotiates the old roads leading to the west side of downtown—and to the *Dallas Morning News* building with the Texas and American flags out front, set on an entire block close to the murky Trinity River. The publisher can stare out the car window through the winter weather and consider how much the city has grown since what he calls “the diaper days of Dallas.”

Day after day, Ted Dealey, sixty-seven, a short, wiry man with thick glasses, has told himself to be vigilant on behalf of Dallas and all that it stands for. Under his direction, the paper he inherited from his father routinely goes to war with the United Nations, the NAACP, labor, liberals, and—lately—the Supreme Court. In the wake of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision desegregating America’s schools, Dealey’s paper charged that the justices had “surrendered to subversion.” His editorials mock the high court as the “Judicial Kremlin” and “Courtnik.”

As the publisher commutes downtown in January, he is perhaps still marveling at

the way that Dallas Congressman Alger invoked splendid references to the Old South and General Robert E. Lee, right in the heart of Washington, DC—a place that Dealey’s paper sometimes calls “the Negro Capital of the U.S.”¹¹

The *Dallas Morning News* was founded by a Confederate officer who served in the North Carolina Fifty-Fifth Regiment before making his way to wide-open Texas. There is a deep Confederate affection in the publisher’s family—he has fond memories of his father installing twenty extra beds in their mansion for old rebel soldiers and relatives coming to Dallas for the national Confederate reunion. He grew up with boys named for Robert E. Lee. When the *Dallas Morning News* built its new headquarters a little more than a decade ago, the governor of Texas and the citizens council members who came to the opening were handed a brochure underscoring the fact that the building had separate dining facilities for whites and blacks.

By 1960, Dealey is the most outspoken keeper of the city’s history and what some call its Southern traditions. He is, beyond most of the men on the Dallas Citizens Council, the public protector of old Dallas. And he sees his paper serving a vital civic function: reminding readers of “the Dallas way of doing things”—one that he and the handful of those other entrenched leaders in the city’s boardrooms single-handedly shaped, nursed, and promoted with uncompromising passion.

Dealey always liked to write. He grew up in the newspaper. As he ages, Dealey also likes to think about one day compiling his increasingly personal reminiscences—ones reflecting on the way things had been in what he felt were the truly innocent days of Dallas. They are nostalgic memories, including how he remembers the black people he had grown up with: Merity would deliver lunch to him wherever Dealey was in the city; jangly Boswell would drive him in the family Cadillac; Viola and Josh lived in a backyard bungalow when they were not cooking and cleaning; Miles polished cuspidors at the newspaper (but locked himself in a small closet to do it, because it reminded him of his close-quarters work as a railroad porter); the miniature, bowlegged, and bald Boykin would fetch things for him; Johnson was your man when you needed someone to check coats at a dinner party in Dallas... he had an uncanny ability to remember every fine coat and every owner.

Yet a parallel universe exists in Dallas, a world seldom glimpsed in the pages of Dealey’s newspaper: The black janitor from Dallas castrated by a rural Texas mob in 1941. The president of an all-Negro junior college who tried to serve on a Dallas jury in 1938, but who went blind after being shoved hard down the courthouse steps. Thurgood Marshall, the prominent civil rights attorney for the NAACP, chased through city streets by the gun-wielding Dallas police chief, who was shouting: “You black son of a bitch... I have you now.”¹²

When Dealey had assumed control of the paper in the 1940s, he began to see the persuasive editorial pages as an important and necessary bully pulpit. He had always felt that when he and the other city leaders gathered downtown at the famous Baker or Adolphus Hotel for power breakfasts, the highest goal was making the city prosperous, making it bustle with quiet, unflappable efficiency... *because it is good for business, good for everyone*. And there really is an order, a way, in Dallas: The citizens council sets the political and economic agenda. Alger then carries their messages in

Washington. Criswell becomes the moral compass, the preacher who surrounds things in biblical inviolability. And, finally, Dealey spells them out inside the *Dallas Morning News*.

He is now convinced, like the other men, that Dallas is a singularly remarkable place. You come upon it in the middle of the seemingly endless Texas prairie, hours and hours from other major cities. It emerges from the vast expanse of North Texas for almost no natural reason at all—no impressive waterfronts, no immediate natural resources. But Dallas has been willed into existence by creative, nimble entrepreneurs. They did it by remaining united, by tamping down divisiveness. If it is bad for business, it is not allowed to thrive. It is exactly why the KKK only reluctantly abandoned its national headquarters in Dallas in the 1920s—there were tens of thousands of members in the city, dozens of leading businessmen, but Dealey’s father had convinced the most influential men of all that all the brazen KKK displays and parades would doom the city’s long-range prospects, that it would chase away profit and all the things that would make the city grow for decades to come.

For the last several years, Dallas has been quietly loping along with little fanfare, little infamy, few distractions. There have been no racial upheavals, no fitful bouts of integration. No outsize calamities making national headlines and tarnishing the city’s image. The mayor doesn’t talk about his years in the KKK. The district attorney, police chief, and sheriff have quarantined most of the slithering vice in the city—it’s still very much there, but instead of it spilling out all over the streets like it used to, you have to know where to find it once the sun goes down. Dallas seems tight, in order.

But now it is a presidential election year, and there are profound choices. It seems like the entire nation is hurtling toward a searing crossroads. There are dangers at home, around the world. And Dealey sees Dallas facing its gravest challenge—just as the nation’s attention is turning to a charismatic Democrat named John F. Kennedy.

And the fiercely protective publisher decides to move into action, to guard Dallas. Dealey and his paper want the city to know what dangers are lurking: “On the one side will be those who want to carry the nation farther along the road toward socialism. They will advocate expanded Social Security, federal health insurance and federal aid to the schools, bringing with it federal control.

“1960 may be a crucial year in America’s history. It still is uncertain that most voters will have the discernment to choose freedom over candy-covered socialism.”¹³

That same month, in Augsburg, West Germany, Major General Edwin A. Walker sweeps into one of the elementary schools on the sprawling military base he commands with unyielding precision.

He is the tough-talking leader of the Twenty-Fourth Infantry Division of the U.S. Army, at the very front lines of the Cold War. At age fifty, Walker is trim, with deep blue eyes and his hair neatly combed into place. He grew up on his family’s sprawling ranch northwest of San Antonio. His ancestors fought for the South during the Civil War, and his Confederate sympathies still smolder. At the behest of his devout, conservative mother, he attended West Point. A poor student, he was hell on the polo fields, and ultimately fearless in battle. During World War II he became a daring

commando officer, parachuting behind enemy lines to lead bloody night raids. He rose quickly through the ranks. At the end of the war, he boasted a chestful of medals and a reputation as one of the finest, most reliable men in the military.

At formal banquets, he dressed in his crisp uniform, and women gravitated to his side. He was considered a prize catch. But Walker has never married. Instead he is surrounded constantly by young, eager soldiers who serve as his personal aides. Word spread that Walker's chauffeur recently committed suicide, and though there are whispers, no one knows exactly why.

As Walker enters the school, he is quickly escorted to the cafeteria, where two hundred expectant people are gathered for a January Parent Teacher Association meeting. Walker steps onto the stage and approaches the microphone. Before he begins, he looks out at the soldiers, mothers, and children seated before him. They are attentive, eager. Walker is a no-nonsense warrior, and his quick temper is well known inside military circles—but everyone is expecting a version of the usual America-and-apple-pie homilies that go with an address to little children. Some inspiring words to the kids, some cheerful reminders and allusions to the general's old days in the classroom. Maybe a story of self-discipline, courage, or camaraderie. Maybe a gentle joke or two.

The auditorium grows quiet as Walker begins speaking in his loud, flat Texas monotone. He is blistering, withering: Despite the army's best efforts, the enemy is taking over America. Some 60 percent of the U.S. press is already controlled by communists. The leading journalists—Walter Lippmann, Edward Murrow, and Eric Sevareid—are “convinced Communists.”

The wary parents in the audience can sense his anger. They begin to turn and murmur to each other: *What is he talking about? Is something like this really happening?*

Walker presses on as the families stare at him: *The communists are relentless, ready to topple America. People at the very top have subversive sympathies. Even former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and President Harry S. Truman are “decidedly pink.”*¹⁴

Inside his art-filled, book-cluttered office on the sixth floor of Neiman Marcus, the exquisitely dressed but gnomish-looking Stanley Marcus shakes his head in disbelief as he considers the latest chess moves by Dallas's self-appointed super-patriots.

Someone has just mailed out six thousand reprints of a January article in a conservative journal, the *American Mercury*. The story is mercilessly attacking Marcus's invention, the Dallas Council on World Affairs: “In Dallas, Leftism's most familiar masquerade is internationalism, in the seemingly innocuous guise of the Council on World Affairs.”¹⁵

The *Dallas Morning News* is also piling on, running stories about the sweeping controversy, and copies of the *Mercury* are even sold out at local newsstands. Marcus is already well known in the city for his cultural inclinations—some that seem to skitter close, in some estimations, to outright socialism. He has used his immense wealth to become a noted art collector and he has also shaped Dallas's symphony orchestra and arts museum.