



# **The President and the Assassin: McKinley, Terror, and Empire at the Dawn of the American Century**

*Scott Miller*

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A SWEEPING TALE OF TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY AMERICA AND THE IRRESISTIBLE FORCES THAT BROUGHT TWO MEN TOGETHER ONE FATEFUL DAY

In 1901, as America tallied its gains from a period of unprecedented imperial expansion, an assassin's bullet shattered the nation's confidence. The shocking murder of President William McKinley threw into stark relief the emerging new world order of what would come to be known as the American Century. *The President and the Assassin* is the story of the momentous years leading up to that event, and of the very different paths that brought together two of the most compelling figures of the era: President William McKinley and Leon Czolgosz, the anarchist who murdered him.

The two men seemed to live in eerily parallel Americas. McKinley was to his contemporaries an enigma, a president whose conflicted feelings about imperialism reflected the country's own. Under its popular Republican commander-in-chief, the United States was undergoing an uneasy transition from a simple agrarian society to an industrial powerhouse spreading its influence overseas by force of arms. Czolgosz was on the losing end of the economic changes taking place—a first-generation Polish immigrant and factory worker sickened by a government that seemed focused solely on making the rich richer. With a deft narrative hand, journalist Scott Miller chronicles how these two men, each pursuing what he considered the right and honorable path, collided in violence at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York.

Along the way, readers meet a veritable who's who of turn-of-the-century America: John Hay, McKinley's visionary secretary of state, whose diplomatic efforts paved the way for a half century of Western exploitation of China; Emma Goldman, the radical anarchist whose incendiary rhetoric inspired Czolgosz to dare the unthinkable; and Theodore Roosevelt, the vainglorious vice president whose 1898 charge up San Juan Hill in Cuba is but one of many thrilling military adventures recounted here.

Rich with relevance to our own era, *The President and the Assassin* holds a mirror up to a fascinating period of upheaval when the titans of industry grew fat, speculators sought fortune abroad, and desperate souls turned to terrorism in a vain attempt to thwart the juggernaut of change.

### Praise for *The President and the Assassin*

"[A] panoramic tour de force . . . Miller has a good eye, trained by years of journalism, for telling details and enriching anecdotes."—The Washington Independent Review of Books

"Even without the intrinsic draw of the 1901 presidential assassination that shapes its pages, Scott Miller's *The President and the Assassin* [is] absorbing reading. . . . What makes the book compelling is [that] so many circumstances and events of the earlier time have parallels in our own."—*The Oregonian*

"A marvelous work of history, wonderfully written."—Fareed Zakaria, author of *The Post-American World*

"A real triumph."—*BookPage*

“Fast-moving and richly detailed.”—*The Buffalo News*

“[A] compelling read.”—*The Boston Globe*

**One of *Newsweek*'s 10 Must-Read Summer Books**

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#### **Ronald Stauffer:**

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