

BISHOP SHEEN

Oswald Case Raises Question of Guilt



By BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

From one point of view, it may have been well that Oswald had his mortal coil shuffled off to go before the Judgment Seat of God. Otherwise, the nakedness of the American soul might have been revealed; an embarrassing skeleton would have stared at us from our national closet, and a bar sinister might have been etched on our escutcheon. Just suppose he had come to trial! We have already developed an American way of thinking which would make it hard and certainly embarrassing to have passed judgment on Oswald for two reasons:

1. How could we have found him "guilty?" We no longer recognize that word. Many of our educators have been battling for years against that division between "good and evil," contending that any charge against a person on the ground of guilt creates a "guilt complex." Moreover, what are the sanctions of guilt in any way, but the sediment of social mores, codes and commandments. The restraint of the libido, it is said, causes frustrations. If, therefore, youth are to give free play to the libido of sex, why should not a man give free play to another libido, namely, a gun? If youths are allowed to wreck homes at parties, to take dope and be excused on the ground that they did it "for kicks," then at what point do "kicks" fall under the category of wrong? If it is agreed that it is better to let evil out, than repress it, cannot a defense lawyer, on this principle, have any criminal released, particularly since guilt is "sickness?"

2. If Oswald had come to trial, it would have been hard on the sympathizers with Communism and Russia. Grant that there has been no proven connection between any Communists and the murder, there is, nevertheless, an undoubted connection between the Communist ideology and the assassination.

SUPPOSE a so-called religious man manifested a similar hate and laid in wait to kill, one could not say that his religion produced the act. Rather, it would have to be said that he acted against it. But a philosophy of hate, when it is violent

against a human person or religion, acts in character when it kills.

Some very embarrassing testimony might have been brought forward in a trial of this kind. The Soviet Union knew it too, for they immediately printed the news that the President was killed by the "right wing reactionaries." What a guilty conscience! Why did they not say he was a Communist sympathizer, but we had nothing to do with it?

The Soviet Union knew full well that there is a connection between a philosophy of violence and violence, between a theory that free enterprise must be destroyed and the murder of free men. The Soviet Union immediately erected another Berlin Wall, saying: "He belonged to West Berlin. He belonged to the enemies of Communism." Rarely, in modern political history has any government been so ashamed of its ideology.

IT MUST BE REPEATED again that the point here, is not the relation between a government and a crime, but between an ideology and a crime. This is where it touches Communism as much as the denial of guilt touches the American people.

The Communist considers faith in God as a product of economic method of production which is based on private property. On the other hand, a declining American ethos assumes that a belief in the moral law is a relic of Puritanism. If Oswald had lived to sit in a prisoner's dock, we would have had to abandon two false ideas that immorality and anti-morality are forms of sickness, and that any American who accepts Communist philosophy is as good as a citizen who does not.

Oswald has gone to a different kind of trial, the one in which murder is called murder not sickness, and where atheism is called hate and not peace. In the meantime, we American people might seriously examine our thinking for a future trial, and certainly a future judgment, and ask ourselves if we are on the right track in our national life by coining the Eleventh Commandment which issued from a high court proclaiming: "Thou shalt not pray."