

JACK L. RUBY - PRELIMINARY DIAGNOSTIC IMPRESSION:

"That's an unfair question." Through the process of denial the patient has been able to believe that it was not a human life that he had taken but rather that he had exterminated a rat.

In summary, we are dealing with a person with a profoundly neurotic character structure, who has been subject to pathological mood states and who has persistently demonstrated a very poor control of aggression by episodic and explosive outbursts. His mental adjustment has long been precarious. His identification with President Kennedy was amazingly strong. The fact that the assassination took place in Dallas, a city with which he was intensely identified, and that the whole tragic day had been heralded by an advertisement, over the signature of a Jew, besmirching his President, were important factors in upsetting his psychological equilibrium.

It is my preliminary impression that his weak ego, which was for a day and a half being constantly assaulted by great emotional stresses, was suddenly overwhelmed, permitting unconscious hostile, aggressive impulses to gain ascendancy and to rob him of his ability to exert the necessary self-control. This psychological state has been well described by Dr. Karl Menninger and his associates in their papers on episodic dyscontrol. In his book, "The Vital Balance", which has just appeared, Dr. Menninger writes,

".... The ego in distress often 'thinks' in primitive language, in primary-process terms. According to this, the ego would rather kill than be killed, or, what amounts to the same thing, suffer a completely disruptive disintegration. Thus, murder is frequently committed, according to our theory, to preserve sanity (as well as in other instances to preserve life). Some colleagues have proposed that murder and suicide may both serve as defenses against 'psychosis'. Certainly this would sometimes seem to be the ego's 'intention'. And it usually works. Such 'temporary insanities' rarely become long-term 'insanities' and indeed, it is just this fact that so perplexes juries in attempting to fix a degree of 'blame' on an offender whose 'insanity' seems to them to have been too brief to have been real.

"This concept lawyers and judges find very baffling. But it is no more obscure in principle than flooding an area to relieve an overtaxed dam, or inoculating with cowpox to prevent smallpox, or incising an abscess to prevent it from bursting. From the standpoint of society, the explosion of murder is disastrous, but from the standpoint of the individual himself it may be the way to survival, the only solution which, at the moment of decision, the crippled ego could find.

"We have been using murder as a dramatic symbolization of the rupture and disintegration of the ego.