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SOVIET REPORTER COMMENTS ON U.S. ASSASSINATIONS

Teletype report from New York by Genrikh Borovik; Moscow, Literaturnaya Gazeta, Russian, No 3, 15 January 1969, p 14

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The trial of the man who killed Senator Robert Kennedy began in Los Angeles on the 7-th of January. For seven months, Sirhan Bishari Sirhan, whose name became notorious on 5 July 1968 after the shot in the kitchen of the Ambassador Hotel, has been awaiting trial in a small (2 by 2.5 meters) windowless cell on the 13-th floor of the "Hall of Justice" in Los Angeles.

The newspaper-men wrote that no person in America had ever been so closely guarded. Incidentally, journalists from Tennessee maintain that "their guy," who is accused of murdering Martin Luther King is guarded even more strictly.

At 9:40 A.M. of 7 January, Sirhan Sirhan was led out of his cell and a few minutes later, he was led into the court-room in which the windows were tightly battened down with armored shutters.

Sirhan behaved outwardly calm. His alarm was given away only by the fingers of his hands -- he was constantly touching his upper lip involuntarily. That is how it was on the first day. On the second, even these indications of nervousness disappeared. He smiled several times at his mother and younger brother, who were present among the public.

There were no more than one or two seats in the court-room for the public. No journalists were allowed in there, they follow the proceedings from a special room on another floor, where a TV screen is set up for local closed-circuit court-room viewing; the camera is concealed behind the air-conditioning inlet screen.

At the door, every person admitted to the court-room is thoroughly searched by the sheriff's men...

At the very first session, the murderer's lawyer demanded a one month delay of the trial. This demand was denied, however, and the trial began. It promises to be a long one: at least two months. There are

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over 200 witnesses alone (for the prosecution and defense). The first two days were devoted to selecting the jury.

Sirhan has three attorneys, one of whom is named Emile Zola Behrman by an irony of fate. But the great writer's namesake acquired a dismal fame for himself by defending a sergeant who had driven soldiers into a swamp and watched how they perished there.

As always, when a major trial is beginning, the pages of newspapers are alive with sketches from the court-room. No photographs are permitted. It is not even permitted to photograph the TV screen. The TV reporters make up their enforced absence from the court-room by activity in the streets of Los Angeles. They ask passers-by this question: can Sirhan hope for a fair trial after the "publicity" that has been received by "this case"?

Although the most skillful among the numerous visitors to the "Ambassador" are still stealing tea-spoons with the hotel's emblem, "publicity" is not a very fitting word for the tragedy that occurred on June 5-th. One should rather speak of a deliberate effort to impose a certain version of the murder upon American public opinion. When the investigation was only making its first small steps, the Mayor of Los Angeles appeared on television and announced that Sirhan Sirhan is an "agent of the communists" and that Robert Kennedy was a victim of a "communist conspiracy."

A similar rumor was circulated immediately following the shot that struck down Martin Luther King in April, and even earlier -- after the tragic death of President Kennedy in Dallas in November 1963.

The monotony of the "scenarios" foisted off on the public cannot fail to put those on guard who follow the events connected with these three murders.

During a recent trip through the United States, I spent two days in New Orleans. I naturally wanted to meet the district attorney Jim Garrison. I wanted to find out whether Jim Garrison saw any connection between the three crimes. And if so, then how?

Unfortunately, Garrison turned out to be out of town. He had gone somewhere on business. It was senseless to ask his secretary, Mrs. Shuler where he went or for how long. But I was still in luck. In New Orleans I found out that shortly before my arrival, Jim Garrison had given an interview to a small Los Angeles newspaper, the "Free Press." I managed to get a text of this interview. It turned out that the reporter had asked the district attorney many of the same questions that I had intended to ask. This is why I am quoting several excerpts from this talk, which seems interesting to me; I only want to add that as far as I know, this interview was not published by a single one of the major American newspapers (the American press has recently written almost nothing about Jim Garrison; it is as if a deal had been made to hush up everything concerning the activities of this person). Why this

is so -- the reader will understand for himself, after reading the replies given by Garrison to questions of the "Free Press" reporter.

Reporter: What parallels, if there are any, do you see between the murders of John Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy?

Garrison: There is nothing "mysterious" in what is happening. I think that the majority of the people in the country feel this, although the clever news services pretend that the word "mystery" explains everything and there is nothing further to be said. The "counter-revolution" that started on 22 November 1963 murdered John Kennedy with the help of an operation organized by the Central Intelligence Agency. This "counter-revolution" is continuing, and that is all...

They are destroying one public figure who opposes the system of military rule in the U.S.A. after another, or any sufficiently frank person who stands between them and the plans for the war in Asia. John Kennedy, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy have been killed... At the basis is always the same technique... A "lone killer" is always on hand. The differences are minor, details only.

Reporter: A "lone killer"...

Garrison: In quotes, of course. In reality, if you look closely at the "lone killer," you will discover his direct connection with the C.I.A. -- it was so in the case of Oswald. Or you will discover a professional killer -- this was the case with Martin Luther King, although it is not clear: did James Ray do the shooting? I personally doubt that he was the killer. It looks like he was used as a decoy. But this is not important. These are details.

Reporter: And what about Sirhan Sirhan? If he had any connections with the C.I.A., they were apparently very thoroughly covered up, or as they say there, "isolated." Do you know anything about Sirhan?

Garrison: I do not want to go into it, because the district attorney and the Los Angeles authorities may decide that I am interfering in their affairs. I will speak generally. The C.I.A. acts under the cover of many facades. The characteristic feature of this case seems to consist of the following: The killer did not realize very clearly that he was used by the C.I.A. Perhaps he thought that he was acting in the interests of some organization of which he was a member. The Central Intelligence Agency has over 500 "fronts." Is it difficult to find "motives" for any act by an individual person?

There is no doubt that no matter which path Robert Kennedy would have taken after his victory in California (in the primary elections, which were held there on June 4 -- G. B.), a killer was ready and waiting everywhere, a member of some organization perhaps, and one who did not realize that he was a tool of the Central Intelligence Agency of the USA.

When Robert Kennedy won in California, this meant that he was on the way to the President's chair. Had Robert Kennedy lost in California, he would be alive now. But having won, he was doomed to die. He won, and his chances of survival were few.

John Kennedy was murdered because he had once said that he "would break the C.I.A. into ten thousand small pieces." The C.I.A. did not wish to be broken up. This machine is like a living organism -- it does not tolerate anyone standing in its way.

Reporter: Is it true that Robert Kennedy, after becoming President, intended to begin prosecution of the people responsible for his brother's murder? What can you say about this?

Garrison: I had several friends, who were close to him. After meeting with them here, in New Orleans, it became clear to me -- he understood what had occurred, but apparently decided not to undertake anything until he occupied a post that would permit him to do something. He would have done something, if he could. But they killed him...

The C.I.A. is now so omnipotent that it is to a considerable degree autonomous. The C.I.A. is a global force. It is so powerful that as a secret participant in military-industrial operations, it has in a sense greater power than all other ruling bodies in the United States of America.

Such is the opinion of Jim Garrison, the district attorney of New Orleans. I think that neither he nor the reporter who asked him the questions harbor the slightest doubts that this opinion -- be it correct or not -- will be corroborated at the trial in Los Angeles.

This trial will hardly be the major event of the next two months. On January 21, a trial -- if it is not postponed -- will begin in New Orleans, in which Jim Garrison accuses Clay Shaw of taking part in a conspiracy for the purpose of killing John Kennedy. And in March -- again if it is not postponed once more -- the trial of James Ray in Memphis, who is accused of murdering Martin Luther King... There are many sensations in the courts ahead. Americans are stocking up on patience. But meanwhile their attention to the Sirhan trial is distracted by the brutal murder of a girl student from Harvard, which occurred on the first day of the trial in Los Angeles...

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