

Newsweek

MARCH 24, 1969 50c

THE ASSASSINS



Top of the Week

The Assassins: Who Did It—And Why? PAGE 28

In courtrooms a continent apart, the nation tried imperfectly last week to settle accounts on the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. Sirhan Sirhan's trial for killing Kennedy turned into an exhaustive anatomy of a murderer—but James Earl Ray's abrupt guilty plea left the King case shrouded in mystery, possibly forever. With reporting from correspondents **Andrew Jaffe** in Memphis and **Robert Shogan** in Washington, Senior Editor **Peter Goldman** wrote the Ray story, while **Martin Kasindorf** reported the Sirhan trial for General Editor **Paul D. Zimmerman's** look at Kennedy's assassin. (Cover photos by Fred Ward—Black Star [King], Lawrence Fried [Kennedy], AP [Sirhan] and UPI [Ray].)



Associated Press



UPI

The end of the road: James Earl Ray goes to prison—and Sirhan Sirhan squirms in the hands of his captors

The Assassins: Who Did It—And Why?

They came pinwheeling into history out of some dim, Dostoevskian underground, one of them a stir-smart fugitive con with no known ambition higher than making the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted" list, the other a damaged little Jordanian immigrant burning to avenge the six-day Arab-Israeli war all by himself. Nobody knew their names—until, in the space of two awful months last spring, fate placed Martin Luther King in the cross hairs of James Earl Ray's hunting rifle and walked Robert F. Kennedy within an inch of the muzzle of Sirhan Sirhan's pistol. In a split second apiece, Ray and Sirhan inflicted deep traumata on the U.S., each wounding the nation in ways that have not been fully reckoned yet. And now, in courtrooms a continent's breadth apart, the nation tried last week to settle accounts by the only means that were available to it: the due process of the law.

The law is, of course, an imperfect instrument for laying ghosts to rest; and few nations confronted by high tragedy are quite so willing as America to trust the catharsis to lawyers. One consequence of this last week was Ray's abrupt plea of guilty to King's murder in Memphis in exchange for a 99-year sentence—an utterly routine deal that left achingly open, perhaps forever, the central question of whether or not Ray was someone else's hired gun. Sirhan's marathon trial in Los Angeles was, by sharp contrast, a painstaking inquiry into every

last fantasy and every least tic of an assassin whose guilt is not even in question. And yet, in the public consciousness, it still seemed almost as unsatisfactory an ending to Bobby Kennedy's biography as the aborted Ray trial was to Martin Luther King's.

Kennedy, in fact, held center stage only fleetingly during the seventh and eighth weeks of the Sirhan trial, when the state presented its eyewitnesses to the shooting and introduced the least painful of the autopsy photos of his body. The commanding presence instead was Sirhan, and the sole object—since everybody knew he killed Kennedy—was to find out why.

Anatomy: The prosecution's Sirhan was a man of brooding malice who willed Kennedy's death on paper and then executed it in a hotel pantry. The defense, in turn, displayed Sirhan himself in all his boiling fury; then, last week, it began making a psychiatric case that Sirhan is (as the first of five defense psychologists and psychiatrists testified) a manic "Jekyll-Hyde" incapable of premeditating anything. His defenders, with no chance for an acquittal, hoped by their anatomy of a murderer to persuade the jury to spare his life. The state's interest in taking it seemed perceptibly to diminish as the trial wore on, yet there was an unspoken need to run the ritual to its end. The specter that haunted Sirhan's trial, and Ray's, was the slaying of Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas—a single anar-

chic stroke that kept the John F. Kennedy murder case from coming to a close and so left the field open forever to conspiracy theorists. Early on, the state and the defense and even Sirhan himself were near agreement on dealing for a guilty plea just as Ray did. But Judge Herbert V. Walker stopped it. Said the judge: "We don't want another Dallas."

Memphis authorities had no such qualms—and the resulting deal which Ray pleaded guilty and was livered in chains to prison in two hours meant that the solution to the murder mystery may well have been locked away with him. His prosecutor, his lawyer, his authorized biographer and the U.S. Government all believe that he was a lone assassin, not the agent of a conspiracy. Yet Ray himself interrupted his ritual mini-hearing to disagree with them all—and to suggest, obliquely but plainly, that he was indeed part of a King murder plot. But who were the plotters? Ray didn't say; in the fore-dictated by Tennessee law, he was even asked. There were eloquent pulp-fed fantasy in his story as it fell out, second-hand and piecemeal, in the aftermath—a tale in which a supposed co-conspirator named "Raoul" conveniently winds up pulling the trigger. Fulfilled? Perhaps—but there was enough in Ray's apparently well-banked pursuit of King and in his flight from justice to doubt even among reasonable men.

For nervous moments afterward

Ray: 99 Years—and a Victory

wondered whether the rush to in Memphis might not set off a of the rioting that followed King's . The rocks never flew; the cyni- of the ghetto, not its smoldering prevailed this time. But the re- was nonetheless bitter. "There was le lot of conspiracy in the sentence," ed a turned-off young Black Panther its.

ns: And Ralph David Abernathy— was notified of the deal in advance did not object—was by no means ed with the developing no-conspir- thodoxy. Who were the conspira- "I think it's the United States of ca," said Abernathy. "There is a ment in this country to preserve d financed by a substantial amount ney . . . People like James Earl Ray yred upon. They are merely "

easy to overrate a trial—and par- ly a trial that never happens—as a to the truth, the whole truth and g but the truth. There was no guar- whatever that a full-dress Ray trial have settled the conspiracy ques- Quite to the contrary, the likelihood hat Ray would not have taken the at all—or that, if he did, he would span some uncheckable tale about tanglement with the so-far untrace- Baoul." Yet the hunger for an end- the story would not be easily . A trial, however imperfect, might helped satisfy the impulse to make sense of the absurd, to impose or- n the anarchy of events. Exhaustive e point of exhaustion, the trial of n Bishara Sirhan was at least a se- effort to discover why he killed t Kennedy. But the deal by which Earl Ray pleaded guilty, whatever erits, left painfully unsettled the ry of who really murdered Martin r King.

He slouched to his place in the sealed-off courtroom, his eyes downcast, his brilliantined hair turning spiky, his face pasty white after nine months in sunless jail cells. He listened impassively to the judge and the lawyers rehearsing the terms of the deal by which he took 99 years in prison—and beat the electric chair—in a trade for his plea of guilty to murder. But then, suddenly, he was on his feet, to challenge the official theory that he was a lone gun and not the unwitting hireling of a conspiracy. And in that moment, James Earl Ray, drifter, penny-ante stick-up man and four-time loser, had his victory: the nation could neither forget him—nor finally close the file on the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

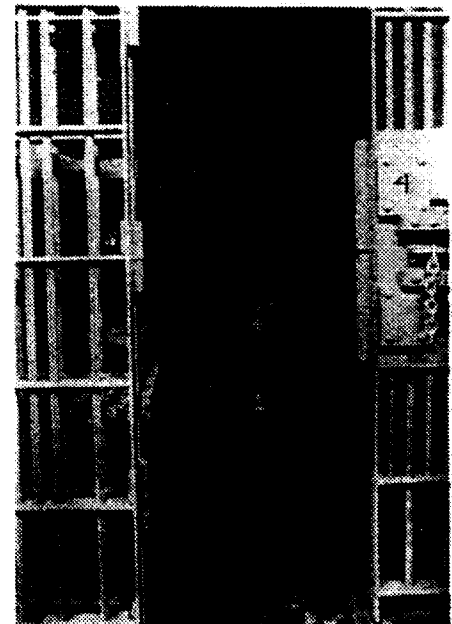
Copping a plea is normal enough in U.S. courtrooms—a time- and money-saving convenience that permits authorities to settle far more cases than they bring to trial. But the case of Tennessee vs. James Earl Ray seemed to cry out for something more than routine treatment. However honorable the intentions—and however just the result—the deal had the surface appearance of unseemly haste, and it set off a chorus of protest. A group of black congressmen demanded a full-scale commission inquiry into the assassination. The New York Times called the deal "shocking." King's widow, Coretta, did not object to it when the prosecution sounded her in advance, but she said afterward that she still believes there was a conspiracy. So did King's official successor, Ralph Abernathy. And so, for his own reasons, did Mississippi's segregationist Sen. James O. Eastland, who talked of mounting an Internal Security subcommittee investigation of his own.

100 to 1: The voices arrayed against the conspiracy theory were imposing. No one close to the case—not the FBI in Memphis Attorney General Phil M. Canale or defense lawyer Percy Foreman or authorized Ray biographer William Bradford Huie—had come up with any evidence that anyone else was involved. "I insist on skepticism as a virtue in life," says Ramsey Clark, U.S. Attorney General (and thus, at least nominally master of the FBI) when King was slain and Ray captured. "But I would have to say that all the evidence and circumstances indicate very strongly that Ray acted alone. I'd say the odds are better than 100 to 1." Yet there were anomalies enough in the case to set even nonconspiratorialist minds running—and above all there was Ray's own insistence that he wasn't alone. Ray, of course, had more than just a psychic vested interest in confusion. "He thinks," said Foreman, "that if he says it was a conspiracy he's not guilty." But the deal to beat the chair precluded even the slim possibility that a trial might have settled the matter.

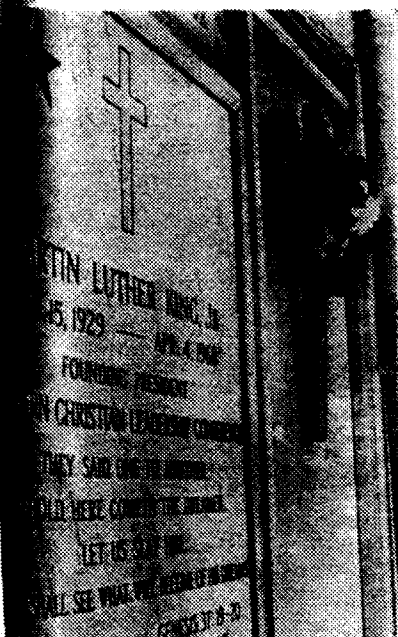
The ultimate irony was that the set-

tlement was initiated not by the authorities but by the defense. Foreman, a large, gaudy Texan, came in late when Ray fired his first lawyer, Arthur Hanes, a Birmingham segregationist under whose management of the case the conspiracy theory first flowered. Foreman, whose main ideology is winning, quickly concluded that Ray had nothing to back up his conspiracy story—and that the state had a solid case against his man. A man of Foreman's considerable craft might have damaged some of it—the shaky eye-witness evidence placing Ray at the scene, for example, or the ballistics tests establishing that Ray's .30-06 Remington-Game-master was the murder weapon, or the strands of his hair that linked him to the getaway white Mustang. But no lawyer could argue away the fingerprints that Ray left on the rifle and in the rickety, paintless boarding house from which the fatal shot was fired. "Those fingerprints," groaned Foreman. "They were everywhere."

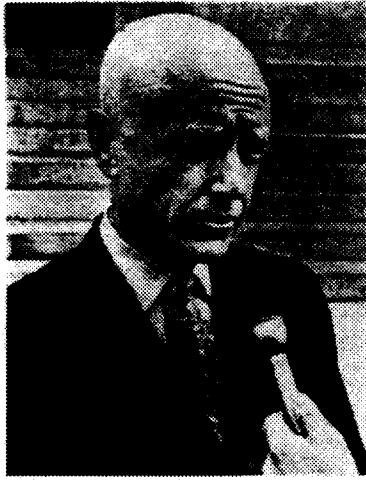
Deal: So, in mid-December, Foreman visited Ray in his air-cooled, TV-monitored cell in Memphis's Shelby County Jail and asked if he was interested in a deal. Ray, who has spent a third of his 41 years behind bars, has always imagined himself a better lawyer than his lawyers ("It took me several months," said Foreman, "before I convinced him I was working in his best interest"), and he was suspicious at first. But Foreman told him that Memphis juries had been hard on first-degree murder defendants—that they had recommended stiff penalties even for men with previously spotless records and for accomplices as well as killers themselves. Ray apparently began to be impressed. For insurance, Foreman journeyed to St. Louis and enlisted mem-



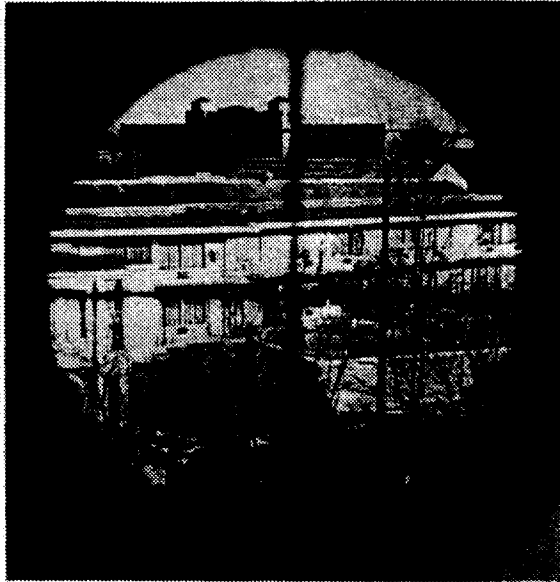
Cell 4: Last stop for Ray



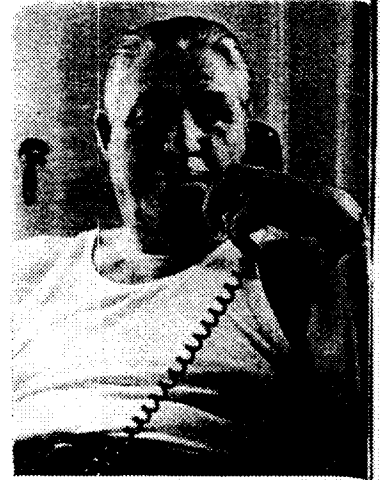
Room 306: Last words for King



Huie: Hunting for 'Raoul'



The assassin's view of King's motel



Foreman: Dealing for a life

bers of his family. "Foreman warned us," Ray's brother John recalled, "that if the trial were to take place, Jimmy would possibly go to the chair to be made an example of."

In mid-February, Ray seemed ready to agree, and Foreman tried out the question on Judge W. Preston Battle, Battle, by one inside account, raised no objections but told him to see prosecutor Canale first. What would Canale swap for a guilty plea? "Ninety-nine years—certainly nothing less than that," said Canale. "But I have to check it first." He tried out the idea on Mrs. King (through a lawyer) and got her okay, though she reserved judgment on the conspiracy questions. Other civil-rights leaders contacted in advance by Canale, among them Abernathy, said much the same. The Justice Department raised no quarrel. Ray himself seemed gloomily uninterested in haggling about the time he would serve—partly because, after numerous botches and one brazen success, he fancied himself something of an escape artist. "I don't care how many years I get," he told Foreman, and so the deal finally was closed.

Golden Raoul? Or was it? The sticky part was Ray's stubborn conspiracy story—a tale in which a shadowy benefactor named "Raoul," a blond Latin (or, later, French-Canadian) mystery man, engaged him first as a drug runner and then, to Ray's great surprise, as part of a plot against King. The tale stretched a bit thin when Ray announced that he and Raoul had switched places at the very last moment—that he had taken the wheel of the getaway car while Raoul fired the shot that felled King on the balcony of Memphis's Lorraine Motel. "No one ever came up with Raoul except Ray," says Canale's assistant, Robert Dwyer, a conclusion shared by Foreman.

*The reason for Canale's insistence: Ray would be eligible for parole after just twelve and a half years of a life sentence but he would have to serve at least 30 out of 99 years even with good time—a commodity he has never been successful at stockpiling.

the FBI and the Royal Canadian Mounted. But Ray stuck to his tale, and nobody knew how he would behave at the hearing dictated by Tennessee law in capital murder cases where a defendant pleads guilty. Foreman visited Ray one last time the day before the hearing to press him for a guarantee to go along. He came away smiling, but he was uncertain to the end whether or not the deal would somehow come together.

It looked for moments as if it might. Early on, with the script playing out smoothly, Judge Battle began Ray's part of the catechism. At the judge's order, Ray stood, his black-and-gray checked sports jacket hanging rumbled on his drooping shoulders. Did he understand his rights? "Yes, sir," said Ray, his voice a reedy whine. The deal—"Is this what you want to do?" Ray sounded suddenly uncertain. "Yes," he began, "I have been—that's—yes." Battle peered sharply down over his half-moon glasses. "Is that what you want to do?" he repeated, and Ray agreed, "That's right."

Yet still, even as he spoke his appointed lines, Ray could not resist injecting a tiny edge of ambivalence. Had there been any promises besides the 99-year sentence? "No—none as I know of." Or any pressure from anybody? "No, no undue pressure." And the key question of all: "Are you pleading guilty . . . because you killed Dr. Martin Luther King under such circumstances that would make you legally guilty of murder in the first degree . . . ?"

"Yes," piped Jimmy Ray. "Legally guilty. Uh-huh."

This was hardly the most forthright confession on record, but it was adequate to the occasion, and Battle seated a pro forma jury of ten white and two black men. What really offended Ray—and nearly derailed the hearing—was the way both sides pooch-pooched his conspiracy story. "There have naturally been rumors going all around that James Earl Ray is a dupe, a fall guy, a member of a

conspiracy," Canale told the jurors. He men had pondered 5,000 pages of investigative reports, traveled thousands of miles, sorted 300 exhibits—and "we have no proof other than Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed by James Earl Ray. Next came Foreman, leaning confidently over the rail and adding, "It took me more than a month to convince myself that the Attorney General [Clark] and J. Edgar Hoover were correct when they said there was no conspiracy . . ."

Stewing: Ray stewed through the rest of Foreman's presentation, then abruptly got up. "Your Honor," he said, shifting his weight from foot to foot, "I would like to say something, too, if I may."

"All right," said Battle warily. "I don't want to change anything that I have said," Ray offered. "I don't want to add anything onto it either. The only thing I have to say is I don't exactly accept the theories of Mr. Clark . . ."

"Who is Mr. Clark?" defender Foreman interjected.

"Ramsey Clark," said Ray. "And Mr. Hoover."

"Mr. who?" rumbled Foreman.

"Mr. J. Edgar Hoover . . . I meant Mr. Canale, Mr. Foreman, Mr. Ramsey Clark—mean on the conspiracy thing. I do want to add something onto it which haven't agreed to in the past."

"I think what he is saying is that doesn't think that Ramsey Clark's or J. Edgar Hoover is right," Foreman told the judge, and then, turning to Ray, he added: "You are not required to agree or withdraw or anything else." Still Battle felt constrained to put the crucial question to him once again: was he pleading guilty because he killed King in such circumstances that he would be legally guilty of first-degree murder? "Yes, sir, make me guilty on that," Ray, and the flurry was over.

And so, for all intents and purposes, was the case of Tennessee vs. James Earl Ray. The state put on a token few witnesses to establish for the record

indeed been killed and that involved, and Assistant Attorney James Beasley read a twenty-minute summary of the imposing mass of that, loner or no, Ray was the man. It was left to Battle to pronounce and to offer a word to justice: "If this defendant was a part of a conspiracy . . . no member of a conspiracy can ever live in security down to pleasant dreams . . . years in these criminal courts convinced me that in the great massacres, Hamlet was right when 'For murder though it have no ill speak with most miraculous

ness: But Ray's moment to speak came and gone. Just before 1 a.m. morning, two cameramen waiting in a dreary chill outside the jail for a transfer saw two men in deputies' uniforms and uniforms walk to a car. "Get cold out there," one yelled at the driver. The "deputy" turned out to be his destination a sheriff's substation town. Before dawn, he was packed in chains, to a highway prison in a bustling motorcade of cars and whisked 200 miles to Nashville. Earl Ray became prisoner No. 1, bunked by himself—for safety's sake in a 6-by-9 maximum-security cell with no leave only for twice-weekly and thrice-weekly showers. (The population of 1,940 includes 826 among them Ray's nearest neighborhood-black-power advocate convicted felon.) No sooner was he inside the cell and came back that he regretted his fate. "I wish the hell I hadn't [pleaded guilty] now," The Nashville Tennessean quoted him as having groused in prison, "because, with what they did to me, I believe the worst I'd have would have been life." The fact was that "they" had enough to put him in the electric chair: the doubts that attended the deal centered not on

his guilt but on the implications of conspiracy around the case. Ray, a prison-hip hard guy, simply didn't fit America's imaginings of the lone assassin abroad with some mad, private vision—a Lee Harvey Oswald, say, or a Sirhan Sirhan. Ray, by contrast, seemed to have no motive at all, lunatic or otherwise—unless it was money. And there were moments before and after the assassination when he appeared to have plenty of that, usually in crisp, new 20s; by one estimate he spent \$15,000 in less than a year. His flight via Canada (where he picked up a faked passport) to Lisbon and London (where he tried desperately to join up as a mercenary in Africa) had the look of a well-laid plot. Even the incredible oddity of clues he left at the scene seemed hard to square with the chill efficiency of the act of murder itself—unless, of course, Ray had been set up as the fall guy for a conspiracy.

'One More Job': And then came the shadowy "Raoul," threading in and out of a Look magazine series written by author Huie last fall out of his own researches and some notes Ray sent him from jail. Huie's Raoul found Ray in a Montreal waterfront bar, got him to run some narcotics into the U.S., paid him \$8,250 in various-sized installments and finally promised him \$12,000 and travel papers anywhere for "one more job." The job, though Ray claimed he didn't know it till much later, turned out to be the murder of Martin Luther King. Huie concluded at the time that there was indeed a conspiracy, that its object was to set off racial war in the U.S. and that King was "secondary . . . The primary target was the U.S.A."

The Look account ended there. But Huie says that Ray claims to have switched places with Raoul just before King appeared on the motel balcony—Raoul taking over the sniper's nest in the boarding-house bathroom while Ray waited at the wheel of the Mustang with the motor running. Ray, in this ver-

sion, heard a shot—whereupon Raoul dashed out, jumped in the back seat of the car, lay on the floor and pulled a sheet over himself. Raoul, according to Ray, jumped out at a traffic light eight blocks away—and they never crossed paths again.

But Raoul never turned up, and today Huie himself—though he still believes that there is some such person—doubts whether he was involved in the King case. Nor is he so persuaded as he once was that there was any conspiracy at all. "Ray," he said last week, "is just smart enough to put everybody on . . . He does not want the case to die out. He wants the dramatic action to continue."

Duped? And continue it did. Blacks particularly seemed incredulous that King's death could have been the random act of a lone gunman. His widow confessed "a sense of emotional relief [at being] spared a trial which would compel us to relive the fearful tragic events of his death." But, she added, only when the others responsible are caught "can the conscience of the nation rest"—and neither she nor other black leaders seemed to doubt that others were involved. "It's just too cruel," said one sympathetic government hand, "for them to think that one single psychotic person could smash something that they cherished so much." Yet segregationist whites who did not cherish King at all seemed equally intent on finding a conspiracy of the left. Ray's cashiered lawyer, Hanes, termed his excellent a "dupe" in a plot entangled "not only with national politics but with international politics." And Jim Eastland hinted that his inquiry would look for accomplices inside the Lorraine—and presumably within King's entourage.

Amid rising criticism of Ray's abrupt cop-out, authorities in Memphis and Washington found themselves suddenly on the defensive, insisting that there were no real mysteries at all. Ray's ready cash? Investigators said he had



Associated Press

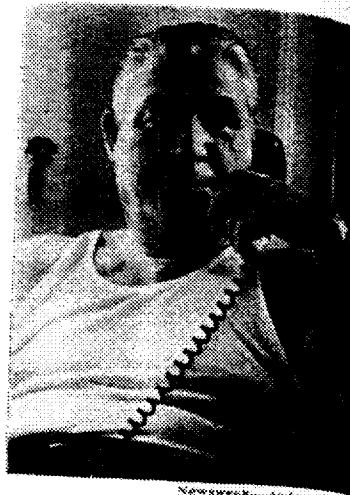


Associated Press

Bernathy charged conspiracy—but Battle (center, photo right) and Canale (right) thought murder would out



...in's view of King's motel



Foreman: Dealing for a life

d the Royal Canadian Mount-ay stuck to his tale, and no-how he would behave at the dated by Tennessee law in der cases where a defendant y. Foreman visited Ray one e day before the hearing to or a guarantee to go along, way smiling, but he was un- be end whether or not the somehow come unglued.

for moments as if it might, uth the script playing out dge Battle began Ray's part hism. At the judge's order, his black-and-gray checked t hanging rumpled on his oulders. Did he understand Yes, sir," said Ray, his voice ine. The deal—"Is this what do?" Ray sounded suddenly "Yes," he began. "I have -yes." Battle peered sharply is half-moon glasses. "Is that out to do?" he repeated, and "That's right."

even as he spoke his ap- s; Ray could not resist ne edge of ambivalence. Had ny promises besides the 99- s? "No—none as I know of," ure from anybody? "No, no re." And the key question you pleading guilty... be- led Dr. Martin Luther King circumstances that would ally guilty of murder in the

sed Jimmy Ray. "Legally h."

hardly the most forthright record, but it was adequate on, and Battle seated a pro- ten white and two black really offended Ray—and led the hearing—was the des, pooh-poohed his con-

"There have naturally been all around that James Earl s, a fall guy, a member of a

conspiracy," Canale told the jurors. His men had pondered 5,000 pages of in- vestigative reports, traveled thousands of miles, sorted 300 exhibits—and "we have no proof other than Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed by James Earl Ray." Next came Foreman, leaning confiden- tially over the rail and adding, "It took me more than a month to convince my- self that the Attorney General [Clark] and J. Edgar Hoover were correct when they said there was no conspiracy..."

Stewing: Ray stewed through the res- of Foreman's presentation, then abruptly got up. "Your Honor," he said, shifting his weight from foot to foot, "I would like to say something, too, if I may."

"All right," said Battle warily.

"I don't want to change anything that I have said," Ray offered. "I don't want to add anything onto it either. The only thing I have to say is I don't exactly accept the theories of Mr. Clark..."

"Who is Mr. Clark?" defender Fore- man interjected.

"Ramsey Clark," said Ray. "And Mr. Hoover."

"Mr. who?" rumbled Foreman.

"Mr. J. Edgar Hoover... I meant Mr. Canale, Mr. Foreman, Mr. Ramsey Clark. I mean on the conspiracy thing. I don't want to add something into it which I haven't agreed to in the past."

"I think what he is saying is that he doesn't think that Ramsey Clark's right or J. Edgar Hoover is right," Foreman told the judge, and then, turning to Ray, he added: "You are not required to agree or withdraw or anything else." But still Battle felt constrained to put the cen- tral question to him once again: was he pleading guilty because he killed King in such circumstances that he would be legally guilty of first-degree murder? "Yes, sir, make me guilty on that," said Ray, and the flurry was over.

And so, for all intents and purposes, was the case of Tennessee vs. James Earl Ray. The state put on a token few wit- nesses to establish for the record that

had indeed been killed and that
 ns involved, and Assistant Attorney
 al James Beasley read a twenty-
 summary of the imposing mass of
 ce that, loner or no, Ray was the
 man. It was left to Battle to pro-
 sentence and to offer a word to
 optics: "If this defendant was a
 er of a conspiracy . . . no member
 h conspiracy can ever live in secu-
 lie down to pleasant dreams . . .
 5 years in these criminal courts
 onvinced me that in the great ma-
 of cases, Hamlet was right when
 id, 'For murder though it have no
 e will speak with most miraculous

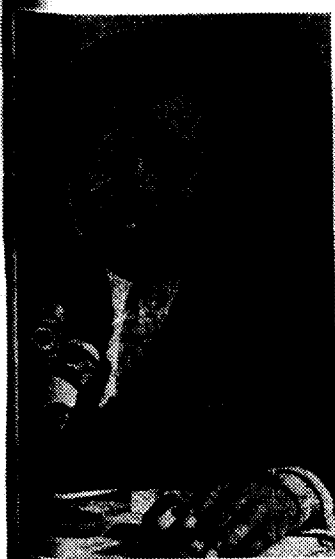
ains: But Ray's moment to speak
 come and gone. Just before 1 a.m.
 morning, two cameramen waiting in
 4-degree chill outside the jail for
 transfer saw two men in deputies'
 hats and uniforms walk to a car.
 get cold out there," one yelled
 a wave. The "deputy" turned out to
 ay, his destination a sheriff's subst-
 across town. Before dawn, he was
 draped in chains, to a highway pa-
 car—one in a bristling motorcade of
 and whisked 200 miles to Nash-
 at 80 miles an hour. And there,
 Earl Ray became prisoner No.
 7, bunked by himself—for safety's
 in a 6-by-9 maximum-security cell
 will leave only for twice-weekly
 and thrice-weekly showers. (The
 on population of 1,940 includes 826
 s, among them Ray's nearest neigh-
 a black-power advocate convicted
 murder.) No sooner was he inside
 word came back that he regretted
 plea. "I wish the hell I hadn't [plead-
 guilty] now," The Nashville Tennes-
 in quoted him as having grouched en-
 to prison, "because, with what they
 on me, I believe the worst I'd have
 ten would have been life."

The fact was that "they" had enough to
 Ray in the electric chair; the doubts
 attended the deal centered not on

his guilt but on the amination
 spiracy around the case. Ray,
 hip hard guy, simply didn't fit
 imaginings of the lone assassin—
 some mad, private vision—a Le
 Oswald, say, or a Sirhan Sirhan
 contrast, seemed to have no
 all, lunatic or otherwise—no
 money. And there were mome
 and after the assassination wh
 peared to have plenty of that,
 crisp, new 20s; by one estimate
 \$15,000 in less than a year. His
 Canada (where he picked up
 passport) to Lisbon and Lond
 he tried desperately to join up
 cenary in Africa) had the look
 laid plot. Even the incredibl
 clues he left at the scene see
 to square with the chill efficien
 act of murder itself—unless,
 Ray had been set up as the fa
 a conspiracy.

'One More Job': And then
 shadowy "Raoul," threading i
 of a Look magazine series writ
 thor Huie last fall out of hi
 searches and some notes Ray
 from jail. Huie's Raoul found
 Montreal waterfront bar, got l
 some narcotics into the U.S.,
 \$8,250 in various-sized install
 finally promised him \$12,000
 papers anywhere for "one r
 The job, though Ray claimed
 know it till much later, turned
 the murder of Martin Luther I
 concluded at the time that
 indeed a conspiracy, that its
 to set off racial war in the U.S.
 King was "secondary" . . . Th
 target was the U.S.A."

The Look account ended
 Huie says that Ray claims
 switched places with Raoul)
 King appeared on the motel
 Raoul taking over the sniper's
 boarding-house bathroom v
 waited at the wheel of the
 with the motor running. Ray,



Abernathy charged conspiracy—but Battle (center, photo right)

spirited some out of Missouri State Prison (where he was said to have peddled drugs before his escape in 1967) and that he got the rest robbing banks and smuggling narcotics and jewelry between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. He would hardly have needed help tracking King, whose travels across the South drumming up support for the Poor People's Campaign were well-publicized—as was the fact that he had taken a room at the Lorraine in Memphis. And the flight to Canada first to pick up a passport was precisely the sort of trick of the trade that makes the grapevine in prison.

Motives: But none of this suggested why Ray might have killed King—and the answer now was locked away in security cell No. 4 in Nashville. "I think race had a lot to do with it," says Canale. One defense report has it that Ray pictured King as the Ho Chi Minh of the riotous blacks—and himself as a latter-day Nathan Hale with "only one life to give so here goes." Yet the most racist act anyone has found in his pre-King past was his refusal to move from Leavenworth Penitentiary to an integrated model farm—hardly a dress rehearsal for assassination. Some of those close to the case speculated instead that what Ray really wanted was, as one put it, "to be somebody." Even when he was an escaped con with a \$50 price on his head, he told Huie, he covered his tracks carefully "because I thought the FBI would put me on the Top 10 any day." The King murder achieved that—but Ray expected even more. He imagined, said one government source, that the murder would make him such a hero at home that his sentence would be commuted—and such a celebrity abroad that, if he could only get to Africa, he would be instantly proclaimed a general in the Rhodesian Army.

All of this, of course, might have come forth to be probed and tested at a trial. The dissection of the tormented mind and soul of Sirhan Sirhan in Los Angeles stood in stark contrast to Ray's skittering moment on stage in Memphis. The sad fact was that, nine months after his arrest, he remained almost as shadowy and two-dimensional a figure in the public eye as he had been when—under his pet alias Eric Starvo Galt—he was hopping countries a step ahead of the law. Nor would the conspiracy question now be settled at trial. Europeans simply assume that assassinations are conspiratorial; it may be a sign of advancing age that America is coming to suspect as much. At the door to King's Room 306 at the Lorraine is set a marble plaque quoting the Book of Genesis: "They said one to another, behold, here cometh the dreamer . . . Let us slay him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." Even then, King's men felt that his murder was the work of more than one man, and the compact that took Ray from court to prison in less than a day meant that the question of conspiracy was left open—perhaps forever.



Kennedy dying: The prey of a Jekyll turned murderous Hyde?

Sirhan: Tragedy of the Absurd

If he presented any clear image at all, James Earl Ray seemed a killer of the old school, the classic antisocial loner, triggerman of a thousand old crime chronicles with a predictable history of stints in state penitentiaries. But from the beginning there was nothing old-fashioned about Sirhan Bishara Sirhan. As his lawyers painted him and as his own erratic courtroom behavior suggested, he was the quintessential contemporary assassin—a loner in the tradition of Lee Harvey Oswald and Richard Speck, a paranoid as loser playing out his psychic fantasies with real bullets.

Thus, the only real issue in dispute in the ten-week-old trial has been the mental competence of the 24-year-old Palestinian refugee. The prosecution has stressed Sirhan's private notebooks with their oaths to kill Kennedy as proof of premeditated murder, while the defense has interpreted these same jottings as the work of a demented misfit. The who-dunnit has been from the beginning more of a why-dunnit, and the customary interest in what happened when the gun went off has taken second place to what went off in Sirhan Sirhan's mind.

Last week Sirhan's lawyers unveiled the first of five expert psychiatric witnesses in an effort to show that their client acted under "diminished responsibility." This liberal California doctrine, applicable in only four other states, directs the jury to return a verdict of second-degree murder if the defense can show that Sirhan—though he may have known right from wrong and may have acted with deliberation—lacked the capacity to "maturely and meaningfully reflect upon the gravity of his contemplated act." If Sirhan were so judged, he would no longer face the gas chamber, but a

maximum term of life imprisonment. Chief defense counsel Grant Cooper had thoroughly prepared the way for his procession of psychiatrists and psychologists a week earlier by putting Sirhan himself on the stand. The witness's heated testimony about his troubled early years as a refugee amid the carnage of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, his virulent hatred toward everything touching Israel, his ambivalent attitudes toward Kennedy, and his profession of a blackout at the scene of the killing had already put his sanity in question. And his courtroom behavior on and off the stand—a volatile mix of truculence, supercilious private smiles, near hysteria, glee, clowning and short-lived lucidity—served as a model demonstration of the defendant's contention that Sirhan was only fifth in contact with reality.

Knotts: Cooper's first expert witness was San Diego clinical psychologist Milton M. Schorr, 45, who offered a three-page biography to a newsman, brought his wife along for news pictures—until the defense lawyers coaxed him away. A short, puffy-faced man in a bright green suit, he was extremely nervous and a bit bewildered on the stand, remarking at one point: "Today is Monday, isn't it? ... is today Monday?" He was told to relax and blurted out "I feel like Don Knotts." He dropped his papers from the witness box and, as Judge Herbert V. Walker looked on with amusement, stacked his notes on the judge's bench. Reporters quickly dubbed him "The Mole."

But when defense counsel Emile Z. Berman began questioning him, the initial impression faded, and Schorr came through with a confident, thorough count of tests he administered to Sirhan.

November: the Rorschach ink-blot test; the Thematic Apperception Test (in which the subject is shown pictures and asked to tell a story about them); the 556-item Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory; the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (an IQ test) and the Bender Gestalt Test which asks the subject to copy simple line and dot drawings. And the results of these tests, as Schorr told it last week, described Sirhan as nothing less than a walking compendium of mental derangements, the classic human time bomb with fuse fired and burning fast.

Oedipal: Sirhan, Schorr said, was a paranoid psychotic approaching schizophrenia. To scale down his rhetoric for laymen, he depicted Sirhan as a man with a "Jekyll-Hyde" personality that comes apart at the seams under stress. It was in this state of "dissociation," with the murderous Hyde cut loose from the restraint of nice-guy Dr. Jekyll, that, Schorr thinks, Sirhan shot Kennedy. Schorr also saw in Sirhan an Oedipal figure for whom Bobby Kennedy became the symbol of the hated father standing between Sirhan and total possession of his mother. Finally, Schorr described his subject as a youth—subjugated by his parents—for whom the murder pistol was a ticket to instant manhood. "I don't believe," said Schorr, "that he is at all aware that the personality of the killer is his personality. Sirhan conceives of himself as a nice guy."

The psychologist also had a ready explanation for Sirhan's curious conduct in the courtroom, including his outburst several weeks ago when he sought to fire his lawyers, plead guilty and be executed. "It's consistent for the paranoid to take the position that he knows more than anybody else," said Schorr. "He's telling the judge he's in higher authority than the judge. He believes himself to be above all law because he is part of supernatural law."

Schorr's testimony may have sounded like something cribbed from the endings of a hundred Hollywood thrillers, but his detailed account of Sirhan's performance seemed convincing enough nonetheless. In the inkblots of the Rorschach test, Sirhan saw "spurting blood," the Suez Canal, a crushed frog, "a monster charging at me," "a fried leg" and "a rotting red apple." "This man," Schorr concluded, "has lost control, so that whatever he's feeling within he's going to act out with no concern for the reality of what he does."

Smirk: At one point, Schorr related, he asked Sirhan to stare at a blank piece of paper. "This is the figure of that arrogant self-assured bastard with the victorious smirk on his face," proclaimed Sirhan. "It's that minister in Israel, Moshe Dayan, and he's looking down at people, but there's a bullet that's crashing through his brain at the height of his glory." Schorr reported that he then asked Sirhan where he was in relation to the scene. "I am the scene," Sirhan is



Los Angeles Times

Schorr: Reading the blots

said to have replied. "I'm the one who's killing him." Schorr added: "He's not a raving maniac. He's got a keen sense of justice, but it's from his private world."

During Schorr's testimony, the usually proud defendant remained "surprisingly docile, even when the psychologist gauged his performance on part of the IQ test at 82, or subnormal. (An earlier slur on his intelligence had provoked a hysterical outburst from Sirhan.) At times, the defendant seemed a bemused spectator to his own dissection. At other moments, he resisted Schorr's analysis. "What is all this b----- about?" he asked defense lawyer Russell Parsons. "Are they talking about me?" Even in his confusion, he remained supremely confident. "We've got 'em whipped," he whispered at one point to Parsons.

Not quite. Assistant District Attorney John Howard rigorously attacked the validity of the tests themselves, managing to wring concessions from Schorr that he had called the MMPI examination a "Mickey Mouse Test" and that the Rorschach test is criticized by many in the psychological community. Howard also impugned Schorr's impartiality in the case, reading before the court part of a letter Schorr had written prior to the November



Sirhan Sr.: Really the target?

tests in which he volunteered his services to the defense. But Schorr himself scored some points in the cross-examination, describing Sirhan's notebooks—the heart of the prosecution's case—as "a sort of escape valve to discharge hostilities." "Every time he writes something down of a homicidal nature," explained Schorr, "he discharges the hostility and tends to lessen the probability that he'll act it out. But he has to keep on constantly writing, furiously writing."

'Hello There!' The week ended with the replaying of tapes of Sirhan's interrogation by the police directly after the shooting. This evidence was as ambiguous as the rest, possibly the all-too-casual and cocky responses of a man off in his own world or, perhaps, the same, sharp-witted replies of a nerveless killer. The tapes showed Sirhan quietly claiming his constitutional rights, prattling about the policemen's families, the high cost of having babies, the stock market and the Boston Strangler. "That's really cruel," he said of the strangler's methods. He asked if the room was bugged and chirped "Hello there!" when told it was. "I'm a good listener, but I'm a lousy person to interview," he told the police. Only once did he seem to deliver a straight, unvarnished answer. "What have you gotten out of life?" he was asked. "Nothing," he said.

As the trial resumes this week, Schorr will take the stand, possibly to defend himself against charges in a New York Times article that his textbook analysis of Sirhan was just that—cribbed in part from "Case Book of a Crime Psychiatrist," written by New York psychiatrist James A. Brussel.* The defense is slated to present its remaining expert psychiatric witnesses, ending with a University of California professor of psychiatry, criminology and law, Dr. Bernard L. Diamond, a developer of the California doctrine of "diminished responsibility." Diamond used hypnosis to draw from Sirhan the details of the killing itself.

Ritual: But even with an estimated three to five weeks of testimony to come, the trial has taken on the dreary, routine cast of a ritual of duty, one that will most likely end not in the death but the incarceration of Sirhan Bishara Sirhan. The prosecution early on stopped quizzing prospective jurors about their view on capital punishment and has omitted mention of the gas chamber. To rebut the legion of defense psychiatrists, it will call only one expert, psychiatrist Seymour Pollack, whose testimony is expected to offer little fuel for the state's case. Most observers think that the jury will ultimately return a first-degree conviction—which the prosecution is seeking out of professional obligation. But then, the consensus is that the psychiatric testimony

*The parallels between Schorr's testimony and Brussel's book were indeed striking. Thus Schorr on the stand: "She whom he loved never kept her pledge. . . . Since the anonymous always demands maximum penalties, the pain has to be death." The equivalent passage from Brussel's book: "She whom he loved never kept her pledge. . . . and since the anonymous always demands the maximum, the pain had to be death."

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

will ultimately lead the jury to spare Sirhan's life.

But whether Sirhan is executed or locked away, the trial itself has notably failed to explain, in any profound way, whatever meaning there may be behind the Kennedy assassination. Perhaps, as Albert Camus has pointed out, the only way to understand such maniacally absurd events is to see the absurd itself as all the answer there is.

THE WIDOWS:

Keeper of the Dream

Straight-backed and smiling serenely, she strode into Boston's cavernous Commonwealth Armory and immediately touched off a standing ovation from the capacity crowd waiting for her there. Wave after wave of applause swept Coretta Scott King up to the stage where, as the widow of Boston University's most famous alumnus, she accepted an honorary degree last week and then delivered BU's centennial Founder's Day address. Mrs. King spoke of peace, poverty and prejudice, frequently reciting words her husband had used. When she finished, many among her 6,000 listeners found themselves in stunned agreement with the man who murmured, "I could have been listening to Dr. King himself."

Martin Luther King had a dream—a vision of brotherhood, freedom and justice which he announced to the world before the Lincoln Memorial in Washington one bright day six years ago. In life, he shared that dream intimately with his strong, sympathetic wife. Since the assassination, Coretta King, 41, has taken up her husband's dream as her own and in the process has become a symbol in her own right.

Mrs. King has much the same charisma as her husband. Everywhere she goes, a mob of ardent admirers, black and white alike, seems to materialize almost at once. She seldom seems to relax while on the road and rarely joins any local festivities. But no well-wisher is ever turned away, no hand ever spurned, no autograph book ever refused. "In a profound way," she told a throng at a ceremony for her in India, "Martin Luther King continues the struggle for peace and understanding between men and nations more powerfully in death than in life. For his spirit has been loosed upon a violent and loveless world."

Rooted: At first, Coretta carried her message with Martin's words. Shortly after the assassination she appeared in his stead at an antiwar rally in New York and for her text used notes that he had left behind. But as she continued to fulfill his long list of appearances, she has developed her own ideology. This is rooted in what she understands to be King's developing philosophy—which linked the fight for civil rights and a better life at home with the struggle of the developing nations and the need for peace throughout the world. She scorns U.S. involve-



Sam Beckett

Mrs. King: "Thank you for being you"

ment in Vietnam's "civil war" and asks "amnesty" for draft resisters and Army deserters.

Back home in Atlanta, Mrs. King lives in a red brick bungalow with her four children (Yolanda, 13, Martin Luther III, 11, Dexter, 8, and Bernice, 5). She sings in the choir at Ebenezer Baptist church and serves on its board of education and courtesy guild. Most of her time lately, though, has been spent at a tape recorder, dictating the raw stuff of a book about King and their life together which is due for publication in June, for which she has received \$500,000. Meanwhile, in a sound-proofed, oak-paneled basement office suite decorated with posters ("Black is beautiful"), five secretaries mount a daily battle with mountainous stacks of mail. "Rev. [Ralph David] Abernathy fell heir to Dr. King's position," explains one Northern civil rights leader. "But the keeper of the image is Mrs. King."

Inevitably, there has been a diver-

gence between the strong-willed, single-minded Mrs. King and the splintered Southern Christian Leadership Conference, led, at least officially, by Abernathy. Though she still draws \$12,000 a year as an SCLC board member and will join Abernathy and the others in an anniversary observance for King in Memphis in April, her interests are broader and rather more to the left. For its part SCLC is trying to recapture something of its earlier influence both by staging large symbolic gestures, despite the fading appeal for many blacks, and by involving itself more in local issues like welfare rights, food stamps, schools. For the time being, Mrs. King will most likely continue to make herself available for major SCLC programs, but she will be traveling more and more frequently in her own orbit, much as she was last week. As she left the Boston University Afro-American Center, for example, she was stopped briefly by a coed who took her hand and said "Thank you ... I just being you."

The Lady of Hickory Hill

"Sometimes people think that because you have money and position that you are immune from the human experience," Robert F. Kennedy remarked to a friend a short time before he was assassinated. "But I can feel as lonesome as lost as the next man when I turn the key in the door and go into an empty house that is usually full of kids and dogs."

Nine months after Kennedy's death Hickory Hill, the 159-year-old Kenner homestead in McLean, Va., is just as much aswarm with animals and people as it ever was in the heady days of the New Frontier. A stream of visitors flows in and out almost round the clock. The tennis court is occupied whenever weather permits. The lawns still serve as playfields for hard-hitting games of touch football. And there at the center of it



Mrs. Kennedy: An amazing ability to cheer everybody up

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

is indomitable Ethel Skakel Kennedy, Bobby's widow and the mother of his eleven children.

"She won't succumb to morbidity," says a Kennedy intimate of Ethel. "She keeps moving." Some friends attribute her extraordinary resiliency to a profound religious faith. (She goes to Mass at nearby St. Luke's almost daily.) Others sense a determined effort to protect her brood (including Rory Elizabeth Katherine, born last December, six months after RFK's death) from the loneliness she herself must often feel. "She has tried to keep it all the same for the kids," says a friend. "Whatever she thinks or feels, she keeps to herself." To countless friends who come and go from Hickory Hill (some-time visitors include columnist Art Buchwald, Olympic decathlon-medalist and Kennedy campaigner Rafer Johnson, ex-astronaut John Glenn, singer Andy Williams plus an endless supply of Kennedy in-laws), Ethel has been as much comforting as comforted. One such visitor last week spoke of her "amazing ability to cheer everybody up. It is almost as though she drew strength from giving pleasure to those concerned about her." And Sen. Edward Kennedy, surviving chief of the Kennedy clan, volunteered: "Ethel has no idea how much her strength and her own warmth and goodwill have meant to others, how much these things have meant to her children, how much she has helped me, and the Kennedy family."

Involved: Between visitors, telephone calls and mountains of mail to be answered (she has volunteers to help, but they are hopelessly behind), the 40-year-old Ethel is also busy with many projects relating to her dead husband. She has had a hand in planning dedication ceremonies for the newly named Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium in Washington, for instance, and even in choosing book covers for European editions of Kennedy's book, "Thirteen Days." "She is interested, involved, and her judgments are astoundingly good and helpful," says a Kennedy intimate who works with her on many of the projects.

Occasionally, Ethel takes time away from Hickory Hill. She has visited New York a few times since last June, once in connection with the sale of the family apartment there. And late last week, she and a bunch of the kids took off for ten days of skiing at Bobby's favorite ski area, Waterville Valley, N.H.

But for the most part these days, life for Ethel Kennedy is clearly centered more than ever at Hickory Hill. Indeed, she has made only one formal appearance outside Hickory Hill since last June. That was at a by-invitation-only dedication of a bust of RFK in the courtyard of the Justice Department building. Even so there are still times, usually at night, when the last guest has left, the kids are bedded down, and Hickory Hill is quiet when Ethel Kennedy knows exactly what Bobby meant about just how empty that big house can be.

WASHINGTON

FORTRESS AMERICA?

BY KENNETH CRAWFORD



Whether the United States of America, given the present state of its public opinion, can remain an effective world power has become a moot question. Its strengths and its solemn commitments to freedom and order argue that it must. But the sound of some of its most influential voices suggests that it cannot.

Nobody explicitly advocates retreat into Herbert Hoover's "Fortress America" concept, but such a retreat is implicitly indicated as the only alternative to present foreign policy by a large, if not yet quite dominant, school of political philosophers. Patently specious as some of its positions are, they thrive in the atmosphere of disillusionment with Vietnam, frustration over the Middle East and concern with domestic disorders tenuously traceable to foreign involvements.

In resolving the nation's basic dilemma, President Nixon, like President Johnson before him, will be hostage to the public opinion created by others enjoying the advantages of irresponsibility. If Mr. Nixon braves the trend toward isolationism, whether it poses as pacific liberalism, Christian forbearance or something else, he, too, may be forced into premature retirement from the Presidency. But if he backs away from the totalitarian challenge, whatever its source, full retreat will be all but inevitable.

NONSENSE

Sentiment for retreat already manifests itself in grotesque ways. What was once regarded as enemy propaganda is now seriously touted as ultimate truth by presumably sophisticated statesmen. A Senate leader can spout the nonsense that the current Communist offensive in Vietnam is merely justified retaliation for the depredations of our B-52s in South Vietnam. His comment not only goes uncontradicted but is widely repeated. Should the allied command, informed of the buildup for this offensive in the Communists' Cambodian sanctuaries, have done nothing to abort their incursions? The enemy must not be inconvenienced?

That this offensive is in clear violation of an understanding specifically acknowledged by North Vietnamese negotiators in Paris and by the Kremlin, when it was verified, has occasioned no outrage, indeed almost no comment. As a people, we Americans agonized over the plight of the rela-

tively few North Vietnamese civilians hurt by our bombing but do no hand-wringing about the hundreds killed, maimed and systematically terrorized and the thousands left homeless in South Vietnam by the rocketing of Saigon and other cities. Our sympathies are strangely inverted.

The brouhaha over deployment of the anti-ballistic missile system was another symptom of the national mood. The opposition case rested partly on the honest doubts of respected experts about the safety, efficacy and desirability of this expensive contraption. But the argument most often heard was that Sentinel ABM's, if installed, would escalate the arms race and thus jeopardize the success of projected arms-control negotiations with the Russians. Yet the Soviet Union had already deployed such a system. Who, then, was doing the escalating? Several U.S. senators said we were. Even so, it took gall for Izvestia to say the same thing.

FADING RESOLVE

Mr. Nixon's modified ABM program will now be debated in Congress. If accepted, it should do something for his bargaining position when he negotiates with the Soviet Union on the Middle East, Vietnam and arms control. He is counting heavily on Soviet cooperation in these areas. But the Kremlin, judging from experience, will be only as cooperative as its respect for American power and resolve requires it to be. The power is still there, but the resolve is fading, as the Russians well know.

They can read American publications and attend Senate debates. They know how many desertions the U.S. armed services suffered last year. They know the extent of draft resistance among the young, who have no stomach for the abstract cause of freedom for faraway peoples. Understanding this reluctance makes it no less inhibiting to U.S. leadership.

John Foster Dulles's policy of containing Communism with the threat of "massive retaliation" was discarded in favor of John F. Kennedy's policy of "flexible response" to Communist aggression. Lyndon Johnson incurred the wrath of his countrymen by following flexibility where it logically led. Mr. Nixon will now try "negotiation" as a substitute for "confrontation." If that fails, what will be left? Fortress America?