



GUNNAR MYRDAL
Sees reasons to fear.

Assassinations: The

WASHINGTON—Gunnar Myrdal, preeminent historian of the race problem in the U. S., has warned that political assassination may become an American custom.

Expressing himself as "horried" over the murder of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Swedish economist and sociologist said in a telephone interview from Stockholm:

"I am scared it may become an established custom in America to knock over any man who sticks his head above the ground.

"This is a horrible prospect. We have psychopaths in every society. You have them too. When assassinations of great moment occur, there is danger that psychopaths will get enjoyment out of the act. They will think they can win an honored position by assassinating some public figure.

"If you in America get the tradition of assassination, everyone will have to travel like President Johnson, entering by the back door and being followed by lots of policemen. I prefer it the way it is here in Sweden where the King can quite casually walk through the streets and step into shops to buy Christmas gifts for his grandchildren."

His Classic Study

Myrdal, whose "An American Dilemma," originally published in 1944, is considered a classic study of the racial problem in America, also made these points in the interview:

¶He is not "giving up" on America's ability to solve the racial question, but said that so far the country is only "nibbling" at the problem.

¶He reiterated a recent statement that it will take the U.S. "trillions" of dollars and the work of a full generation to achieve a solution.

¶Dr. King was right in holding that the solution could not come through violence.

¶It is "silly" for the U.S. to allow practically anyone and everyone to buy guns.

¶The efforts of Mayor John V. Lindsay and Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller to deal with the Negro problem have been particularly admirable. Myrdal commended Lindsay for "risking his life" by going into the slums and urging people to maintain order.

His Advice

And what advice did Myrdal have for Americans in this time of emergency?

"Let us calm our hearts," he said, "and work to fulfill Martin Luther King's dream."

"We know how violence is creeping up on us," Myrdal said. "But not only in America. We can turn on our television sets and see what is happening in Vietnam. Every child knows it is not fiction."

Hits Gun Laws

"Yes, violence has been creeping up on us since World War I. That war was a great crime. Millions and millions of poor soldiers were driven to death at Verdun. Before World War I we had a philosophy of progress. Everyone thought things were going to get better. But then came the two great wars with their violence."

"Is the U.S. more violent than other western countries?" Myrdal was asked.

New American Way?

"I love America deeply," he replied, "but I regret to say I think it is. You take the silly idea that everyone can buy a gun. Guns are disappearing in Sweden. I am all against your gun laws. It is argued that the Constitution supports them by holding that every citizen has the right to bear arms. Then to hell with the Constitution! To allow everyone to have guns today is dangerous."

Myrdal said that the recent wave of race riots in the U. S. would have been even more unfortunate if the disorders had not been caused by an event such as Dr. King's assassination. His point was that as a martyr Dr. King may sting the conscience of Americans, particularly middle-class Americans and lead to more drastic steps to solve the racial problem.

Ghandi's assassination in India, he noted, resulted in the calming of strife between Moslems and Hindus.

In India, Myrdal said, there were qualified men to succeed Ghandi, including Jawaharlal Nehru, who became prime minister. The great difficulty before the U.S. now, he added, is to find someone who can replace Martin Luther King as a worthy leader of the Negro people.

"We have a poem," Myrdal concluded, "which says in so many words that when things look darkest, God will find his man."

"So, even though things are becoming worse with the continued migration of the Negro from the south to the cities of the North, I am not giving up. There is something to work for. I am not a defeatist. You have to fight against adversity."

Los Angeles Times—Washington Post