

Whitewater,
The Summit,
Howth,
Co. Dublin
5 July 1968

Dear Mrs. Meagher,

Many thanks for sending me your very interesting article, and for your invitation to write on the three assassinations. It is unfortunately impossible for me to write an article on this subject before the date given. I attach however a brief comment, which may be of some interest to you and which you may use if you think fit. Best wishes, Yours sincerely, Conor Cruise O'Brien.

THE THREE ASSASSINATIONS.

I am inclined to think that the assassinations of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King belong essentially in the same pattern of veto by assassination--in that in each case a right wing group--not necessarily the same one--deliberately eliminated a personality whom they believed to be giving leadership in a direction of change, contrary to their interests, or prejudices. However, on present information I doubt whether Robert Kennedy's assassination fits into the same picture. It is obviously difficult to comment on this at present, but if the person apprehended and charged is in fact the assassin, it would appear that he acted for reasons which could only be dubiously--and I think improperly--connected with right-wing conspiratorial activity in the United States. In this case his reasons would be connected rather with the use of America's power in the world outside, and the ease with which American political figures discuss and favour the application of force. Senator Kennedy was reported, in the course of his campaign, as favouring unlimited arms shipments to Israel. Granted the history of Palestine, and the emotional state of the Palestinian Arabs, especially since the Six-Days War, the sequel does not seem quite so incomprehensible as some commentators have found it. I am not either condoning murder or condemning the State of Israel, but I think the long and tragic interplay of international politics, of which both Jews and Arabs were victims, here claimed its latest victim.

Yorty held a press conference in which he leaked information which he claimed as indicating that Sirhan Bishara Sirhan was a Communist or under Communist influence and inspiration. He repeated almost exactly the inglorious performance of the Dallas authorities who had tried energetically and insidiously to portray Oswald as a Communist and to inflame opinion in such a manner as to distract attention from the ultra-Right of Dallas, which was logically and irresistably under suspicion. Yorty's insinuations were no less vicious or contrived, and moved other Los Angeles officials to repudiate his statements as not only prejudicial to the accused but unfounded and misleading.

Some days later, Winchell published a report which sought to implicate pro-Castro Cubans in the assassination of Robert Kennedy. Again, an exact repetition of efforts by rabid anti-Castroites and agents provocateur to incriminate Fidel Castro in the murder of President Kennedy. The absurdity of the exercise is matched only by its malice and delerium.

If we are to function rationally and in the context of reality rather than be buffeted here and there by doctrinal passion, we cannot yet do more than acknowledge that the accused assassin appears to have been caught red-handed and that while there is no solid evidence as yet of accomplices or conspirators, the possibility cannot be dismissed a priori. In the assassination of Martin Luther King, there are persistent and serious indications of conspiracy and perhaps of a hired killer. And, in the assassination of President Kennedy, there is no longer any doubt that he was caught in a murderous crossfire by two or more killers, but that Oswald may well have been entirely innocent and unknowing. The fact that two of the three assassinations were, or give every appearance of having been, the work of a conspiracy (or of two unrelated conspiracies) justifies every hesitation in adjudging the nature of the third assassination. Respect for fact and fairness to the accused require that judgment be withheld until all the evidence has been unfolded and tested under cross-examination. Logic and understanding of the political forces and counter-forces evident in the nation at this time of show-down on Vietnam and in the cities, and of the mammoth economic stakes invested in the status quo---these, however, require that the possibility of conspiracy be left open. The accused assassin is, fortunately, alive. He may decide to testify at his trial. The truth may emerge in irrefutable fullness and spare us the uncertainty and turmoil