

First Draft

Three Assassinations

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"We will have new assassinations," I wrote in these pages, in the June issue. "If indeed a conspiracy did kill (John Fitzgerald) Kennedy," wrote Conor Cruise O'Brien in the December 1967 issue, "then a future President who incurred the displeasure of the same or similar circles would be likely to meet the same fate." Dr. O'Brien, warning that it is "urgently necessary to call for a serious and independent investigation into the assassination of President Kennedy," then said, "If the man who became President through that assassination still chooses to maintain the fiction that there has already been a serious investigation into the assassination, then it is time for others to give a lead in this matter. It is from the late President's Senatorial brothers that that lead would most fittingly come."

But the Senators Kennedy did not take the lead. Robert Francis Kennedy, who said on March 25, 1968 that he stood by the Warren Report and on April 4, 1968, said in effect that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin, has now himself fallen with an assassin's bullet in his head. Later today he will be buried near his assassinated brother at Arlington.

Ted Kennedy, the sole surviving brother, finally at this late date, and at such enormous cost, has at last and for the first time expressed doubt that it was Lee Harvey Oswald who assassinated President Kennedy. Reportedly he gave words to his doubt while in vigil at Robert Kennedy's coffin on the plane which flew the body to New York. He may disavow and forget his bitter disbelief--perhaps he has done so already, for as I see and hear him this moment on the screen beyond my typewriter delivering an ~~anguished~~ eulogy of his second assassinated brother, I see Earl Warren there among the honored guests and mourners at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Robert Kennedy was en route to the White House, if not this year then next time--if there is a next time. No one doubts that. He was hated and loathed by <sup>some of</sup> the highest public officials and political leaders--by those who were his rivals for power, and by those who ~~strangled~~ <sup>choked</sup> at the prospect of yielding power to him. J. Edgar Hoover, pretending to stand aloof, in the weeks before RFK's murder, and using a notorious syndicated column, had funneled a stream of

information to the public ~~concerning~~<sup>fingering</sup> Kennedy as the man who had ~~used~~<sup>authorized</sup> wiretaps and bugging to spy on Martin Luther King in his most private life as well as in his official activities. The same syndicated column, fed ~~down~~ by other high sources in the administration, also denounced RFK as the friend of the utilities, who protected them so that they could continue to rob the people. These detractors, these rivals, will be among the mourners, too, for surely if they have one talent it is for the most awesome hypocrisy.

Fortunate J. Edgar Hoover! who in his twilight years experiences one by one the downfall and death of his arch-enemies—Jack Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Bob Kennedy. He will live to be 150, on the strength of such juices.

But what of the people, the country? The lambs are being devoured by the wolves, and perhaps the only question that remains is whether they will be meekly destroyed or go down ~~whining~~ resisting the savages whose masks have been made transparent at last.

No sooner was Robert Kennedy shot down than that broken record, Ramsey Clark, was spinning on the turntable the stale and insulting cliché: "No evidence of a conspiracy, only the evidence of this individual act." A few short hours after the murder of Martin Luther King, and a few short hours after the shooting of Robert Kennedy, there could be no investigative basis whatever for making any judgment of the nature of the crime; and that Ramsey Clark has done so twice within two months and without visible embarrassment reveals him to be a toady and a tiresome little bureaucrat and propagandist whose occupancy of high office is an affront.

Like Ramsey Clark, the New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison lost no time in making unwarranted pronouncements about the latest assassination: on June 5, while Kennedy lay dying, and before his assailant was even identified, Garrison was already declaring the event to be part of a vast conspiracy, the same conspiracy for which he had ~~already~~ arrested a prominent citizen of New Orleans. The news of this self-serving declaration was given to the Associated Press by Henry Wade, the District Attorney of Dallas whose ~~test~~<sup>improprieties</sup> and ignorance will live forever in the annals of mindlessness. Since Wade is, to paraphrase my friend Leo Sauvage, the Jim Garrison of Dallas, it is not unfitting that the one should speak for the other.

But the vilest, cheapest and dirtiest act of instant capitalization on the mortality of a fellow human being was committed by Mark Lane, the "dean" of the critics of the Warren Commission in the eyes of many and certainly in his own estimation. On a Philadelphia television interview only four or five hours after Robert Kennedy died, Lane said that within the last few weeks RFK had

sent emissaries to New Orleans to reassure Garrison that he was sympathetic, that he did not accept the Warren Report either, but that he could not act now, while he was a candidate, "there were guns between him and the White House," but if elected, he would reopen the case and there would be arrests and prosecutions.

Although it was self-evident that this was an infamous falsehood from beginning to end and utterly incompatible with recent utterances or writings of Robert Kennedy, Garrison, and Lane himself, immediate inquiries were made which confirmed that the story was wholly unfounded.

But Lane's despicable contrivance was only one of many obscene and cretinous statements that cluttered the airwaves on the days after the second Kennedy assassination. Luminaries among the news commentators hastened hysterically to insist again that the country was NOT sick, that Oswald was the lone assassin of President Kennedy---James Earl Ray was the lone assassin of Martin Luther King, because, according to the pious jackass Daniel Schorr of CBS, Ramsey Clark had said so only the day before the new assassination---and Sirhan Sirhan was a you-know-what and not even an American to boot. That Sirhan had been soaking up American culture for eleven years in Southern California, this was not mentioned: He was an Arab, not an American, and ~~I heard~~ William Rusher almost convulsed with fury at those who dared to blame this country.

For other prominent personalities, this third assassination was finally enough to rock them out of complacency. Hugh Downs wondered if there was not an anti-humanist conspiracy which was picking off the outstanding spokesmen for social justice and against the Vietnam war. Arthur Schlesinger refused to believe that this, too, was only a lone deranged Jordanian assassin--the pattern was too consistent to be accidental. Arthur Miller wrote an indictment of the American social order that stung bitterly; and other silent intellectuals were heard from in troubled and troubling appraisal of the nation which has become the leading assassination center of the world.

As for Lyndon Baines Johnson, who manages to look like a killer even as he scolds and decries against murder (except, of course, in Vietnam, where the inferno continues to consume the helpless and innocent human sacrifices to American self-righteousness), Johnson had the solution: appoint another Commission! And he brought into being what will be known, I suppose, as the (Milton) Eisenhower Commission, to investigate the causes of violence in America.

If a new commission was not sufficient, Johnson added insult to injury by naming as members, among others, Representative Hale Boggs of Louisiana, late of the duplicitous Warren Commission; and that body's senior counsel, Albert E. Jenner, Jr. Jenner is a liar and a key perpetrator of the framing of Lee Harvey Oswald for a crime committed by others. In the March 1967 issue of this magazine, I documented from the Warren Commission's own published evidence a stream of lies and misstatements broadcast by Jenner on a local radio station, lies and inaccuracies which can leave no doubt of Jenner's untrustworthiness and dishonesty. (After that article was written, I personally heard and witnessed Jenner admitting to a member of his family that his assertion that he and others on the Commission or its staff had examined the autopsy photographs and X-rays of the murdered President was false.) Not at all shaken by the assassination of a second Kennedy, Jenner returned to the television studio on the next day to announce that as a member of the new commission he intended to delve still further into the "motivation" of Oswald--the man whom he helped to frame for a crime of which he did not commit, and could not have committed. An independent firearms expert and foremost ballistics authority, Shelley Braverman, has told me recently that if he had been present on the sixth floor and witnessed Oswald in the act of shooting, he would have utmost difficulty in believing him guilty. (Some of Braverman's reasons are given in his devastating critique of the ballistics and rifle testimony on which the Warren Commission relied, in Guns, May 1967, pages 18-56.)

In an editorial on June 7, 1968 the New York Post expressed distaste for the "false comfort" offered us in the form of another commission and called upon Lyndon Johnson "to abandon the preposterous pretense that further study is needed." With such members as Jenner, the new commission may turn out to be worse than "false comfort," and just plain false. Which is not to say that further study is not needed. Indeed, it is needed, and needed desperately --further study, investigation, and prosecution of those who committed the assassination of President Kennedy and of those who wrote a fraudulent history of the crime and who, like Jenner, continue to press upon the public their shameful contrivance of a non-existent lone assassin.

If we do not at long last really solve that assassination, no thinking person in the world will believe the official findings when they are made in the King and Robert Kennedy assassinations, even if they are credible. Self-serving windbags will continue to shriek lurid accusations against a whole galaxy of supposed conspirators, from Lyndon Johnson and the CIA to psychopathic oil millionaires--accusations some of which may accidentally be true but which,

when uttered by outright demagogues and unsupported by a shred of credible evidence, serve only to absolve those accused from legitimate suspicion.

Surely it is time for the American public and for our institutions and our academic and professional communities to examine seriously the several responsible books which challenge the Warren Report on fully documented and authenticated grounds—a duty which, to their discredit, they have failed to carry out or have undertaken only spasmodically. At issue is not merely the solution of a horrendous murder, or the determination of truth for its own sake, or the rectification of an abominable injustice, supremely important and urgent as these tasks are. Also at issue is the abuse of power by the elected Government, the elimination of candidates for the bestowal of that power by the people, and the real and present danger that the elimination of Senator Kennedy while he was campaigning for the highest office will become an excuse for usurpation of those shreds of democratic rights still left to the people.

The new assassination foreseen in the June issue has now taken place, with the murder of Robert F. Kennedy in Los Angeles on June 6. Must we see Senator Eugene McCarthy's head blown off by bullets, too, before we understand the meaning of the liquidation of two Kennedys and of Martin Luther King? Must we find space at Arlington for Edward Kennedy? Robert and Ted Kennedy did not heed the appeal directed to them by Conor Cruise O'Brien, and now Robert Kennedy has been tragically cut down. The only remaining Kennedy brother can still act, as can Senator McCarthy and every other man who has no stomach for slaughter, in Dallas or Memphis or Los Angeles or Saigon or Hanoi. Merely to mourn and to weep is to comfort oneself as spectator. That is not enough. Today, it is not even decent. We are at the eleventh hour. Every individual has options open to him and can do something, even so little as sending a telegram, writing a letter, ringing an alarm to those who are still complacent. I hope there is still time.