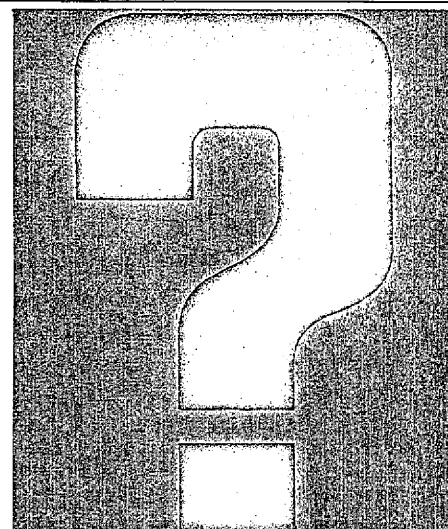
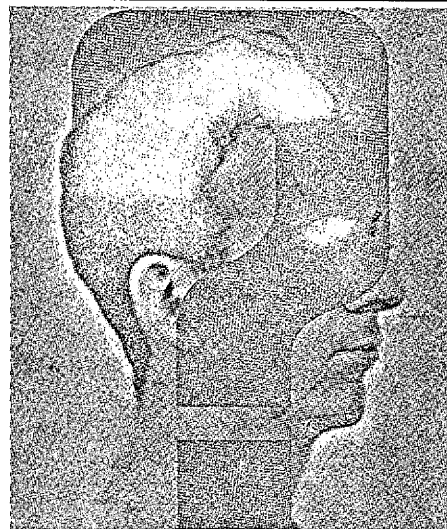
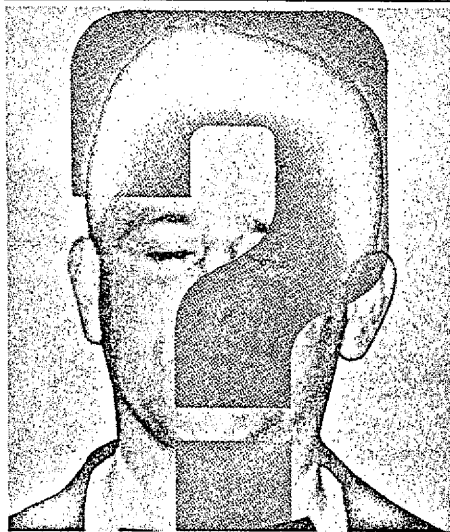


Two Assassinations

by Sylvia Meagher



"All of the evidence indicates that this was the act of a single individual . . . There is no evidence of a widespread plot."

We heard these words from Dallas officials on November 22, 1963; and we heard them again from U.S. Attorney-General Ramsey Clark, in Memphis, less than 24 hours after Martin Luther King was assassinated there. We will hear them again.

Assassination with impunity is inherent in the American Way. The government can guarantee every technological miracle—from the hydrogen bomb to the most lethal chemical/biological weapons, to a rocket to Mars and an electronic data bank to keep track of every detail of our lives from cradle to grave. But the government does not find and punish the assassins who are shooting down, one by one, our noblest and most progressive individuals. Martin Luther King, truly a Christ-like and beloved man, now has been added to the roster of martyrs which, since 1960, has inscribed the four Birmingham children, Medgar Evers, William Moore, Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, Malcolm X, Jimmie Lee Jackson, James Reeb, Viola Liuzzo, Jonathan Myrick Danials, Richard Morrisroe, Wharlest Jackson, and John Fitzgerald Kennedy, at home; and Patrice Lumumba, Che Guevara, and others assassinated abroad who were, directly

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or indirectly, victims of American veto by assassination.

Less than five years separate the assassinations of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King. Since we have learned nothing from history, since we have mocked truth and hurled the Warren Report into the sorrowing face of justice, we are indeed condemned to reliving the events we have tried to falsify and forget.

Martin Luther King was shot to death by an assassin firing a high-powered rifle with telescopic sight from the window of a building, as Kennedy was said to have been shot. This rifle, too, was "misidentified": first said to be a semi-automatic Browning (on which no telescopic sight can be mounted), it was soon re-identified as a 30-caliber pump-action Remington rifle with telescopic sight, and as a 30.06. The rifle was found, within minutes, near the scene, where it was left on the street, and it was rushed to the FBI Laboratory in Washington. The FBI had traced the Italian Mannlicher-Carcano rifle allegedly inculcated in the Kennedy assassination within 24 hours; but the rifle used to assassinate Martin Luther King has not yet been traced, so far as the public knows, three full days later. One newscast announced that the FBI "thought" it had found a palmprint on the rifle. No fingerprints, then, as there were none on the Carcano but only a palmprint discovered under circumstances which, even after the attempt by the Warren Commission to legitimize this print, give every appearance of fabrication by police

authorities for the purpose of incriminating an innocent man.

The assassin of Martin Luther King used an alias, "John Willard," when he rented a cheap room in a rooming house opposite the motel where Martin Luther King and his party were staying. The name of the motel and the number of Dr. King's room had been published in the press. The supposed assassin of President Kennedy lived in a rooming house in Dallas, under the alias "O. H. Lee."

Martin Luther King, struck by a bullet fired into his head from a window in front of him, fell violently back. John F. Kennedy, supposedly struck by a bullet fired into his head from a window *behind* him, fell violently back.

Kennedy's alleged assassin was apprehended less than 90 minutes after the fatal shooting, but in that interim he had supposedly already murdered a police officer in a different section of Dallas. Martin Luther King's assassin was still at large, 72 hours later, although there was a heavy FBI presence in Memphis and police were staked out around the motel to protect Dr. King and were on the scene instantly when the shot was fired. As one of Dr. King's aides described it, bitterly, "I saw the police coming from everywhere. They said, 'Where did it come from? And I said, 'Behind you.' The police were coming from where the shot came."

"John Willard" reportedly was seen fleeing from the rooming house and escaping in a

white Mustang. The manhunt has been extended hundreds of miles outside of Memphis. The *New York Post* reported on April 6 that "there seemed little doubt that he was able to flee the city, eluding city police and the Arkansas state troopers guarding bridges across the Mississippi." This was a carefully planned escape, then, after a carefully planned murder. Will it turn out that "John Willard" had no help from anyone, but still eluded the FBI, the Memphis police, and the Arkansas troopers?

We will be wise to scrutinize with utmost care the pronouncements made by the local and federal authorities, who always try to sell us a lone deranged murderer when a political assassination has been committed. The authorities, who have saturated the media with pleas for non-violence, would be dismayed to uncover a racist conspiracy behind the slaying of Martin Luther King. If there was such a conspiracy and it becomes known, it will be far more difficult to restrain the rage of black people and to protect Property and the lives of whites. Perhaps "John Willard" acted alone, in the technical sense, but he knew that the white racist South would help him—to escape, or if apprehended, to escape the consequences—as it had helped all other racist assassins. Not one has yet paid with his life, after due process, for the life he took.

Robert Kennedy, who may well be in the White House by this time next year, broke the news of the death of Martin Luther King to a Negro rally in Indianapolis, visibly shaken by deep emotion. "For those of you who are black," he said to the anguished gathering, "and tempted to be filled with hatred at the injustice of such an act, I can also feel in my heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed . . . killed by a white man."

Perhaps Robert Kennedy has compelling reasons for perpetuating by his overt support the falsification of his brother's assassination and the flagrant framing of Lee Harvey Oswald as the "lone assassin" which has been painstakingly documented by a number of serious scholars and critics of the Warren Report. Ten days before this new assassination, Robert Kennedy told a rally of college students in Los Angeles that if he became President, he would not reopen the Warren Report. He said, "I stand by the Warren Commission Report. I've seen everything in the Archives."

Those of us who have studied the Warren Commission's documents can hardly accept Senator Kennedy's assurance that he has "seen everything" in the Archives. He stated in writing on August 4, 1964, to Chief Justice Warren:

As you know, I am personally not aware of the detailed results of the extensive investigation in this matter . . . I have, however, received periodic reports about the work of the Commission . . . (CE 3025)

Senator Kennedy has not sat in the Archives studying about 100 cubic feet of documents and transcripts during the last three years. So far as is known, he has not set foot in the Archives. (The transfer to that building of the autopsy photographs and X-rays, under restrictions which in effect bar examina-

tion of this evidence by *anyone* before 1971, was handled for the Kennedys by one of their numerous aides, Burke Marshall.) Robert Kennedy and his brother Edward Kennedy have both said explicitly that they have not read the Warren Report, even as they have also said that they stand by it. But we must not judge the evidence in the light of what the Senators Kennedy say about it, as I have already written elsewhere; we must judge the Kennedys by what they say about the evidence, which has been proven indisputably to be specious, manipulated and misrepresented, and in some instances, suppressed (in the case of such vital forensic items as the spectrographic test results, the description of the President's wounds by his widow, and numerous still-classified investigative reports).

That the assassins of President Kennedy escaped identification, apprehension, and trial is an inescapable fact. The immunity which they were given, knowingly or unknowingly, by those who value "political truth" above truth, is an open encouragement to would-be assassins, no less than the unavenged assassinations of black children in Birmingham and civil rights workers in Mississippi and in the many other garrisons of bigotry and bloodlust in this wretched country. Those who chose imperatives other than the truth about the Dallas assassination have the blood of Martin Luther King on their conscience, if not on their hands.

We have heard Lyndon Baines Johnson call for non-violence at last, while U.S. planes continued to drop bombs with intensified fury on North Vietnam in strange fulfillment of a "unilateral de-escalation." Martin Luther King, who had spoken against the war as he had spoken against the poverty which disgraces this wealthiest of lands, was called "the biggest liar in the United States" by J. Edgar Hoover, whose men are now investigating his assassination. Indeed, Ramsey Clark acknowledged that the FBI was present in Memphis in force, before the assassination. Martin Luther King is dead. The Administration and the Congress will make a slightly larger hand-out to the black ghettos this time, for the black man has been pushed to the outside edge of unrestrainable rage and bitter desperation as his humanity is despoiled and his greatest leaders are savagely executed by racist degenerates.

Eric Sevareid says that the country is *not* sick. Roscoe Drummond is obsessed only with the looting and the disorder that erupted in the wake of the assassination of Martin Luther King. Dan Rather asks three black

MIGHT

"Right is weak—to speak it right.
That's the way things are. Get power.
Over the people, might will prevail."

I agree, it might. Power need not fail.
And if power fail, shall we not empower
the humble right? Weakness takes on might
—the people prevail.

There's power—and there's power.

—Sam Bradley

men whom he is interviewing hours after this new atrocity whether they do not have compassion for him, a white man who is horrified by the crime but takes it for granted that he has no responsibility for it. Do we need more evidence that nothing has changed? That the Establishment does not, will not, or cannot understand what has happened?

The system under which we live produces assassins with the same predictability that Con Edison produces electricity. The system that kills countless innocent people in Asia, arms dictators against their own people in every corner of the world, and disposes of leaders of disliked governments by assassination if need be—the spokesmen for such a system are only obscene when they have the audacity to call for non-violence from the oppressed and humiliated people whom they have tormented throughout the history of this country.

Things will continue as they are, exactly as they are, after the ceremonial mourning for Martin Luther King, and the mourning for the victims of the assassinations which will be committed soon again, by the racists or the cold-warriors who are the system's true sons.

Martin Luther King believed that he could deliver his people from evil within the existing order. But he did not understand the helplessness of good people—those few individuals whose consciences he was able to reach—against the fundamental racism and inhumanity of this society. On the day of national mourning for Dr. King, Sunday April 7, *The New York Times* published a photograph with the following caption: "New York City: Violence erupted sporadically in the Negro ghettos and in the midtown area but massive police strength kept it generally in hand. Above, on a Harlem street, an unidentified man accuses police of having beaten another man unmercifully." The fact that Martin Luther King made the supreme sacrifice, to save the soul of the American people, has made no difference whatever to police. Business as usual. On the same day, one could listen for hour after hour to eulogies of Dr. King, without once hearing the word "Vietnam."

The racism and inhumanity will not change, whatever cosmetics this society applies and however impassioned its tributes to Martin Luther King, now that he is dead. It will change only when this greedy, cruel, warring system is destroyed—the system that routinely and uncaringly in the daily conduct of its business makes martyrs of innocent and helpless people on every continent of the planet.

Contrition and rivers of tears for Martin Luther King will change nothing. If we do not change the system, we will have new assassinations, of the next great moral leader or the next President who tries to co-exist with Cuba or China. We will have more Warren Reports. We will have new Vietnams.

And we will deserve them.
(April 7, 1968)