

and anti-Israel partisan, 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, and that his car had been observed at the site of the "subversive" Du Bois Club—which happens to be defunct, a small detail that Yorty overlooked. Yorty repeated almost exactly the inglorious performance of the Dallas authorities who had energetically and insidiously tried to inflame public opinion against Oswald by portraying him as a communist, seeking to divert logical and irresistible suspicion from the ultra-Right in Dallas and to redirect it to Castro or Mao. Yorty's statements were no less vicious and contrived, and moved other Los Angeles officials to repudiate his insinuations as not only prejudicial but unfounded and misleading.

Some days later, Walter Winchell published a report which sought to implicate pro-Castro Cubans in the assassination of Robert Kennedy. Again, an exact replay of efforts by rabid anti-Castro exiles and *agents provocateurs* to incriminate Fidel Castro in the assassination of President Kennedy. The malice of the exercise, now as then, is matched only by its delirium.

Still, one does not expect better things from such men as Winchell, Yorty, and Capote. From J. F. Stone, however, one takes for granted a position based on the highest intellectual and moral considerations. If his emotional defense of the Warren Report in 1964 was disappointing, all the more so is his strange acknowledgment on June 24 that while he has resisted the conspiracy theory in the killing of John F. Kennedy, and continues to resist it, he considers that "enough has come to light clearly to show a conspiracy in the killing of Martin Luther King and very possibly of Robert Kennedy." Why is Stone ready to recognize the probability of conspiracy in two of the three assassinations but continue to "resist" it in the third, which is the only one in which conspiracy is a proven fact? Perhaps it is because Stone cannot bring himself to concede that Earl Warren could have been wrong—or worse than wrong—in placing his prestige at the service of a specious lone-assassin theory . . . but surely Stone has passed the stage of blind hero-worship, and owes the public an informed, impartial judgment on an event so grave as the Dallas assassination.

If we are to function rationally and in the context of reality, rather than be buffeted here and there by doctrinal bias, we cannot yet do more than acknowledge that the accused assassin of Robert Kennedy 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*. (The attempt to shoot Sirhan's older brother may not be a bizarre crime of revenge, as the pundits were quick to characterize it, but may be an attempt to silence him.) In the assassination of Martin Luther King, there are persistent and material indications of conspiracy and perhaps of a hired killer. And, in the assassination of President Kennedy, there can be

no doubt that he was caught in a murderous crossfire by two or more killers, while 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 third assassination to have been the act of one individual alone. 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. But logic, and understanding of the political forces and counter-forces at play at this time of showdown on Vietnam and in the cities, and awareness of the mammoth economic stakes invested in the status quo—these require that the possibility of conspiracy be left open. The accused assassin is, for-

## How Many Conspiracies?

by Conor Cruise O'Brien

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 would think improperly—connected with right wing conspiratorial activity in the United States. In this case his reason 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 favor the application of force. Senator Kennedy was reported, in the course of his campaign, as favoring 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.

Dr. O'Brien served in the Irish Foreign Service, was the U.N. Secretary-General's Civilian Representative in Katanga, and later, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana. He is at present Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities at New York University. He is author of *Maria Cross* (1952), *Parnell and His Party* (1957), *To Katanga and Back* (1962), *Writers and Politics* (1965), and *United Nations: Sacred Drama* (1968).

tunately, alive. He may decide to testify at his trial. The truth may emerge in irrefutable fullness, and spare us the uncertainty and turmoil that would have been touched off if Sirhan had been killed on the spot, as he nearly was, by an infuriated crowd.

### Deceptive Appearances

Some years ago a woman was shot in the Times Square Station of the New York subway by a man holding a sawed-off firearm in a cardboard box. Had the man been killed while attempting to escape, as might well have happened, he would have been branded a diabolical and cowardly killer and the case would have been closed. He was, in fact, completely innocent. Because he was taken alive, the authorities were able to determine that he had been tricked by the woman's husband into believing that he was taking a photograph of the victim. Instead of a camera, the box contained a gun, placed there by the real murderer. I am grateful to Shelley Braverman, the firearms expert, for calling this to my attention, because it is a remarkable example of the vulnerability of purely circumstantial evidence—although I do not suggest that there is necessarily any analogy to be found in the three assassinations.

This example of a "lone assassin" who turned out to be only an innocent dupe should perhaps be borne in mind while the legal process spins out and brings the accused assassins of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy to trial.

But regardless of the outcome in the Sirhan case or that of James Earl Ray, justice remains to be done in the Oswald case. Oswald stands wrongfully and cruelly stigmatized as a "lone assassin" in a crime which was committed by a conspiracy. He is the victim of a governmental commission whose depraved "investigation" signifies an official policy of falsehood and abuse of trust. As every part of the fabric of American life shows increasing tension and threatens to disintegrate completely, we are forced back to Dallas, where the frightening chain reaction started, and to Los Angeles, where the prospect was diminished for some moderation or reversal of the ferocious policy of carnage abroad and attrition at home against protest and dissent. While the Warren Report remains a gangrenous stain on the history books, it is a license to the Government to mutilate truth and justice, to frustrate the great yearning for a return to a humanistic ideal, and to mechanize and conform society by the force of clubs, bullets, mace, and napalm.

While that big lie endures in its official wrappers, there will be new assassinations again and still again, until the earth at Arlington groans under its burden of martyrs.