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Kennedy's Killers

Can Kill You, Too

by Joseph Vetrano

On December 23rd, 1965, the well-known political commentator, Marshall Windmiller, delivered a talk over KPFA radio entitled, "The Warren Report". Mr. Windmiller began his talk by citing the crisis of confidence which afflicts the present government in Washington, and the difficulty it has in attaining its credibility with its own people. He goes on to say that this crisis "is rooted in a widespread feeling that our foreign policy, the war in Vietnam, and the distortions that are used to justify them, are all symptoms of a basic sickness that is eating away at our whole system of government."

He cites as a good example of this process the Warren Commission's Report, and says that "it leaves us with an impression of a condition that is so extensive, and so malevolent, as to activate all of our psychological defenses and cause us to turn away from the evidence rather than grapple with the conclusions it leads us to."

The occasion of Mr. Windmiller's commentary is the publication of a new book on the Kennedy assassination by Sylvan Fox, currently city editor of the New York World Telegram, entitled "The Unanswered Questions about President Kennedy's Assassination." Mr. Windmiller proceeds to analyse and evaluate this book, and in the process he manages to reach some very interesting conclusions. In many ways, Mr. Windmiller's commentary is more interesting than the book itself, and it is recommended to anyone who is not satisfied that all the answers have been given with respect to this frightening and momentous turning point in American political history. It is available from the TLD Press, Box 856, Berkeley, for twenty-five cents.

Mr. Windmiller concludes that there were two conspiracies; the first, to kill President Kennedy, and the second, to cover up, to hide the facts, to prevent the American people from knowing the truth. And he says, "If this is the case, then it is a far-reaching conspiracy, involving as knowing or unknowing accomplices hundreds of people, high ranking government officials, the Secret Service, the FBI, and even the Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court."

Mr. Windmiller is to be congratulated for his commentary. It took real courage to arrive at such conclusions, and to air them publicly, although it was not the first time I have heard such convictions expressed. Usually they have been expressed in private, however. My own conviction, which I expressed within a few days after the assassinations, was that we were witnessing the emergence of the blurred but real outlines of conspirational government in this country. Subsequent events have not caused me to modify this opinion; on the contrary, they have strengthened it.

I have never believed that Lee Harvey Oswald was the "lone, unaided assassin", as the official story would have us believe. Unless you bury your doubts, deny the existence of all those curious and disturbing and unexplained facts, and accept the official fiction as unquestioned gospel, you are bound to begin to ask questions. And as soon as you begin to ask questions, you are bound to be carried along to certain unpleasant conclusions. Once the official lie, embodied in the Warren Report, has been rejected, one is irresistably impelled along a certain train of reasoning, a certain logical sequence. This process starts with the question, "Well, if Oswald did not murder the President, then who did?" And it ends with the question, "Who benefited most from the President's assassination?" The assassination was not only the murder of a President, it was also a terrible, and possibly fatal, blow at constitutional government as we have known it in this country.

The President of the United States is dead, that is our condition.

In other words, the last honestly elected President was President Kennedy, and we have not yet discovered a legitimate successor to him. It is my opinion that the murder of the President was in fact a successful coup, and that the murderers achieved their political goal, namely, a sharp change in the direction of American foreign and domestic policy. My interpretation of the last election, which confirmed Mr. Johnson in power, is that the voters, albeit unwittingly, simply legitimized this coup. It must be remembered that Mr. Johnson did not become President as the result of a free election, but by virtue of the assassination of President Kennedy. Once established in power, his confirmation at the polls was a foregone conclusion, particularly considering the character of his only opponent.

It was the most successful political crime of this century, perhaps in modern history. We have a government of assassins. And the bitter fruit of that government is the military-barbarism being inflicted upon the Vietnamese people, which is but a foretaste of things to come. That, in plain English, is my interpretation of the events.

What does one do, when one has the knowledge that one's own government is a government of conspirators, or war criminals and mass murderers? If I do nothing, am I an accomplice? If I content myself with merely symbolic protest, such as marching in a small or large circle carrying a placard, am I any less an accomplice? Or have I merely carried out a symbolic ritual cunningly devised by my subconscious mind to deflect and harmlessly discharge my guilt and anxiety? In what way can I carry out an effective opposition to the war? I confess that I have not yet found a satisfactory answer to this question, in practical terms.

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In the absence of any effective mass opposition on the part of the American people, I believe that the war in Vietnam will continue, and become worse. The government of the United States has made an enormous investment in the war, in terms of prestige, of the number of men committed, and installations under construction. Apparently the military are looking forward to a conflict that will last for twenty or thirty years, with a

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more or less permanent occupation. One need not guess what this would mean in terms of promotions and increased prestige. But it is madness to think that it will last that long without a violent resolution.

The United States is not going to leave Vietnam now, unless driven into the sea. I do not believe that the men in power will accept such a defeat. When such a prospect becomes likely, I believe that these men will reach for that which seems to be their only salvation, the nuclear weapon.

For any person who truly understands the nature of the war in Vietnam, and its implications, there can be but two rational choices, I believe. Either throw yourself into the anti-war movement, and be willing to take whatever risks are necessary to stop or slow down the war; or prepare to leave the country.

There seems to be an implication floating around in the peace movement that, if only we look hard enough, if only we are flexible enough, reasonable enough, we shall find some perfectly safe, perfectly comfortable, perfectly respectable, perfectly risk-free way to protest this war. Such a way does not exist. Any protest which is effective is also going to be dangerous. Any effective protest is going to hurt those men in power, and they are going to strike back, as ruthlessly and as desperately as they are now striking at the Vietnamese people.

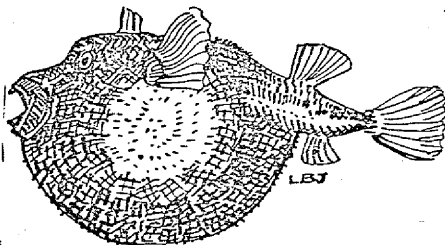
At present there are still some restraints, some limitations, upon what is politically feasible for them to do at home, in contrast to what they can do in Vietnam but this distinction is steadily being eroded as the war progresses, and we may expect that ultimately it will be erased altogether. At the present time I think that it might still be possible to mount an effective protest against the war, provided there was a determined leadership, a will to do it, and enough people joined in, but the ground is being eroded beneath our feet.

Such a project would be dangerous, it would involve real risks, but the risks are relative, I am convinced. It would have to involve something much more radical, much more immediate, than anything attempted thus far, and certainly much more than the grass-roots effort, through community education, to build a political movement which might ul-

timately gain the strength to challenge the present political coalition of Republican and Democratic parties. This is a long term process, and cannot achieve any positive results for at least ten years. It is my conviction that we have not got that sort of time at our disposal. Truly effective action, which involves significant numbers of people, can only be mass civil disobedience, not of a symbolic sort, but of the sort that effectively blocks a vital artery, or jams a vital installation.

There are no risks that we would face in such an encounter which are remotely comparable to the risks being faced, every hour of every day, by any man, woman or child in the villages of Vietnam right now. There is a true sense in which the people of Vietnam are fighting our war for us; they are taking the brunt of the war against the freedom of all peoples, everywhere. They cannot be expected to fight on alone forever, and they won't be. It is only a matter of time until the Chinese are involved, and probably the Soviet Union as well. The longer we delay in mounting an effective, indigenous American protest to the war, the more dangerous it becomes, moreover. The worst thing that we can do, and the most dangerous, in my opinion, is to do nothing. To deny the frightful reality, and in the spirit of "life as usual -- business as usual", settle down to our private pursuits and ignore the war, is the most dangerous course open to anyone.

As a collectivity, we may find ourselves in the position of that mountain climber in our nightmares who, after struggling up a great precipice, finds himself in a position where he can neither continue upwards nor turn around and go back. He clings to his precarious perch, and his strength wanes. To deny the reality really amounts to passively awaiting the fate that the generals in the Pentagon and the political criminals in the White House are preparing for us all.



If this war continues, I predict that every horror, every atrocity, that we have witnessed being inflicted upon the Vietnamese people by our government will eventually be experienced here on our own soil, in a worse form. I do not exclude torture, burning and concentration camps. Political murder has already become an established institution in American life. It was not so very long ago that the world was shocked by the self-immolation by burning of Buddhists in Saigon in protest against the Diem regime. How many people at that time thought it conceivable that such protests could occur in this country? Yet they have occurred, have they not? If this war continues, there are many ways in which Vietnam will come home to America.

Already our fate, yours and mine, has been programmed into the computers in Mr. McNamara's headquarters in Washington. The computers are whirring and whirring, the computers are clicking and clicking, and their message is megatonnage, their message is death.