

Oct. 11, 1975

Dear comrade Marcy

A week ago when we met accidentally in the subway, comrade Claudette gave me a copy of the Sept. 26 th issue of Workers World featuring your article on recent political assassinations in the United States. I read it with avid interest and noted with pleasure correspondences with my own thought. We seem to be in agreement in basic approach in explicating the class content of political assassinations and in seeking to place them in "broad historical perspective;" in short, to consider them in the light of the materialist conception of history. Well put and timely is your denigration of "government 'inquiries' and 'investigations'," now the focus of a mounting public clamor from the right which seeks, now as before, to enlarge the Warren Commission's findings into a communist conspiracy plotted by Castro in retaliation for American government attempts on his life, precisely when the government is maneuvering to abate its hostility toward the revolutionary regime in Cuba; and as a counterweight to intensifying pressure from the "left," mostly college students, academics, lawyers, writers, and petty bourgeois and bourgeois opportunists and demagogues, whose targets are the president, an ex-Warren Commissioner, and the CIA. I agree, all such investigations, as the historical record demonstrates abundantly and conclusively, are "aimed at stunting and paralyzing the efforts of independent...forces to focus on the real causes (of these assassinations)...which can only be rooted out through working class Marxist analysis."

But in relating these assassinations to underlying conflicts among capitalist interests you did so only generally without analysis of specific situations and motivations, which, in effect, reduced these convulsive episodes to a common denominator of abstraction and made it difficult for workers generally to comprehend sympathetically. Nor, even considered as a group signifying the "magnitude and ferocity of the internecine struggle within the bourgeoisie," were these assassinations identified with or differentiated from political assassinations in earlier stages of American capitalist development; for example, the assassination of Lincoln at the threshold of transformation of mercantile into industrial capitalism through the creation of a unified national economy for the first time in the history of the country.

Strong exception must be taken to the view expressed in the two paragraphs in which you reduce "All or most of the assassins" to "the same type as van der Lubbe, the man charged by the Hitler regime with setting the Reichstag fire." Lumping van der Lubbe with James Earl Ray, an assassin of Martin Luther King; Sirhan Sirhan, one of Robert Kennedy's assassins; and Lee Harvey Oswald, the posthumously convicted "lone" killer of president Kennedy is an arbitrary, confused and confusing, and gratuitous exercise in blackwash. It is too close to the automatic government formula which misrepresents political assassinations as isolated acts of alienated, disaffected, or deranged individuals, self motivated intrusions into history.

Moreover, I am sure you are aware van der Lubbe was not an assassin. He was, research has established, a Dutch bricklayer, a worker revolutionist with an internationalist orientation, and an arsonist. "We can form a good idea of Marinus van der Lubbe's real character from the statement he made to the police on 3 March 1933," wrote Fritz

Tobias in The Reichstag Fire (Putnam's Sons, 1964, pp34-35). In that statement van der Lubbe said, "At the outset, I must insist that my action was inspired by political motives...I myself am a Leftist, and was a member of the Communist Party until 1929. What I did not like about the Party is the way they lord it over the workers...I side with the proletariat in the class struggle...what the workers' organizations are doing (in Germany) is not likely to rouse the workers to the struggle for freedom...I realized...the workers will do nothing by themselves...something absolutely had to be done...I considered arson a suitable method. I did not wish to harm private people but something that belonged to the system itself: official buildings, the Welfare Office for example...City Hall...the Palace...I decided on the Reichstag as the center of the whole system..." Throughout his trial van der Lubbe insisted he had acted alone.

James Earl Ray, in sharp contrast, was, vocationally, a non-political thief and was manipulated by people yet to be identified. Sirhan Sirhan remains a mystery.

Oswald whose identity was borrowed and duplicated by an intelligence agency of the American government following his departure for the Soviet Union in 1959, was framed as a cop killer, murdered in Dallas police headquarters, and defamed posthumously as the sole and motiveless assassin of president Kennedy. Subsequent research has established his true character as a worker who embraced revolutionary ideals and tried to find a place in the struggle for communism in the Soviet Union, was repelled by soviet oppression of workers in town and countryside, and returned to the United States; but unlike so many disillusioned communists did not betray nor abandon his ideals and convictions, remained hostile to capitalism and American imperialism, and foresaw a "pure" communist social order following nuclear holocaustin consequence of conflict between the American imperialist and soviet systems; pending that eventuality he thought the correct revolutionary tactic was patient propaganda.

When arrested Oswald was unaffiliated with any revolutionary organization. The soviet government promptly denounced him as a Trotskyist and the opportunist Socialist Workers Party cleared their skirts of him by pointing to their rejection of his application for membership on technical organizational grounds.

In police custody Oswald affirmed his innocence ("I didn't shoot anybody"), stigmatized his plight as a frame up ("I am a patsy"), identified himself as a Marxist ("but not a Marxist Leninist"), and asked for help ("I do request someone to come forward to give me legal assistance"). His obvious intention to fight the frame up imposed opposite obligations on his enemies and on Marxist revolutionaries. The first, who are also our enemies, found it necessary to protect their frame up and acted promptly, killing Oswald and thereby with ironic macabre eloquence attesting his innocence. On revolutionists there fell a moral and political obligation to spring to Oswald's defense in response to his pleas of innocence and help for help; and subsequently to clear his name.

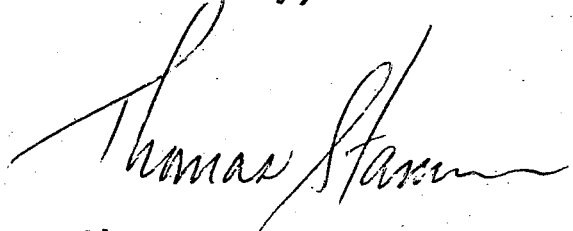
More - the Warren Commission confessed itself unable to establish a motive for the murder it attributed to Oswald but suggested his Marxist beliefs were a contributory cause of the assassination he conceived and executed without help from anyone. Not only did revolutionists fail in their duty to Oswald but they have not yet re-

futed the slander of our cause by our class enemy by expounding Marxist ideas in reply on the strategy of mass action for revolutionary goals versus individual heroics and shock tactics, and on the insurrectionary road to power in the United States.

The calendar, however, gives us a timely opportunity to do so. This November 22 will be the twelfth anniversary of the assassination of president Kennedy which is still a lively current issue in American political life. I would like to write an article for the issue of Workers World closest to the anniversary date, summing up more than a decade of research, analysis, and polemics by outlining a Marxist analysis of that assassination, including its roots in the cold war, its documented triggering motivation in the conspiratorial plan to remove an otherwise insuperable obstacle to ~~the~~ large scale military intervention in southeast Asia, and its far reaching domestic and international consequences. And also to give a talk on the same subject either at a public party forum or a closed meeting for party members and close sympathizers.

Will you let me know?

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas Stamm". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Fraternally,".

Thomas Stamm

(I gave c. Claudette my address).