

5-21-72
NYT

Bremer's Way of Life Likened to 3 Assassins

By **BOYCE RENSBERGER**

As details come to light about the life of Arthur Herman Bremer, the man accused of shooting George C. Wallace, similarities to Lee Harvey Oswald, James Earl Ray and Sirhan Bishara Sirhan frequently appear.

The personal backgrounds of Mr. Bremer and the three assassins display consistent patterns of poverty, troubled childhoods, derelict or absent fathers, domineering mothers, sexual inadequacy and, perhaps the most widely shared characteristic, lives of repeated failure and social isolation.

"He was a loner. Never talked much with anybody. Just kept to himself."

The words, in almost the same language each time, have been said in descriptions of Oswald, Ray, Sirhan and, now, Arthur Herman Bremer, who was shown as the gunman in a Columbia Broadcasting System film of the attack on Governor Wallace last Monday.

"There is a fantastic similarity. This man Bremer seems to have had much the same background," said Dr. David Abrahamsen, a New York psychiatrist who has written several books on the psychological and social factors underlying criminal behavior.

"Looking broadly at the political assassin in our history, we see that he has always been a personal failure, an isolated human being, incapable of exhibiting genuine human relationships, and possessing extraordinary ambitions that were out of proportion to his intellectual and emotional assets," Dr. Abrahamsen said.

He noted, as have many others, that those who try to kill high leaders in the United States are different from assassins in most other countries. While the typical assassin elsewhere in the world usually operates out of coldly calculated political motives, Amer-

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ican assassins are almost invariably mentally ill persons driven by twisted forces in their own mind.

Dr. Abrahamsen suggested that in contrast with many other countries, American government is so truly open and changeable through the ballot that conventional political assassins seldom arise. Only the mentally ill of a particular bent come to believe that it is necessary to kill a President to achieve their goals, he says.

Similar Pattern Found

Dr. Donald W. Hastings, professor and head of the department of psychiatry and neurology at the University of Minnesota, has made a study of the lives of the nine men who have attempted to assassinate eight Presidents (four succeeded), and has concluded that all except the two Puerto Rican nationalists who tried to shoot President Truman in 1950 showed symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia and had similar personal histories.

The assault on Mr. Truman is the only one believed to have been part of a genuine political conspiracy, in this case to win independence for Puerto Rico.

Dr. Hastings notes that although John Wilkes Booth hoped his murder of President Lincoln would be seen as part of a plot in behalf of the defeated Confederacy, Booth was clearly ill and acting out of his own derangement.

According to the experts, the processes that led to derangement of all the assassins began early in life when circumstances interfered with the normal way in which a young boy develops his basic concepts

of his own identity or role in the world.

In each of the cases, family life during this crucial period appears to have been severely disturbed and unstable. Oswald's father died before Lee was born and the boy was raised by a domineering, over-protective mother. The fathers of Ray and Sirhan both beat their sons frequently and both abandoned their families when their sons were in their early teens.

In the case of Mr. Bremer, the relationship with the father appears to have been somewhat better. However, according to neighbors and friends, there are many indications of a rocky home life with fighting, and a mother who, for example, would not let her son go out for football in high school because she thought him too sickly.

In all four lives there is evidence of difficulties in relating to women. For example, Ray, who killed the Res. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Sirhan, who killed Senator Robert F. Kennedy, are believed never to have had a girl friend. Psychoanalysts consider this a classic outcome of a boyhood in which a stable male identity is not formed.

Relationships with people in general also appear to have been impaired in all four. Acquaintances of all of them have described them as loners with no close friends. Anyone who said hello was likely to be greeted with a vacant stare.

Such behavior, psychiatrists generally agree, indicates that the individual is unable to trust people. Becoming friends with somebody means opening oneself up to some extent, and a person who found he could

not trust even his parents in childhood seldom comes to trust strangers.

"Often this kind of behavior develops into a paranoid ideation," said Dr. Hastings. "The person distrusts others, feels that if he lets his guard down, they will hurt him."

Difference Is Unclear

In severe cases, the psychiatrists explain, the person becomes unable to distinguish between his own imagination and reality.

Yet another similarity among the three convicted assassins and the suspected assailant is that they led lives of repeated failure—a failure that the psychiatrists say should be measured against the person's own estimate or fantasy of his capabilities.

Oswald, the assassin of President Kennedy, had to be hailed as hero when he defected to the Soviet Union and was crushed to find the Russians did not want him. Ray was a constant drifter, in and out of prison many times. He fancied himself a jailhouse lawyer but when he spoke he damaged his case. Sirhan wanted to be a diplomat but flunked out of college, planned to become a famous jockey and got a job as an exercise boy but was thrown from a horse and quit.

Mr. Bremer's life is similar. His notebooks show that at various times he hoped to be a great writer or photographer, but he could only get jobs as a janitor and bus boy.

"What happens when such a loveless, lonely, hating, frustrated, psychically and socially alienated and incoordinated man attaches himself to a political movement with profound and wide appeal?" asked Dr.

Lawrence Z. Freeman of the University of Chicago.

"If his alienation and psychic incoordination are not paralyzing, he may become the leader of a movement which projects into political and military action his private murderous hate," he said. "However, when such a man lacks sufficient cohesion of personality to stir, organize and direct others, he may become an assassin."

Dr. Abrahamsen believes that such men sometimes choose to kill persons who have achieved what they themselves wish to be but can never hope to be.

Thus Oswald, a leftist who once said he could become Premier of Cuba, killed a liberal President who already led a powerful country. If Mr. Bremer did, in fact, shoot Governor

Wallace, it may have been because he wanted to be like Mr. Wallace and could not be, Dr. Abrahamsen said.

Dr. John Spiegel, director of the Lemberg Center for the Study of Violence at Brandeis University, is another expert who does not consider American assassination attempts a reflection of the violence or sickness of society.

"We've always been a gun-toting, trigger-happy society," he said. "Guns and violence have traditionally been an intimate part of American life. But the assassinations we've had don't really stem from that. All the evidence is that they are different. They've resulted either from a personal grudge or mental disturbance."