



Marquis Childs Protecting Against Assassins

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IN NEW YORK the other day a Secret Service agent in an undercover role took \$1,000 as payment for the assassination of President Nixon. The payment allegedly was made by Andrew B. Topping, an extreme rightist who was arrested and put under \$500,000 bail.

This was another warning of the extreme danger of accident in our gun-mad society. One of the charges against Topping is the illegal possession of four handguns and a rifle. The excerpts from the diary of Arthur H. Bremer, convicted of the attempted assassination of Gov. George Wallace, were chilling reading as he detailed his efforts to get near enough to the President to shoot him.

The truth may be, as the last President to be assassinated, John F. Kennedy, several times said, that anyone determined to kill can do so. But, surely, this is a time to use restraint and to avoid unnecessary risks. President Nixon does not have to prove his courage and his bonhomie by jumping out of his car and rushing out to shake hands with street-side crowds as he has frequently done in the past.

HIS PERFORMANCE in Jan Jose, Calif., at the end of the 1968 campaign was an example. While he was speaking in the auditorium ~~at the~~ there a crowd of militant demonstrators gathered around the front entrance. Secret Service men with him recommended that he leave by the rear door. Instead he went out to confront the crowd, stood on the roof of his limousine and gave the victory sign. He is supposed to have said as he did so, "this is what drives them wild."

That incident points up the limitations on the Secret Service. It can recommend, but it cannot enforce its recommendations either on a President or on a presidential candidate to whom

agents are assigned.

As the Warren Report shows, Kennedy was advised as he began his fatal ride in Dallas to raise the bullet-proof, bubble top of his car. It was also recommended that Secret Service agents ride on the two rear platforms on the presidential limousine. These recommendations were vetoed and Kennedy rode with his wife

and Gov. and Mrs. John Connally in an open car.

A MEASURE of what assassination and threats of death have meant is in the Secret Service budget. Ten years ago it was \$5.5 million, with 380 special agents who protect Presidents, their families, distinguished foreign visitors and presidential candidates. The fiscal 1973 budget is \$60 million, with 1,200 agents.

During the primaries when five Democratic candidates were being protected the cost was running at \$1 million a month. This meant three shifts during each 24 hours with extra-duty agents as replacements. The service will not say how many agents are assigned to each individual.

ONE OF THE glaring weaknesses that came to light after the Kennedy assassination was the failure of other government agencies concerned with crime and detection to coordinate with the Secret Service. This has now been corrected and a great volume of information comes to service headquarters in Washington. Thus far in 1972 alone, 16,500 reports under the heading of "protective intelligence" were checked out. Of that total only a small fraction involved threats on the life of the President or presidential candidates.

John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., George Wallace who narrowly escaped and will be crippled for life—this is a fearful toll in less than a decade. It should stand as a somber warning to those in public life who court needless danger. The man under protection should take the recommendation of the Secret Service agent as sound advice from an expert, which he will ignore not alone at his own risk but at the jeopardy of the political system itself.

For adding to that score will bring consequences far beyond the fate of any individual. The inability to safeguard the elective system from violence will be proof that that system is no longer valid. The law requiring regulation of handguns recently passed by the Senate is a small step to curb assassins. Even if it is passed by the House, too, it will leave a vast unregulated arsenal for the mad men of the left and right.

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