

The Political Impact

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During the 1960s the United States was forced to accept senseless violence as a determining factor in its politics. That violence now has been extended to another presidential campaign and another decade.

The mood of optimism that left American politics with the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963 still has not returned.

The violent deaths of Malcolm X in 1965 and Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy in 1968, brought

wider sectors of the electorate toward the abyss of hopelessness.

Now the hopelessness extends from left to right. The shooting of George C. Wallace robs a large number of alienated voters of their champion and perhaps their reason for believing that American politics could work for them.

An early effect of the shots that rang out yesterday in Laurel likely will be to mute the tone of the Democratic presidential primary campaign in California. From all reports a bitter and divisive

fight was brewing between Sens. Hubert H. Humphrey and George S. McGovern.

And with the spectre of assassination injected into presidential politics for a third successive campaign, the chances of the surviving Kennedy brother being pressured into accepting the Democratic nomination, always remote, would seem more so.

Given the availability of handguns in the United States and the established tenor of violence in the country's politics, there will never be a safe time for Sen. Edward M. Kennedy to run for president.

But the arguments against his running in 1972 are greater today than they were yesterday, and the party leaders who

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Shooting Mutes Politics, Extends Hopelessness

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might have insisted upon it might be fewer.

Aide Is Optimistic

The chances are strong now that the Democratic National Convention in Miami Beach will be a two-man contest, major candidates, although a Wallace spokesman said early today the governor is still in the race and will be on the political scene through the November election.

Billy Joe Camp, the governor's press spokesman, said Mrs. Cornelia Wallace and the wounded governor had discussed his political future in Holy Cross Hospital and decided emphatically "the governor will continue."

A Key Question

Asked specifically if Wallace himself would campaign in the future, Camp said optimistically, "Yes, he will." The evidence of the primary

elections is that Wallace's contentment was broadening as his own style softened and his fixation on the racial issue lessened.

If Wallace is unable to continue his campaign, the vital but still unanswered question is which candidate will appeal to his supporters. Surveys by the Washington Star in the Washington area indicated that as many as half the people who said they were going to vote for him today in Maryland intended to vote for Nixon in November.

In the days preceding the shooting, there was increasing speculation among leading Democrats over whether Wallace would renew his third party candidacy of 1968.

That probably would deprive President Nixon of some Southern state electoral votes but it could also subtract vital Democratic margins in states such as Ohio and Michigan. Other Democrats argued Wallace seeking recognition

from Democratic party leaders and a place at the head table in party deliberations. Attempts to accommodate the governor without showing an acceptance for his racial views were being sought. His new role as a fallen leader will intensify the desire to accommodate him.

Delegate monitors at the Democratic National Committee had expected that many of Wallace's 300-odd delegates might defect from his cause early at the convention because the delegates are not personally allied to his cause but committed to him because he won primaries in their states.

If Wallace remains a candidate, those defections would seem less likely. Even hostile delegates are likely to respect their allegiance to a wounded martyr.

But, despite the early optimism of his aides, there is the real possibility that Wallace will not be a factor at the convention, either because he

withdraws or because his condition makes him inactive.

'Social Issue' Looms

This would lessen the possibility of a deadlocked convention. With only two active candidates—Humphrey and McGovern—and no individual holding the balance of power, one is likely to gain a majority on an early ballot.

The issues that Wallace articulated founded in racial hostilities and polished to include a myriad of other points of abrasion between classes and groups, will not go away.

Wallace did not preach reconciliation, and it is unlikely that his being gunned down will bring it to presidential politics in 1972.

More likely, the so-called "social issue," the argument that permissiveness has increased violence and tension and that a hard-hearted reaction is a necessary antidote, will once more come to the fore.

In the remaining primaries, it is hard to imagine this re-

action taking hold. Humphrey and McGovern are more likely to call for handgun registration than to point to Wallace's shooting as a manifestation of a permissive society.

McGovern Hurt?

The first reaction among some McGovern supporters was that the shooting would hurt their man. In recent weeks McGovern's foes have been pinning the "radical" label to him and this would set him at the other pole from Wallace.

In the fall election campaign, Presidential Nixon is apt to reflect Wallace's position and his rhetoric more often than the Democrats. But an important ingredient in the Wallace message was anti-establishment.

"Send them a message," he said gleefully from his platform. To many of his supporters, the message will have been cut short in Laurel and no other messenger will seem appropriate.