

Wallace update

5/20/72

This morning's Post has little on Bremer (ticketed for speeding 20 miles inside NY driving toward Pa. 4/15, 75 in 65 mile zone), is mostly on Nixon's visit to Wallace (and this excessive praises on leaving are a separate commentary and a mark of his concern for the Wallace vote), and includes an interview with the chief of Wallace's Alabama security, the wounded Dothard. The latter is little short of incredible and addresses not the possibility of protecting controversial figures or anyone from professional assassins but the professional incompetence of those who do.

It seems intolerable to me that the Secret Service would accept divided authority. Yet Dothard makes clear that when Wallace asked if he might walk into the crowd at Laurel, where it happened, he, not the chief of the Secret Service escort, assented. There simply has to be one single authority in such matters.

It now turns out that there had been more violence and more threats than had been reported earlier. There are conflicting accounts of an arrest in Baltimore a bit earlier, one version being an armed man was taken and another escaped, while the police says there is no such record, nothing but a man turned away because he had a targar pen. (Visible? In his hands?) There seems to be no dispute that another man had an open knife and that he also was turned away. There was a throwing bee at Landover, which is closer to Washington than Laurel but close enough to Laurel. At least one rock hit Wallace there. Here in Frederick, Wallace was set upon on entering the Armory and again in leaving it, and at Wheaton, the security people seemed to sense enough hostility in the crowd for Wallace not to press the flesh. These and other considerations should have dominated the thinking, reaction and attitudes of the security people at Laurel. I find it incredible that because they felt a better over all attitude in the crowd they could conceive that each and every individual in it was well disposed. All of this violence except that at Hagerstown was within an hour's drive of Laurel, most much less. Hagerstown can't be more than 1 1/2 hrs away, no distance at all, superhighway most of the way by the shorter mileage and all the way by what is longer but may take less time.

It now turns out that there are two shifts and that they change promptly at 4 p.m. That should be obvious to anyone watching rallies for even a short period of time and in itself is crazy "security". It can be understood that one shift might be needed at 8 a.m. and another until midnight, but need they all shift so ostentatiously, at one time?

Earlier in the week, Paul Valentine was much more critical than I was inclined to be about the failures of the security forces. I am now coming to his point of view, that they did fail. I suppose my feeling was that a determined assassin can't have his attempt thwarted. In this case I am coming to believe it could and should have been. With all this violence somebody should have been studying the pictures, and if reporters or photographers could spot a rather conspicuous person like Bremer was, police should have done so more readily if they were doing their job. That should have included a study of all pictures. Our local police, which prevented serious trouble but did not attempt to prevent minor damage, had complete pictures of the crowd. They have not spotted Bremer in them and they have, since the shooting, studied them. In the current political climate I think this is proper police work, not repression. In Hagerstown, the pictures are not complete, that is, do not take in all of the crowd. Bremer does not show there, either. We have had no report on Baltimore or Landover, but if Bremer shows in pictures there, then this thing becomes even less tolerable.

The Post selects from an AP story that includes quotes of Cornelia Wallace an interesting expression that, I think, bears on my analysis that Humph and Wallace have something going. She does not say he will run only as candidate for President. Rather she says that for the "emos to win he must be on the ticket, a fairly open bid for second place. and a rather interesting parallel with the apparent Connally move. Agnew, by the way, showed his longest and most haggard face to date on TV yesterday saying it does not make political sense for the No. 2 man to be of a different party. How fast that can change. So, I think he has gotten the message, if not the word. HW