

Picture from...

Quiet lonely gunman who followed Mr Wallace from meeting to meeting

From Ian McDonald
Washington, May 16

Mr Arthur Bremer, the suspect in the attempted assassination of Governor Wallace, was questioned by police before a campaign rally in Michigan last Saturday, it was revealed today.

Police in Kalamazoo detained him briefly after being told that a "suspicious person" had been seen at about four in the afternoon in front of the city's National Guard armoury, where Mr Wallace was to speak that evening. Mr Bremer was released after questioning and the rally took place without incident.

Mr Bremer was also present yesterday morning at a Wallace rally in Wheaton, Maryland, a few hours before the governor was shot. At the Wheaton appearance he was filmed by a television crew standing prominently in the front of the crowd. He was wearing glasses, sporting a Wallace campaign button on his chest and smiling broadly.

He is therefore suspected of having followed the governor from one rally to another, waiting for an opportunity to assassinate him.

Little is known about the suspect, except that he might have been expected to be a supporter of the Alabama Governor rather than a man dedicated to his death.

Like Lee Harvey Oswald, the assassin of President Kennedy, he was a lonely man. He had few friends and those he had were often alienated by his unpredictable and erratic behaviour. Like James Earl Ray, the murderer of Dr Martin Luther King, he often expressed racist sentiments and collected Confederate mementoes. He kept a notebook in which he jotted down his thoughts, in the manner of Sirhan Sirhan, the killer of Senator Robert Kennedy.

Governor Wallace was shot down like Huey Long of Louisiana—with whom he has often been compared—as he stepped forward to shake the hand of the man who allegedly planned to kill him. But unlike the earlier political assassinations, there have been few suggestions that yester-

day's shooting was part of some dark conspiracy. Almost all observers agree that the alleged suspect was evidently a deranged man acting on his own.

Mr Bremer's neighbours in Milwaukee describe him as an exceptionally quiet person, one whom it was hard to talk to. His brother Roger said: "Nobody could talk to him, we never knew much about him".

Miss Joan Pemrich, a 16-year-old high-school student, whom he took out occasionally, said: "He didn't know how to bowl or roller skate. I don't think he knew how to do anything. He didn't even have a television or radio in his apartment."

Whenever they went out, she added, "he tried to take me to dirty movies".

Her mother said she had known Mr Bremer for years and found him "strange". "I would say hello to him every day", she said, "and he would never say hello to me".

The suspect's apartment was a mess of clothes, papers and old school reports showing generally low grades. A Confederate flag lay on the floor, together with sex comics. In a closet there was a magazine about guns, an open box of bullets, and some Black Panther literature. A Wallace sign was still on the door and a number of Wallace campaign buttons had been tossed into a wastepaper basket.

The picture given by those who knew him was of an emotionally immature man with deep, psychological problems.

This is reinforced by the cryptic scribbles in Mr Bremer's notebook. These included: "Nixon uses a nightlight"; "My country tiz (sic) of thee, sweet land of bigotry"; "Never say coloured, say Negro, so here is a negroed card"; "My blood is black".

His father, Mr Theodore Bremer, a lorry driver, said he felt his son was "a Humphrey man, like myself". But Mr Stephen Wasche, the assistant manager of his 138-dollar-a-month apartment, said he

was "pretty sure" that Mr Bremer had worked for Governor Wallace during the Wisconsin primary last April.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation was the first to search Mr Bremer's apartment. However it removed little evidence and, strangely, failed to seal the flat or prohibit entrance to it. Mr Harold Weisberg, an author and student of assassinations, observed that any evidence could have been disturbed by the camera crews and reporters who later walked through the apartment.

The national commission on violence, which was set up in 1968 after the murders of Dr King and Senator Kennedy, recommended that law enforcement agencies should exchange information that might lead to the identification of obviously unstable characters. These persons could then be watched closely whenever a politician entered their area. But the commission noted, "party affiliation, public places, term of office and political strength provide few clues about the likelihood of assassination".

The commission endorsed the principle of secret service protection for all candidates, which was instituted by Congressional resolution after Senator Kennedy's death.

It also made a number of other recommendations which have not been adopted. It called for strict controls on fire-arms, especially hand-guns, a proposal that President Johnson tried to have adopted, but which the Nixon Administration has rejected. It also said that

candidates should make far greater use of television for campaigning and minimize the number of their personal appearances. Congress, it added, should enact a law requiring free television time for candidates.

Governor Wallace had tried to express the resentments and feelings of alienation of the working classes the people from whose ranks the suspect sprang. This did not save the governor from becoming a victim of the violence he had so often talked about. But the blow was not struck by a member of a racial minority, by a long-haired youth, by a student, or by any of the other groups he has assailed.

As the commission noted four years ago: "Many of the authentic heroes of American history have been individuals willing to suffer ostracism and to employ unconventional (and even violent) means to realize goals unpopular to a majority of citizens. While these qualities have been a source of strength and a goad to progress for our nation, it is not difficult to see their perverse relationship to the act of a demented assassin."

Milwaukee, May 16.—Acquaintances at the Milwaukee Technical College described Mr Bremer as a "lonely weirdo" with a terrifying sense of anger. One said: "We all decided to stay away from him because there was something wrong with him. Whenever he argued, he had a kind of funny smirk on his face. He didn't go into a violent rage—he just had this smirk on his face." Reuter.

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