

Marquis Childs *Post 9/16/75*

## The Crime Epidemic

As he was led away by police after having pumped five bullets into Gov. George Wallace, Arthur Bremer is said to have turned to one of the officers to ask, "How much do you think they will pay me for my story?"

Whether accurate or not, this illustrates the yearning for publicity of those who, like Bremer, see a way to instant fame and money in criminality directed at a prominent figure. The flood of public attention given Lynette Fromme after her unsuccessful attempt to shoot President Ford feeds this same appetite. That she should be on the cover of both the national news magazines will surely be an incentive to other depraved minds to break through the anonymity barrier and prove that they, too, can vent their hatred on a President or a political candidate.

Fromme's roommate, Sandra Good, is interviewed as though she were a reputable citizen, and she complies by giving out a "death list" with the names of corporate executives to be stuck down because they have polluted the atmosphere. Time magazine ran a picture of the two women nude that apparently had been sent to members of the Manson "family" held in prison.

And Charles Manson, the demon worshipped by these de-humanized minds, was interviewed in his prison cell by Stan Atkinson of the Oakland, Calif., station KTUV. With this remarkable latitude in the accepted code

of penal confinement for a convicted murderer, it is hardly surprising that the outcry grows for restoration of the death penalty.

In this atmosphere, with the sickness of criminality spreading like a plague, President Ford plunges into crowds in a half dozen states. The wisdom of starting to campaign so early with the nominating convention still nearly a year off to one side, the President owes it to the Secret Service and, more important, to all of us to take reasonable precautions in the aftermath of the Sacramento assassination attempt. To do less may prove he is a courageous fatalist willing to accept the chances of death, but that is a kind of bravery we can ill afford.

Another form the sickness takes is the attempt to re-open the court judgments and the commission findings in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert. Some who press these inquiries may be genuinely concerned that justice was not done. But the strong suspicion is that the same yearning for publicity has a lot to do with the clamor to rake over the assassinations that were so tragically a part of the 1960.

At the far out extreme is the charge getting a headline or two that the CIA was behind the murder of the Kennedys. This is apparently on the theory that, since the agency is accused of just about every other crime, they must have had a hand in that one, too.

It was disturbing to learn that the

FBI had suppressed the record of a threatening letter from Lee Harvey Oswald. Whether this was withheld from the commission investigating the President's assassination is presently the subject of an inquiry within the FBI. The commission, headed by then-Chief Justice Earl Warren, spent months in a comprehensive examination of all the evidence and came out with the conclusion that there was no plot and that Oswald fired the shots that killed the President and seriously wounded then-Gov. John Connally. The threatening letter could, in retrospect, have meant little.

One can only hope that this is a favor which will pass. But exploiting the sensationalism of the outlaws who boast of their outlawness does not contribute to a return to stability and a moderation of the violence so prevalent.

Television and the movies have a sizeable share of responsibility. Try looking at the ads for current films. There's hardly a one that doesn't show a smoking gun. The defenders say that this violence is an outlet for pent-up hostilities and, therefore, beneficial. The growing proportion of crimes committed by persons under 21 seems to give that the lie.

Life is intolerable on the narrow edge of fear. That is one consequence of the epidemic, and it is hardly less than that, of crime today.