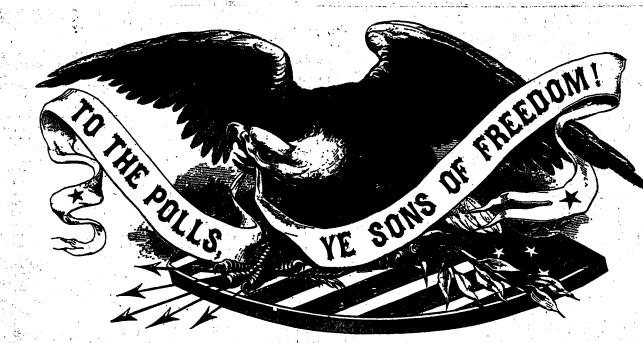
THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1972



The Presidency: Too Soon to Love Again

By Priscilla McMillan

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Presidential politics, for many of us, has become an area of life cordoned off by shock, grief and pain. Again and again in the past decade we have been touched and wounded by the political process as we had not been wounded before. It is not indifference but the numbness of mourning that lies behind the apparent apathy observers have noticed during the election campaign.

It goes back to President John F. Kennedy whose political and family life were brought extraordinarily close to us on TV. On that terrible day in Dallas nime years ago his death, too, was brought extraordinarily close.

Many Americans simply have not recovered. Even the mogule of TV, men not noted for their sensitivity, seem to recognize this for they seldom show a long film cip of John F. Kennedy in action. They realize that it is still too painful, that the process of mourning is incomplete, that our sorrow is not yet spent.

Not only our apathy, but some of the cynicism the pundits have noticed this year goes back to the murder of J.F.K. For what did his assassination do but stop the political process dead in its tracks, short-circuit democracy

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were trying, however, to wrest back that control over events that we lost. It will be hard for Americans to recover. Meanwhile, we are paying the price: the loss of our hope about leadership and a failure to invest the best of our energies and emotions in national politics.

Priscilla McMillan is an Associate of the Russian Research Center, Harvard University, and is completing a book on the assassination of John F. Kennedy. by substituting the will of a single madman for that of a nation? Of what value is a system geared to expression of the popular will if the workings of that will can be wiped out in a second?

We still were struggling with our guilt and grief and with political questions raised by the assassination when, five years later, we had to face it again, first with the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King and then that of Robert F. Kennedy. And this year, just as the campaign was warming up, we were reminded of the shock and horror all over again by the nearly fatal shooting of Governor Wallace of Alabama.

Is it any wonder that some of us were tempted to plunge into campaigning this year, tempted to get hopeful about national politics once again, only to draw back out of a dimly perceived need for self-protection? It is not that we have grown morally callous, as the pundits say, or that we have been manipulated into insensibility. It is simply that we want to put some emotional distance between ourselves and the political scene, charged as it now is with feelings of anxiety and pain. Among politicians, the first to un-

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