

FORTY-TWO

FRIDAY

NEW ORLEANS

# Hermann Deutsch

Show Must Go on  
--Nobody Knows Why

"THE SHOW MUST go on!" is a theatrical tradition as old as mankind itself. I recall only one instance in which it was challenged, and that was on the occasion when Marilyn Monroe and her husband, Joe DiMaggio, agreed to disagree, and parted company. Enough reporters to fill a high school football stadium charged the now Joe-less residence, and clamored for news from the Hollywooden Olympians.

Among other jumbled demands, one reporter asked about an impending flick—"The Seven-Year Itch," I think

—and Miss Monroe's attorney genially replied: "The show must go on, you know."

"Why?" dead-panned one of the journalists; and there really appeared to be no adequate reply to that simple query.

At any rate, we are assured by a not-so-recent doggerel-ditty that "Life is a cabaret, old chum!" and since a cabaret is after its fashion a quasi-theatrical entertainment form, life must go on, just as

though one of this generation's foremost world citizens had not abruptly been carried from the stage in an outburst of unspeakably senseless and feral violence at an assassin's hands.



HERMANN DEUTSCH

★ ★ ★  
BASEBALL GAMES CONTINUE, valedictorians pontificate at graduation exercises, June brides approach the nuptial altar on father's arm, housewives and their husbands through the supermarkets with checklist and check-books to lay up the week's perishable supplies, and actors may yet interrupt rescreenings of the grimmed deed of darkness in real life with paeans of praise for this dentifrice, that laundry bleach, the other laxative or brand of gasoline, while columnists print pungent paragraphs of trivia about who's infanticipating, rifting, filling an engagement at which nitery, going abroad for the summer, etc. For the show must go on. Why? I can only suggest, with Felicia Hemans, that inquirers "ask of the winds, that far around with fragments strewed the sea." I don't know the answer, and to date have encountered no one who does.

Perhaps the routine performance of wonted roles is the only opiate that dulls the sharp pang of personal tragedy; say what you will, Robert F. Kennedy's death was a personal tragedy for all, for those who liked him, for those who disliked him with a deep and consuming passion, for those to whom he was a source of minor indifference.

Rival candidates, dazed by the sudden, brutal removal

from their midst of the one competitor against whom all other candidates—Republicans and Democrats alike—were readying the attack, have declared a temporary moratorium on further campaign activities, and have withdrawn to their homes or offices until further notice.

★ ★ ★

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT President Johnson has missed the boat by appointing yet another commission to investigate a subject which has already been investigated up and down and crossways no one knows how many times, until investigations have become just another "exercise in futility." What the occasion called for, as any pragmatic rationalist would agree, is for him to summon his legal staff and his floor leaders and whips in both houses, direct the attorneys to draft, and the congressional leaders in House and Senate to introduce and push through to adoption, whatever practical new legislation to restrict or at least license the sale of side arms, and possibly other types of guns, a law with genuine teeth and no mere token dentures, and send it in as an immediate administration "must."

As a practical matter, I regard it as inevitable that the new commission will organize, employ a counsel, a secretarial staff, etc., etc., summon shoals of witnesses, examine them with the television cameras grinding away a la the Joseph McCarthy inquisition of the army being soft on communism, and have them settle down to work about the time the robins return to Washington after the new Congress takes office next year—all in the hope of getting out another report by the time the leaves turn in Rock Creek park in the autumn of 1969, after which the report will be printed and bound in at least one volume, which the next Congress and the next administration may or may not take up for action amid the snap, crackle and pop of fragmenting campaign pledges and countless reams of oratory about another proposed deficit budget and new taxes.

★ ★ ★

IT'S THE GREATEST show on earth, in very truth; not as volatile as the French Chamber of Deputies when the head of the Gallic state criticises and instructs the rest of the world on just what it must do and how it should comport itself to assure a stable and solvent government, the last syllables of which homily are uttered as the French economy abruptly collapses, and the incumbent administration barely squeaks ahead of the chamber vote of censure which would automatically destroy it. At least that is how the Pompidou cabinet remained in office a fortnight or so ago, there being no guarantees that it would survive another similar assault.

The show must go on, right enough; but don't ask me why.