

Rising Threat of Political Killings

Violence Probers' Warning

New York Times

Washington

The National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence warned yesterday that the nation may be entering an era of political assassination conspiracies.

It recommended fundamental changes in presidential practices.

The commission urged that the President and the major figures in a presidential campaign forego traditional outdoor political rallies and that the Secret Service extend its coverage to public figures who may become targets of violence.

It also requested Congress to arrange free television time for the major candidates in the final weeks before a presidential election to establish a new pattern of safe national campaigning.

"Present trends warn of an escalating risk of assassination, not only for Presidents but for other office-holders at every level of government,

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as well as leaders of civil rights and political interest groups," the commission reported after studying a task force examination of assassination patterns in the United States and in other countries.

"We do not predict that such an outbreak will occur," the report went on. "But we feel compelled to note that some of the conditions for such an outbreak are present or may be developing. These conditions add urgency to the need to develop effective protection against assassination."

SLAYINGS

The commission was appointed by President Johnson in June, 1968, after the assassination of Senator Robert N. Kennedy (Dem-N.Y.) had followed by less than two months the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

This was the sixth policy statement sent to the White House examining the root causes of violence in the U.S. and what can be done about it.

The report also expressed concern that Negroes holding public office may increasingly become targets for assassination by both white and black extremists.

Noting that the recent wave of assassinations in the U.S. were not conspiratorial in nature and were carried out by disgruntled individuals, the commission cautioned however, that "many of the conditions associated with conspiratorial assassination in other countries appear to be developing" in the U.S.

The commission cited these reasons for its concern that rising social tensions contribute to planned political murder:

- The threat of urban guerrilla warfare, such as a 1968 attack on Cleveland policemen by black extremists, and the menace of heightened political violence.

- Constant vilification of U.S. institutions and leaders.
- The promise in the next few years of rapid social and economic change, which it said was "another characteristic that correlates with high levels of conspiratorial assassination."

Part of the blame for the outbreak of assassinations the U.S. has experienced in this decade, the report asserted, must be attributed to the "violent rhetoric of our politics, our constant flirtation with actual violence" and the impact of these forces upon the "twisted mind" of the lone assassin.

"Dissidents in the U.S. have often been very vocal and very abusive; they sometimes have heaped scorn on a President, even vilified him. American demonstrators boisterously, stage emotion-charged strikes and sit-ins, hurl stones and foul language at authorities."

The result, the commission contended, is a climate that brings the assassin "at least halfway to his distorted perception of what actions are right and legitimate."

The commission reported that the Secret Service has developed intelligence systems and equipment since the slaying of President Kennedy six years ago that greatly increases its capacity to protect a President.

CONFIDENT

"The Secret Service is confident that, had its new intelligence system been in effect in 1963, the activities of Lee Harvey Oswald would have been brought to (its) attention before the fatal attack," the commission said.

However, the report conceded that there was no "perfect" way to guard a President short of "confining him to the White House and limiting his communication with the American public to television and other media.

"This extreme solution is neither practicable nor desirable. For political reasons and for the sake of ceremonial traditions of the office, the American people expect the President to get out and 'mingle with the people'."