

# Film: 'Rising Target'

By RICHARD EDER

**A** DOCUMENTARY, such as Barbara Frank's film about the killing of Robert F. Kennedy, has a peculiar power to reverse the order of time. It should be used with delicacy or the emotional effects it produces will be fraudulent. "Rising Target," which is being shown at the International Women's Film Festival at the Cinema Studio Theater, a decent film, quite straightforward and often affecting, but it does brush occasionally upon such fraudulence.

Making a virtue out of necessity, it is an outsider's view of the few days before, during and after the assassination. The camera shows the campaign train in California, Senator Kennedy's flight to Los Angeles, the partylike atmosphere at the hotel as news of his primary victory came in, the confusion when the shots were fired out of everyone's sight, the vigil at the hospital, and finally the airplane flying out of Los Angeles with the body and the mourners.

American political campaigning has a full share of hoopla and nonsense. The camera shows it all: some silly jokes and sillier dance routines by Jerry Lewis and Gene Kelly, respectively, at a rally just before the balloting; Senator Kennedy's own brief and rather lame speech.

But of course we know he is going to be killed and so the more or less harmless silliness becomes sinister and shocking. Tying the two together is not really a legitimate way to comment either upon the silliness or upon whatever may be more deeply wrong with American politics.

Otherwise, Miss Frank makes good use of her outsider's camera. If her machine is often blocked by the bigger machines of the television crews, if she has to crane and squint and stand on tiptoe, this only makes it a more accurate representation of what most participants actually see.

There is the cheering after Senator Kennedy makes his victory speech, thanks his supporters and leaves. The white doors of the pantry close behind him. There are a few seconds when the crowd in the ballroom remains fixed in its celebration, then a few squeaking screams, one voice distinctly shouting "God, God!" and then a turmoil of shoulder, heads, stunned faces and blocked camera views.



A scene from Barbara Frank's film "Rising Target"

## A Look Backward

**RISING TARGET**, a documentary film about the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy directed and produced by Barbara Frank; camera, James Joentides, Robert Eberlein, Eli Hollander, Joan Churchill and Eric Saarinen; editor, Jean-Claude Lubchansky; production company, Joshua Films. At the Second International Festival of Women's Films, Cinema Studio Theater. Will be shown today at 7 P.M. and tomorrow at 9 P.M. Running time: 80 minutes. This film has not been rated.

There is the heaviness with which everyone moves after the tragedy has sunk in. Frank Mankiewicz, the press secretary, talks about the details of bullet fragments and bone splinters, Pierre Salinger gives the order of departure of the coffin and mourners. We take in the paradox; public life compels these two intimates of the dead man to speak in public, not about grief, but about timetables.

Miss Frank's film works as a record of a tragedy, even if it misses in its ironic overtones. But it does have an insight of another kind: Not into the tragedy, but into the helplessness that follows.