

**CHARLES BARTLETT**

## The Need to Remind Brave Men

One of the felicitous conclusions of the Warren Commission is that no official or agency of the Federal Government was significantly responsible, by misjudgment or oversight, for the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

The report makes it obvious that the tragedy might not have occurred if the State Department had prohibited Lee Oswald's return from Russia, if the FBI had conveyed its knowledge of Oswald to the Secret Service, and if the Secret Service had enforced elaborate measures against snipers in tall buildings.

But these eventualities seem no more crucial, in following the dark sequence of events, than many others. If Oswald had been more adjusted in youth and in marriage. . . . If he had been able to fly to Cuba in October. . . . If his job in Dallas had taken him to another part of the city. . . .

The excellence of the Warren report is that it explores all the details of the assassination with such completeness that it reveals the many hinges of the fate that closed in on President Kennedy. The deed emerges as a weird stroke, bereft of logic and meaning but seemingly predestined by a rambling chain of circumstance.

The commission could have destroyed, or badly damaged, the Secret Service by focusing

heavily upon the precautions that might, in retrospect, have been taken. This would have been totally unfair to this splendid group of men whose professional devotion, personal quality and daily discomforts are unique in Federal service.

President Kennedy made the key decisions that permitted his murder by exposing himself in an open car and asking his guards to stay off the rear bumper. This was the calculated risk of a man who keenly sensed the dangers of his role but also knew the value of allowing himself to be seen by the people.

The political logic that induced President Kennedy to ride bareheaded into Dallas is sound enough to retain its appeal for future Presidents who face the challenge of an election. As the lesson of last Nov. 22 fades, Presidents again will be tempted to weigh the advantages of risky exposure more heavily than the perils.

The Warren Commission answers this future problem with a proposal to create a "Committee of Cabinet Officers" who would be charged with studying and discussing the protection of the President. The theory is that in urging precautions upon a President, these top officials would speak with more directness and influence than the Secret Service agents, who function as staff members.

In the final deliberations of the Warren Commission, a minority argued that the protection of the President should be taken away from the Secret Service and accorded to the FBI, a younger and larger agency. The chief purpose of this shift would be closer coordination between the research on dangerous individuals and the protection of the President.

But ex-President Hoover asserted the key argument against this change in his reorganization study of 1949. He made the point that a President would be less comfortable in intimate relations with agents of the FBI, a huge apparatus involved on many fronts, than he is now with the Secret Service, a smaller unit that meets its assignment with a tradition of discretion and personal loyalty.

The Dallas tragedy will mean more elaborate protection for the President. But the Warren report makes a valuable point in suggesting that a President needs more guards less than he needs men who can constantly pressure him to be cautious in his campaigns and travels.

John Kennedy gave every sign of being sensitive to the threat of assassination. But a brave man does not give instinctive thought to his own safety. He needs to be reminded.