



Thoughts on an assassination

RITUAL HUMAN SACRIFICE: One of the few affective rituals left in the dying and decaying society is the ritual murder of its gods and heroes. Even if it is only a vulgar counterfeit of the real thing as it was practiced in the past. What we witnessed in the death and interment of Robert F. Kennedy was a ritual of human sacrifice in a society designed for death, not for life. And even this ritual is becoming so frequent and repetitious that it is becoming as hollow of content as Yom Kippur and Christmas.

DEATH—WITHOUT RESURRECTION: The sickness of the dying society is such that it can only preside over death, without the myth of resurrection. One is struck by the sense of needless death that pervaded the ritual, despite the efforts the Church made to breathe "eternal life" into the ancient mythos of the Mass. It was a Christian death without a Christian re-birth, the shedding of blood without catharsis. The Catholic Church (or any other) no longer has the spiritual power to raise sacrificial death, not even martyrdom, to the level of national penance. What some still call the national conscience is so sodden with guilt of genocide, bigotry, hypocrisy and hate-filled violence, that it is beyond all hope of salvation by confession and penance.

God is dead

EVEN THE PAGAN GOD, EROS: Eros is dead, except among those where his cult is kept alive and potent, and that cult is not to be found in the Church. He was slain long ago, without any hope of resurrection. In the Church it is perpetual Winter without Spring. One year-long ritual of impotence. Even the once-lively Kennedy cult, the sex and fertility symbol, which millions all over the world were once drawn to, has been murdered. Eros lives, but not in the Church, and no longer in the national mythology.

A God-Hero with feet of clay

With Bobby Kennedy goes the once potent mythos of the political hero-god as sex symbol. The old charisma lies buried in Arlington cemetery with Jack and Bobby. I doubt that it can be passed on to Teddy. To Jackie, maybe, but not to Teddy. McCarthy never had it and no one expects it to rub off on him now—not after he told his young followers to cut their hair and shave off their beards for the good of the cause. For that matter, Bobby Kennedy was in the same bag with Mr. Clean Gene on that score. He told an audience of students one day that he trimmed his page boy bob because his mother advised him to. A god-hero with feet of clay (shorn locks in this case) cannot be a source of inherited charisma for the young, not for Teddy and not for Gene. And no amount of money and publicity can revive it. As the Kennedy myth, the political myth as well as the sex myth, vanishes under sober analysis, the eternal flame will become just another gas jet.

The laying on of hands

which Bobby was still able to bestow on many of the faithful, had its final effusion of power at the casket in Saint Patrick's Cathedral. Those who viewed the closed casket, touching it or kissing it as they passed by, were performing the last rites of the whole Kennedy myth, which had been so much in evidence during Bobby's campaign. They numbered tens and, as the funeral showed, hundreds of thousands of people, young and old. It resembles the once royal charisma of healing by the laying on of hands, among the last vestiges of the god-king's divine powers. If anyone ever doubted that Bobby was running for office on Jack's martyrdom charisma he had only to listen to the frequency with which the television reporters kept referring to Bobby as "President Kennedy"—a kind of psycho-political word-slip. It is a significant word-slip because it was the prospect of Bobby succeeding to the presidency as a delayed action royal succession that may have been part of Sirhan Sirhan's mixed motivation for the assassination. His political enemies were the same enemies Jack Kennedy had. Assassins have their own mystique. It is still too early to speculate on Sirhan's motives. But, whatever triggered his act, the societal factors are still there anyway, and what these are is obvious enough. One has only to call the role of the victims. They fall into a pattern, they had something fatally in common.

Significant sidelights

(A) Why wasn't there more police protection at the Ambassador Hotel that night? It might have occurred to any security-minded cop, and he wouldn't have to be a Sherlock Holmes, that the narrow corridor off the kitchen was a made-to-order site for an ambush. No policemen were detailed to accompany Kennedy from the rostrum to his next destination in the hotel. Even one rookie cop could have prevented the assassination if he had been at the candidate's side. Why hasn't this question been raised in the press? Why hasn't Chief Reddin been questioned? Reddin the Unready had other things on his mind that night—getting ready for the Long Hot Summer, perhaps. Just to prove that I try to be fair to the LAPD, I should mention, however, that last Tuesday the Traffic department announced that it was voiding the 100 traffic tickets it held against the members of the Bobby Kennedy staff for speeding and going through red lights in the excitement of getting the victim to the hospital and in other urgent matters on the night of the assassination—the tickets were voided, they said, in the interests of justice."

(B) The use of a funeral train with all the hazards of derailment, bombing, and danger to trackside crowds was a clue, if a clue is still needed, to the workings of the official government and political mind. The funeral train is an outmoded idea and, in the conditions which prevail today, potentially murderous and suicidal. The whole Kennedy staff, the whole Kennedy clan, and many communications people were on the same train! Three deaths resulted among the raiiside crowds—making the train a Juggernaut, without the Juggernaut's religious significance, unless we suppose that it was really a part of the sacrificial death ritual.

(C) And, as I write, the television screen reports that Marty Rosen of Columbus, Ohio, a chain department store owner, has done his patriotic bit for gun control, moved, he said, by the tragic death of Robert Kennedy. He has stopped the sale of hand guns and ammo in his sporting department and given away his remaining stock, valued at \$20,000 to—you guessed it—the Columbus Police Department! Such is the conscience and humanity of the Liberal Mind.