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## Protecting the President

Assassins have killed one out of every five Presidents in the past hundred years. Serious attempts, one of them successful, have been made to shoot down three of the last four Chief Executives. These grim statistics are enough to demonstrate the importance of protecting the President, a task which the Warren Commission discusses in its report.

The Commission makes several useful recommendations, some of which have already been put into effect. The Secret Service does need more agents if it is to do more comprehensive advance work on Presidential trips. It also needs to expand and automate its files on individuals who conceivably might want to harm the President. As the Commission suggests, if the Secret Service's files had been more effectively organized and there had been better liaison with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, it is likely that Lee Harvey Oswald would have come to the attention of officials planning President Kennedy's trip to Dallas.

However, in estimating the record of the Secret Service, it is too easy to be wise after the fact. Although cooperation between the Secret Service and the F.B.I. should surely be improved, a certain amount of rivalry is inevitable between two organizations in the same field, each of which considers itself an élite group.

Danger to a President is a fact of life which he and the nation have to accept. "Though it would be safer for a President to live in a cage, it would interfere with his business," as Lincoln wryly remarked. Now that jet travel enables a Chief Executive to visit several cities in a single day, the problem of providing really effective security for him in all these places in a short span of time becomes so enormous as to be insoluble. For this reason, it is highly doubtful that the Warren Commission's suggestion for checking tall buildings along the routes of motorcades is practicable.

A President can keep the risks to a minimum by observing sensible restrictions, by permitting Secret Service agents to stay close to his side when in public, and by not plunging into crowds. But experience shows that Presidents find these restraints irksome and, like most political leaders, they want to meet people. Only yesterday, Mr. Johnson on his New England tour mixed with crowds and was his usual gregarious self.

The Secret Service can augment its strength and improve its procedures; but for this problem of protecting a President, there can be no foolproof solution.