

Shooting Is the Sixth of a Violent Decade

NYTimes MAY 16 1972

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In less than a decade, starting with the murder of President Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963, the faith of many Americans in the reasonableness of their country's politics has been shattered by assassins' bullets six times, the latest victim being Gov. George C. Wallace of Alabama yesterday.

The others who fell—and died—before the assassins in this period were Malcolm X on Feb. 21, 1965; George Lincoln Rockwell, the American Nazi leader, on Aug. 25, 1967; the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968, and Senator Robert F. Kennedy on June 5, 1968.

Starting with an attempt on the life of President Andrew Jackson, 10 American Presidents or Presidential aspirants, including Governor Wallace, have been assassins' targets.

Assassinated Governors

Of the nearly 1,350 men who have held the office of Governor since 1790, one—William Goebel of Kentucky—was killed by an assassin, in 1900. But six others, including Governor Wallace, were targets of political assassinations.

Two of these were wounded, the last being John B. Connally of Texas, who was riding with

President Kennedy when the President was killed.

In looking back over the history of violence toward Presidents or would-be Presidents, the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence concluded that "party affiliation, public policies, term of office and political strength provide few clues about the likelihood of assassination."

Abraham Lincoln, for instance, the first President to be killed by an assassin, was the head of a divided nation during the Civil War, but William McKinley, the third President murdered, was a popular man in a relatively stable and unified era.

No Pattern Evident

Nor, until recently, have assassinations been confined to Presidents or political leaders who have exhibited strong leadership qualities. Presidents Lincoln and Kennedy did fit this category, but Presidents James A. Garfield and McKinley did not.

Franklin D. Roosevelt was shot at three weeks prior to his first Presidential inauguration, before he had a chance to demonstrate his Presidential qualities.

The Presidents killed in office were Lincoln in 1865, Garfield in 1881, McKinley in 1901 and Kennedy.

Attempts were made on the

lives of Presidents Jackson in 1835 and Harry S. Truman in 1950. Neither man was wounded. Theodore Roosevelt, then a former President running again on the Bull Moose party ticket, was wounded in 1912.

Mr. Lincoln escaped assassination in February, 1861, when he was the President-elect. A plot to kill him in the railway station in Baltimore was foiled. It was to take place while the inaugural train was en route from Springfield, Ill., to Washington.

Times of Civil Strife

The political assassinations of the last decade have occurred during periods of increasing civil strife.

The assassination of President Kennedy, for instance, came during the civil rights era, several months after the fatal shooting, on June 12, 1963, in Jackson, Miss., of Medgar Evers, the black rights leader.

Malcolm X and Dr. King also were symbols of the black man's striving for a better life, as was Robert Kennedy. Governor Wallace was on the other side politically.

"We have not found a specific remedy for assassination and political violence in a democracy apart from the perceived legitimacy of the government and its leaders," the commission on violence concluded.

Anarchy Once Again

The shooting of Gov. George C. Wallace is a staggering blow to the morale of a country already badly shaken by intrusions of violence on its political system. Public men can no longer feel that the slow and often painful processes of democracy will be allowed to work themselves out at the polls—that a campaign or a career will not be wiped out in a moment by the swift and dreadful shortcut of the bullet.

Once again a dismayed nation must ask itself whether it can afford to let its Presidential candidates mingle with the electorate or whether they must rely solely on the remote and sometimes misleading intermediary of television—a question that is itself an indictment. With guns so readily purchaseable all over America, no multiplication of police guard can provide real safety in a campaign crowd.

Horrifying as these cowardly crimes are, the real victim—whether it is a Lincoln, a King, a Kennedy or Wallace who is shot—is the Republic itself. Reflection of the hatred and polarization that are rampant in American society today, these brutal private assaults can only deepen that hatred, intensify that polarization.

Little as this newspaper shares Governor Wallace's opinions, we earnestly hope for his quick and complete recovery—and the recovery of those in his entourage who like him were senselessly gunned down. The United States cannot be hurt by an open clash of views. It can be badly—perhaps fatally—hurt by an ever-increasing recourse to anarchy.