

Assassination — Left and Right

The tragic murder of Senator Robert Kennedy points up an interesting fact about all the recent assassinations and assassination attempts that has gone unnoticed: that every single murder or attempted murder was of a leader of what may broadly be called the “Left” — John Kennedy, Senator Kennedy, Malcolm X, “Red Rudi” Dutschke, the West German student leader, Medgar Evers, and the Reverend Martin Luther King. How is it that among this spate of murders, no right-wing leader has been assassinated? None of the cliches, true though they may be, about America being a “violent society” resolves this peculiar problem.

In my view, the answer lies in a grave misunderstanding of the situation, Left and Right, each in its own camp. In short, what we have in the world is a State apparatus, run more or less “peacefully” and quietly, with more or less stability by a ruling elite or Establishment, with the exploited but torpid masses paying the bill. To overthrow this Old Order, or existing statist regime, which is broadly the task of the Left, requires charismatic and dynamic leaders to rouse the masses out of their torpor, to expose their exploitation by the ruling classes, and then to move to overthrow that rule.

Therefore, the Left, being in one or another sense revolutionary, requires dynamic individual leaders to promote that revolution. Hence, some intelligent members of the Right, those devoted to the status quo,

realizing the great dependence of the Left on their leaders, particularly in the critical early stages of the revolution, move to assassinate those leaders and to nip the situation in the bud. The irony is that the Left doesn't realize the importance to it of such dynamic leaders and, therefore, does not move, in one way or another, to protect them. For the Left, naively believing that all of history is determined by broad social forces and classes of people, gravely underestimates the importance of individual leadership — its own leadership — in such a struggle. While it is true that individual leaders cannot make a revolution if the fertile soil is not there, inspired leadership to cultivate that soil is just as important. The Left, a prisoner of its own naive view of history, does not realize this.

On the other hand, the Left doesn't assassinate Right-wing leaders for the same reason: Since it is broad social forces rather than individual leaders that matter, what would be the point of killing Mr. X if Mr. Y, put in by the same existing system to replace him, is just as bad? Ironically, in *this* case, the Left is more nearly correct, for the job of running an existing Establishment — in contrast to the task of rousing the masses to overthrow it — is just about the same from one Establishment ruler to the next. Therefore, in the case of the *Right* wing, one leader is just about the same as the next.

Thus: Both sides, Left and Right, are far more correct in analyzing the role of leadership in the opposition than in their own camp.