

L. T. SPECIAL - Monday, November 25, 1963
(Re: Events at Dallas)

Good Evening Everybody - or at any rate to any
who happen to be tuned in.

CBS has suggested that I do a rather
different broadcast this evening, this my first
broadcast for a couple of weeks. Now that I am
home from the hospital in Detroit where the widely
known Dr. Herman Alvarez had his eye on me, the
suggestion is that I reminisce for a few minutes,
chat with you from my home - discuss a subject that
has been in all our thoughts during these tragic hours.

Is it possible for us to protect our
Presidents; really protect them?

But before I say anything more I would like
to salute my radio and television colleagues, all of
them - not just my own network. The way they have

handled this tragedy that has sent such a shock wave around the world, this may have, I'm sure will have, an important, lasting effect on life in this country, and, throughout the world. I believe the way our TV and radio people have covered the President Kennedy tragedy will have a long range effect on the behaviour of Man.

For the second time in the thirty-four years I have been on the air, I have been reluctantly compelled to stay out of circulation. As a result I have had an opportunity to look at TV and listen to radio far far more than ever before. The previous time was 14 years ago, after returning from Tibet.

Our hearts are too full to express our thoughts in words. I'm not going to try. I'll merely carry out my orders and make a few random observations thoughts of a traveller.

You all saw, right in your own homes, what

happened some seventy hours ago during the parade in Dallas. And then yesterday again, right before your eyes, millions of you saw the second shooting. In your newspaper today, you saw the picture made by Bob Jackson of the Dallas Times-Herald, the closeup of the night club owner firing point blank at Lee Harvey Oswald. That picture and what we saw on the TV screen reminded me of the pictures flown to us from France in October of 1934 when King Alexander the First of Yugoslavia was shot down by an assassin in Marseilles. When one of our French newsreel cameramen, Raymond Mejat, just happened to get it - his camera trained on the king at the very moment.

My own first memory of a tragedy like the one that has overwhelmed us, was the assassination of President McKinley, in 1901. I was too young to realize fully what had happened, but I still remember that day.

Not so long afterward, McKinley's successor,

Col. Theodore Roosevelt, visited our Colorado mining camp. There was much bitterness during the presidential campaign. In our town, a man was about to bring a massive plank down on Teddy Roosevelt's head. Only the interference of our Irish postmaster, Danny Sullivan, saved his life.

Later, during the Bull Moose campaign some of you will remember that Teddy Roosevelt was shot, while making a speech in Milwaukee. But the wound was not fatal.

I am mentioning these incidents to suggest how difficult it is to protect our leaders. This, of course, has been true all through history. Even before the days when Julius Ceasar was assassinated in the Forum at Rome. You may recall that Ceasar's associates in the triumvirate, Pompey and Crassys, later both fell at the hands of assassins. And so on and so on and so on, right down to the present day.

5....

Every man in public life who seeks the top spot, knows it may happen to him.

I wonder if you recall the incident in Paris right after World War One? The French were giving Woodrow Wilson a tremendous ovation. He was riding down the Champs Elysee with Clemenceau. That famous avenue was lined on both sides with picked French troops, the Guard Republicaine. Yet a would-be assassin almost succeeded. Riding with President Wilson was my secret service friend Colonel Starling, a southerner and a superb marksman. Col. Starling actually shot a gun right out of a would-be assassin's hand.

In nineteen thirty-three all of us who were on the air at that time, told the story of Franklin D Roosevelt's visit to Miami. You will recall that the Mayor of Chicago, Toni Cermak, died from a bullet that obviously was intended for F.D.R.

Near the end of World War Two, in Europe, I

6....

happened to be with our American Commander in Italy, General Mark Clark, when the news was brought to him of what had happened to Mussolini. You all know that tragic story.

In Latin America, there have been many of these tragedies:- President Obregon in Mexico; President Castillo Armas, in Guatemala; President Jose Ramon of Panama; Samozza of Nicaragua, and so on - all in recent years. Those of us who have been on the air have had these tragic stories to tell, over and over.

When I was in Jordan this year, I was again reminded of a grim episode that you may remember. It made world headlines in the summer of Nineteen fifty-one. King Abdullah had just entered the great mosque in Jerusalem. With him was his young grandson, who is the present, still youthful King Hussein of Jordan. Abdullah was on his knees at prayer, when he was killed by an assassin.

So how can any ruler be given complete protection? During World War One, while with Lawrence's army in Arabia, I became well acquainted with a young Baghdad Arab officer, by the name of Nuri S'aid. In after years Nuri was the Prime Minister of Iraq; held that office more than a dozen times. When we read of the critical comments that have been made in the last day or two by leaders and writers behind the Iron Curtain, you might think we have a monopoly on tragedies of this sort. But, Iraq was a monarchy. Nuri was virtually its dictator. He was an exceedingly able man. Yet he, and his King, young Feisal, as you know, were both assassinated, and within a couple of years their assassin met the same fate.

Indonesia today is ruled by a dictator, Sukarno. On my way back from the South Pole, some months ago, when I called on Sukarno, among other things

8....

he told me of five attempts made on his life by his own countrymen, once by an assassin who was within fifteen or twenty feet of him.

History past and present is full of these grim tragedies. Only a few weeks ago, I paid a visit to one of my favorite Central Asian countries, Afghanistan. I was there for the fiftieth birthday of King Mohammed Zahir Shah. How did he get his throne? It's another story that H. V. Kaltenborn and the rest of us who were broadcasting at the time told about on the air. His father King Nadir Shah was assassinated, in Nineteen thirty-three. True Zahir Shah has enjoyed a longer continuous reign than any living ruler -- for thirty years. But one explanation for this may be the fact that up until this year he was a mere puppet, so they didn't bother about him. It was only last March that he took the reins of authority away from his cousin, Prince Daoud.

After leaving Afghanistan just a few weeks ago,

I made a journey on into Russian Central Asia, to the fabled city of Samarkand, now a part of the Asiatic Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan. Here in the city made famous by such Asiatic conquerors as Genghis Khan, and Tamerlane, I visited the ruins of an ancient observatory. One of Tamerlane's successors at Samarkand was his grandson, the Emir Ulugbek. He was the astronomer-king who built a fabulous observatory, and spent most of his time there. An ambitious Moslem priest wanted to get rid of him, a mullah - by the name of Akhror, who cajoled the Emir into setting forth on a holy pilgrimage to Mecca. The very first night out from Samarkand, as Emir Ulugbek sat alone in his royal tent, an assassin rushed in with a scimitar and beheaded him. The year, fourteen forty-nine.

*about the narrow escapes
Of course we all know/that one of our present distinguished guests, President Charles DeGaulle, has had. How lucky he was the bullets just missed him.*

On one of my expeditions this year I spent some time with Stone Age tribesmen in one of the great inner valleys of the wild island of New Guinea. Among a people who had been cut off from the rest of the world - they and their ancestors -- for thousands of years. True, they have their blood feuds and wild tribal wars. But it seems to me that they are in some ways more civilized than the peoples of the great nations around this planet where dwell so many millions of people who feel that they themselves are highly civilized; and who look upon the Stone Age people of New Guinea as savages. I wonder!

But to get back to the question: What under the sun can be done to protect our Presidents and other heads of state? I opened these the remarks of a frustrated news man who has had to stay shut up in a room with a tribute to my colleagues in radio and television, and I am going to close on that same theme.

11....

Perhaps you have heard eminent scholars say -- I've heard them say it -- that this world of ours has changed more in the past fifty or sixty years than it had changed in the preceding two thousand years, from the time of Christ.

Population experts tell us that when Christ was born there were only about two hundred and fifty million people living on this planet. Today, there are between three and four billion. Before many years have passed they think it will be seven or eight billion. Modern communications, radio and TV, and high speed transportation - the airplane, already have done things to our planet that stagger the imagination.

It may not happen in our time. But I think the day is not too far off when these modern miracles - TV - Radio, and the jet plane - will have had such a tremendous impact on all Mankind that even this shocking problem will have been solved.

NOVEMBER 26, 1963

Instead of my usual ending, for the first

time I think I'll simply end this by repeating something that is being said all over this country: That at least we are fortunate in having an especially able successor to the talented, charming, courageous, dedicated young man to whom the nation and the world paid final tribute this afternoon at Arlington.

Goodnight

A minor point, you might say - during a national tragedy. But it's not altogether minor that the man you're saying is Chief Executive has already put his stamp on the Executive Mansion. Even to the switch - of receiving chairs.

Lyndon Johnson - is President of the United States. The President's office in the White House is beginning to look like - Lyndon Johnson's office. Which