

THE HINCKLEY GUN STILL SMOKES

BY ROBERT E. SEGAL.

One of America's true heroes, Jim Brady, has returned to work in the White House for a few hours. It seems now that he has won his fight against death from one of John Hinckley's 22 caliber bullets. But the battle to curb further assassination attempts and other terrorist acts and the debate over insanity pleas as defense in murder cases are far from finished.

When John Hinckley's bullets were found lodging in President Reagan, Jim Brady, Secret Service Agent Tim McCarthy, and Police Officer Tom Delahanty outside the Washington Hilton at about 2:30 P.M. on March 31, 1981, the nation rocked with anger but not with disbelief. We had to believe because all-seeing television, a miracle of this new electronic day, had brought the bloody scene into our living rooms.

There followed weeks and months of review of young Hinckley's wanderings and frequent accounts of indictment, trial delays, actual hearings, the judge's charge to the jury, confusion among members of the jury, the verdict, fierce public argument over the verdict, and then the rush to get tough with any future gun-toting aberrant trying to kill a president or

anybody else.

Packed into this drama was much speculation about a failed 25-year-old with a gun, fantasies about a young movie star, and a yearning to be lifted to the world's attention from the dark depths of anonymity. Along the way, there were reports that John Hinckley had read "Mein Kampf" and had been seen hanging around headquarters of the American Nazi Party. But these news flashes paled as court procedures dragged and the senior Hinckleys gave without stint of their wealth and their honest concern for a son whose guilty deed had been televised for posterity.

Standing before Federal Judge Barrington D. Parker in Washington, John Hinckley, Sr. said: "I am the cause of John's tragedy and I wish to God that I could trade places with him right now." It is true that skilled family counselors had concluded that the father had given his erratic son too much financial aid and too many chances to chart a straight course. But perhaps a larger truth was that the young man was a human reed too fragile to withstand the buffeting of a rock-and-roll world wherein yesterday's values have been adulterated by current moral corrosion.

Prosecution's team of psychiatrists concluded that Hinckley selected deliberately from a range of choices. In his dilemma, he might have killed himself, might have gone to Yale and tried to kill Jodie Foster, or might have gone back to his Washington hotel room to think things over. His conscious decision, the doctors declared, was to shoot the President. He wanted to become a "famous" crimi-

nal. In that, at least, he did succeed.

Two of the jurors said bluntly after the trial that they fought for an untrammelled verdict of guilty. "This guy isn't crazy; he's a genius," said one. "He manipulated his parents and manipulated the jury." Said the second: "Trying to fight 10 other people was hard. I gave up in the end."

"Not guilty by reason of insanity," was the ultimate verdict. And now the cry for change rings through the land. President Reagan said the law placed an unfair burden on the prosecution. Senator Orrin G. Hatch of Idaho introduced a bill aimed at effectively eliminating the insanity defense except in cases in which the defendant lacked the state of mind required as an element of the offense. Attorney General William French Smith strongly supported the Hatch move.

On the bench, at the bar, in medical schools, out in the public domain, a new controversy simmers. Messrs. Reagan, Hatch and Smith are backed by millions in their rush to squeeze nearly all of the strength of the insanity plea out of the traditional law. But second thoughts have raised flags of caution. The legal surgery now proposed may kill not only the patient but the moral basis of criminal law itself.

Meanwhile, John Hinckley is in St. Elizabeths Hospital for what promises to be a long, perhaps a life-long, stay. And many men with many guns still stalk human prey. The only good news, it seems, is that the President has recovered from his wounds and Jim Brady is back at work.

HAIG PRAISES ISRAELI LEADER

JERUSALEM (WNS) --- In his first private trip to Israel following his resignation as Secretary of State for the Reagan Administration, Alexander Haig met with Premier Menachem

Begin and praised the Premier for his dedication "to the security and interests of the State of Israel and the free world." Haig was the first official visitor received by Begin af-

ter completion of the seven day (shiva) mourning period for his late wife, Aliza. Haig told reporters that the situation in Lebanon has improved and there is a "unique opportunity" for positive

developments there. Haig was the guest of honor at ceremonies in Sde Boker marking the ninth anniversary of the death of former Premier David Ben Gurion. He received an honorary doctorate

from Ben Gurion University in Beersheba. In a short speech at the ceremonies, Haig said recent events in Lebanon proved that the enemies of peace in the region have been totally beaten. "Once again the

Soviet's inability to suggest real solutions to the crises for which they were responsible has been demonstrated in the open," he said.

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