

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

The incredible, devastating news that engulfed all America and the world yesterday afternoon is still difficult of comprehension. Hours after the event it remains almost inconceivable that John Fitzgerald Kennedy, President of the United States, whose every word and action typified life and youth and strength, now lies dead of an assassin's bullet.

All of us—from the country's highest leaders to the humblest citizen—all of us are still in a state of shock from this stunning blow, that even now seems unreal in its grotesque horror. And hundreds of millions of people beyond our borders—throughout the hemisphere and across the seas—mourn, too, the loss of a President who gave worldwide reality to the American ideals of peace and freedom.

One's first thought turns in human sympathy to the President's family, to his wife who was by his side when he was struck down, to his little children, to his parents, to his brothers and sisters. The acutely personal loss they have suffered is intensified by the unusual closeness of their relationships within this tight-knit family.

The personal loss is deep and crushing; the loss to the nation and the world is historic and overpowering. John F. Kennedy was a man of intellect as well as action. He represented the vitality and the energy, the intelligence and the enthusiasm, the courage and the hope of these United States in the middle of this 20th century. On that day less than three years ago when he took the oath of his great office, he said:

"Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has

been passed to a new generation of Americans—born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage—and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world."

John F. Kennedy died in and for this belief, the belief in those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which in his day it recommitted itself—rights which we hope to see exercised around the world, but which we are determined to see exercised within our borders.

No madman's bullet can stop this inexorable march of human rights; no murder, however tragic, can make it falter. In death as in life, the words and spirit of this our most newly martyred President will lead the nation ever closer toward fulfillment of the ideals of domestic brotherhood and international peace by which his Administration has been guided from the start.

Among the last words John F. Kennedy wrote were these: "In a world full of frustrations and irritations, America's leadership must be guided by the lights of learning and reason."

The light of reason was momentarily extinguished with the crack of a rifle shot in Dallas yesterday. But that light is, in reality, inextinguishable; and, with God's help, it will show the way to our country and our country's leaders as we mourn for John F. Kennedy in the darkening days ahead.