President Kennedy assassinated

On November 23, 1963, the day after JFK’s assassination, The Guardian reports on the drama of the event and how it was covered on television.

President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States, was shot* during a motorcade* drive through downtown Dallas this afternoon. He died in the emergency* room of the Parkland Memorial Hospital 32 minutes after the attack. He was 46 years old. He is the third President to be assassinated in office* since Abraham Lincoln and the first since President McKinley in 1901.

Prime suspect

In the late afternoon the Dallas police took into custody* a former* Marine, one Lee H. Oswald, aged 24, who is alleged* to have shot a policeman outside a theatre. He is said to have remarked only, "It is all a woman's work and later arrived in Washington with the body of the dead President.

An hour of tumult

This is being written in the numbered* interval between the first shock and the hurried* attempt to reconstruct a sequence of fact from an hour of tumult. However, this is the first assassination of a world figure that took place in the age of television, and every network and station in the country took up the plotting* of the appalling* story. It begins to form a grisly* pattern, contradicted by a grisly* preface: the projection on television screens of a happy crowd and a grinning* President only a few seconds before the gunfire.

“Lee Harvey Oswald, is said to have remarked only, ‘It is all over now’.”

The President was almost at the end of his two day tour of Texas. He was to make a luncheon speech in the Dallas Trade Mart building and his motor procession had been about another mile to go. He had had the warmest* welcome of his trip from a great crowd at the airport. The cries and pleas for a personal touch were so engaging that Mrs Kennedy took the lead* and walked from the ramp of the presidential plane to a fence* that held the crowd in. She was followed quickly by the President, and they both seized* hands and forearms* and smiled gladly at the people.

The Secret Service and the police were relieved* to get them into their car, where Mrs Kennedy sat between the President and John B Connally, the Governor of Texas.

Three gunshots

The motorcade was going along slowly but smoothly* when three multilet* shots, which the crowd first mistook* for fireworks, cracked through the cheers*. One hit the shoulder* and the wrist* of Governor Connally who was taken with the President to the hospital, where his condition* is serious.

The other brought blood trickling* from the back of the sitting President’s head. His right arm flopped* from a high wave* of greeting and he collapsed* into the arms of Mrs Kennedy, who fell unharmed*. She was heard to cry “Oh No!” and sat there all the way crying* his head in her lap. As some people hayed* and screamed and others fell to the ground, and hid their faces, the secret service escort broke* into two

groups, one speeding the President’s car to the hospital — and another joined a part of the heavy police escort in wheeling* off in pursuit of a man fleeing* across some railroad* tracks. Nothing came of this lead*.

The President was taken to the emergency room of the Parkland Hospital and Governor Connally was taken into the surgery*. Mrs Kennedy went in with the living President and less than an hour later came out with the dead man in a bronze coffin*, which arrived shortly* after two priests* had administered the last rites of the Roman Catholic Church.

Return to Washington

The body was escorted by Generals Clifton and McCuigh, the President’s chief military and air force aides to the Dallas Airport and flown thence* to Washington. Within an hour of the President’s death, the Secret Service had found a sniper’s nest inside the building from which the first witnesses* swore the bullets had been fired. It is a warehouse* for a school textbook firm on the corner of Elm and Houston Streets.

In an upper window, whose open window commanded the route of the Presidential motorcade, the Servicemen found the remains* of a fried chicken and a foreign made rifle* with a telescopic sight. Alongside it lay three empty cartridges.

Alistair Cooke

Source: Reuters and NBC Limited is affiliated company.

VOCABULARY

break loose: escape
chafe: fret
chauvinist: nationalistic
collaborate: work together
concede: admit
erode: wear away
foment: foment trouble
flap: speak loudly
frantic: wild
furor: excitement
harass: bother
howl: moan
implicated: involved
inexorable: goal-directed
leader: guide
lurk: hide
nervous: anxious
obstructed: hindered
perplex: confuse
plotting: planning
praising: approving
principles: standards
relaxed: relaxed
rushed: hurried
sensitized: sensitive
shudder: shake
sniper: sniper
speech: talk
stutter: stammer
vociferously: loudly
wheedle: plead
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headline: title
private: personal
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