

House panel to stir

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WASHINGTON — Doubts that have haunted the country for almost 15 years will be stirred anew when the House Select Committee on Assassinations opens its hearings Monday into the murders of John F. Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

When the committee finishes its work in December, its members and staff hope that many of the lingering questions will have been answered.

It is also possible, however, that the hearing will lead to new revelations, doubts and suspicions.

The most basic questions are:

- Did Lee Harvey Oswald have help in Dallas when Kennedy was shot to death on Nov. 22, 1963?

- Did someone hire James Earl Ray, or otherwise assist him, to kill King in Memphis on April 4, 1968—was Ray in fact the killer?

Those questions were first raised within hours after each killing and have been pursued ever since by hundreds of official investigators, amateur detectives, writers and "assassi-

nation buffs." And even though the Warren Commission found that Oswald was Kennedy's lone killer, and though Ray pleaded guilty to killing King, and although the FBI has published its files on both killings, the questions remain.

Now, the congressional investigators hope that they can bring all the public and private probes together and re-examine the mysteries with the help of hindsight, skepticism and technology unavailable in 1963 or 1968.

For example, a top committee investigator, in a briefing for reporters last week, said the committee would

explore the possibility, as charged by some students and black leaders, that the FBI conspired to kill King.

The committee has employed computer technology and exotic sound recording techniques to find out whether a fourth shot from a gun other than Oswald's came from the crowd on that sunny afternoon in Dallas.

Oswald, a puzzling figure who had links to both pro-Castro and anti-Castro Cubans, to the Soviets, and to the FBI in Dallas, was killed before he could be brought to trial. Ray also raised suspicions when he unexpect-

doubts over JFK, King

edly pleaded guilty, stopping his trial before it began, although he now insists that he is innocent.

Thus the congressional hearings, which were ordered by the House under the continuing pressure of national doubt, will, in effect, take the place of the courtroom trials that Oswald, Ray and the American people were denied.

The first week of the hearings will be devoted to the killing of King. Ray is scheduled to spend three days before the committee as star witness.

The hearings will then recess until after Labor Day, with the rest of

September devoted to the Kennedy murder. Following another recess for the elections, the committee is scheduled to return to the King case during most of November. In December, committee members plan to discuss the evidence publicly before voting on their findings and issuing a final report.

Soon after the committee was formed in early 1977 under the chairmanship of Rep. Henry Gonzalez (D., Tex.), leaks, staff dissension and committee bickering virtually destroyed it.

But under Gonzalez' replacement,

Rep. Louis Stokes (D., Ohio), the committee staff, headed by former law professor G. Robert Blakey, has steadfastly shunned publicity.

As a result, other members of Congress have impatiently questioned what the committee has been doing with its budget of nearly \$5 million.