

Assassination Rumors: Hard to Kill 'Em Off

By KEVIN P. PHILLIPS

Washington—So far, 1978 has been a pretty good year for so-called nuts and a great year for oddballs. Old yardsticks are going by the wayside.

California Tax Revolt leader Howard Jarvis, for many years written off by politicians and the local media as a right-wing fringe operator, set the nation absolutely on its ear with Proposition 13's stunning June victory.

Meanwhile, the nation's "gold bugs"—people long assumed to be cranks because of their zealous advocacy of hoarding gold rather than paper dollars—are looking pretty darn good with gold now at \$200 an ounce. Indeed, the words "gold" and "nut" are rarely strung together these days. Yesterday's currency kooks turned out to be among 1978's savviest investors.

Now it may be the turn of the assassination conspiracy set. Granted that the recent congressional hearings served pretty conclusively to indicate that James Earl Ray did in fact kill Martin Luther King ten years ago, that still doesn't disprove the larger existence of one or more conspiracies. And in any event, the Kennedy assassination remains the larger and more important enigma.

Too Many Coincidences

All in all, I find myself in general agreement with Newsweek's Meg Greenfield who wrote recently that there are just too many coincidences surrounding the Kennedy and King shootings.

Four witnesses who either testified in various inquiries or were scheduled to do so have been killed or committed suicide: Mobsters Sam Giancana and John Rosselli; George de Mohrenschildt, a friend of Lee Harvey Oswald; and former senior FBI official William Sullivan. A coincidence?

Secondly, the backdrop to both the Kennedy and King assassinations has featured allegations of either peripheral or substantial involvement by many of the same organizations and individuals: the Soviet KGB, Fidel Castro's Cuban espionage service, anti-Castro Cubans an agent named Raoul, organized crime, the FBI and the CIA. Another coincidence?

If so, it doesn't end there. Many of the same groups that dance around the background of the Kennedy and King assassinations also lurk in the background of yet a third major event—Watergate.

A Setup by CIA?

Right off, and perhaps still missing a few, I can name five senior Nixon White House officials who have seriously questioned whether the Watergate events might not have been "set up" or at least partially manipulated by the Central Intelligence Agency.

One conceivable CIA motive to scuttle Richard Nixon's potentially embarrassing private inquiries into the Bay of Pigs and the Kennedy assassination, Bob Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, Chuck Colson, John Dean and Ray Price have all either touched on this possibility in their own books or been so quoted in some other publication. So far, however, the national media have been very loath to pursue these directions.

See what I mean? The conspiracy possibility is appalling—and yet also fascinating. Suppose there does turn out to have been a conspiracy in the Kennedy killing that in some manner draws in Fidel Castro, organized crime and the CIA? Could those revelations, in turn, shed some new light on the still unfathomed hows, whys, and wherefores of the Watergate break-in? Maybe so. And could proof of a conspiracy to assassinate John F. Kennedy possibly fuel renewed speculation—in the directions already publicly raised by former Nixon aides—about a conspiracy to politically cripple or assassinate Richard Nixon? Ponder that one.

All in all, I just have this gnawing feeling that sooner or later the conspiracy people, like the tax zealots and gold bugs, are going to be proved at least partially right. Nineteen seventy-eight is turning out to be that kind of year.

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