

Gonzalez, Assailing His Committee, Quits as Assassination Inquiry Head

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WASHINGTON, March 2—Representative Henry B. Gonzalez submitted his resignation as chairman of the House Committee on Assassinations today after accusing some other committee members of trying to usurp his powers and the Democratic leadership of failing to support him.

The action by the Texas Democrat, according to a number of senior House Democrats, may mean the end of the House investigation into the deaths of President Kennedy and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Representative Thomas P. O'Neill Jr., Speaker of the House, said in his regular

news conference that, unless the committee came up with some major new investigative lead, he did not believe that the panel would survive. Mr. O'Neill, a Massachusetts Democrat, said he would not accept the resignation until he had talked with Mr. Gonzalez and that under House rules the resignation would "have to be adopted by the House."

Representative Jim Wright, of Texas, the majority leader, said in an interview it was his opinion "that unless Henry can be prevailed upon to continue as chairman, the House probably will not

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Richard A. Sprague



United Press International
Representative Henry B. Gonzalez

GONZALEZ, ASSAILING PANEL, QUILTS AS HEAD

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vote to continue the investigation."

Mr. Gonzalez, who has been ill in Texas for the last 10 days, submitted his resignation in a two-page letter in which he called the committee's chief counsel, Richard A. Sprague, "an unscrupulous individual, an unconscionable scoundrel."

A spokesman for Mr. Sprague said he would have no comment.

The committee, which was established

by the House last September, has been wracked with open dissension since Feb. 10, when Mr. Gonzalez moved to dismiss Mr. Sprague, only to have all the 11 other members instruct the controversial chief counsel to disregard the termination notice.

Under its present mandate, the 73-man committee staff must win the support of a majority of the House for a new resolution if it is to continue operating after March 31.

Walter E. Fauntroy, the House delegate from the District of Columbia who is chairman of an assassination subcommittee that is concentrating on the events surrounding Dr. King's death, said he had not "given up hope that we will be able to continue."

Mr. Fauntroy said the problem was that

public attention had concentrated on the internal struggle of the committee rather than on its investigation. While he refused to discuss whether the investigators had thus far uncovered any major new leads, he indicated that some committee members were considering possible ways to influence the public's opinion about the inquiry.

"A hearing is among the kinds of things that could be used to change the public focus," Mr. Fauntroy said in an interview.

Representative Richardson Preyer, a North Carolina Democrat who is chairman of the subcommittee on the Kennedy assassination, agreed that national attention had focused on the dispute between Mr. Gonzalez and Mr. Sprague and that it might be helpful to "hold some hearings on the evidence that might be forthcoming."

But because of the potential for damag-

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ing innocent persons, Mr. Preyer said that in his opinion such hearings would initially have to be conducted in executive session rather than open to the public.

In his letter to the House Speaker, Mr. Gonzalez said that no head of a committee could have taken any other action than he had when he attempted to dismiss Mr. Sprague.

'Administrative Nightmare'

"I found in the committee an administrative nightmare; I found a chief counsel who assumed the full powers of the committee itself (and by implication usurped the powers of the House itself); a chief counsel who was insubordinate and insulting, not to mention disloyal," Mr. Gonzalez said.

"I found unjustifiable salaries, unjustified employees and reckless, inexplicable financial obligations. I had a responsibil-

ity to act, and no one has yet demonstrated that I acted wrongly or without full cause."

The Texas Congressman said that in the last few days he had been ill and absent but that even so, "several of my colleagues on the committee appear to be interested in usurping even my ministerial powers."

He said that "it seems clear now that the House leadership is unwilling to offer me support," but "I cannot bring myself to sign pay vouchers for an unscrupulous individual, an unconscionable scoundrel, and no power on earth can compel me to do so."

"Under the circumstances that now exist," he concluded, "I have no alternative but to resign from the Select Committee on Assassinations herewith."