

News Analysis: From Katzenbach to Hart on JFK

Report bares decade

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of deception

Just three days after the assassination of President John Kennedy, Deputy Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach sent a letter to the White House stating that "the public must be satisfied that Oswald was the assassin; that he did not have confederates who are still at large; and that the evidence was such that he would have been convicted at trial." The Katzenbach directive to the White House continued, "Speculation about Oswald's motivation ought to be cut off."

At that time, while Katzenbach insisted that the White House should condemn Lee Harvey Oswald as the lone assassin, the Warren Commission had not yet been appointed and the FBI investigation into the crime had barely gotten underway. Katzenbach recognized the need for the establishment of some apparatus to support his rush to judgment and he urged the White House to act since "we should have some basis for rebutting thought that there was 'a communist conspiracy' or 'a right wing conspiracy.'" Thus before Oswald had been dead for twenty-four hours the extremists of the center were moving to cover up the facts.

Even more illuminating of the shadowy role played by Katzenbach was the letter that he sent to each member of the Warren Commission on December 9, 1963, urging that the Commission immediately issue a press release stating that Oswald was the lone assassin. Had the Commission acted favorably upon that directive its image of integrity would likely have been thoroughly compromised for the Commission was not even to call its first witness until two more months had passed.

The Katzenbach correspondence, suppressed for twelve and one-half years, was uncovered, along with other evidence, by the Church Committee, and published in the Committee's final report last

week. This historic work was accomplished under the auspices of Sen. Richard Schweiker (R-Pa.) and Sen. Gary Hart (D-Colo.) in D.C. is pretty much a chain-of-command town with the pecking order fairly well established and adhered to. Therefore the question arises: On whose behalf was a Deputy Attorney General sending directives to the new President and then to the members of the President's Commission, including its Chairman, the Chief Justice of the United States? At a news conference held in conjunction with the release of the report, Sen. Schweiker stated that he would like to see that question answered and urged that it could be arranged if Katzenbach was ordered to explain his role while under oath in an appearance before a Congressional investigating committee.

In its report the Senate Intelligence Committee concluded that it had "divulged" evidence which impeaches the process by which the intelligence agencies arrived at their own conclusions about the assassination, and by which they provided information to the Commission. The report continued, "This evidence indicates that the investigation of the assassination was deficient and that facts which might have substantially affected the course of the investigation were not provided to the Warren Commission or those



DEATH DAY for John F. Kennedy. He appeared to greet a crowd of people who had been unable to get tickets to a breakfast sponsored by the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, November 22, 1963. In his right hand, Baines Johnson. To Kennedy's rear is Texas Governor John Connally and (left) Senator Frank W. Yarborough. (Photo by World Wide)

individuals within the FBI and the CIA, as well as other agencies of Government, who were charged with investigating the assassination.

The significance of that finding should be examined in light of the Warren Commission's early decision to secure no independent investigators and to rely instead for information upon the FBI, the CIA and the other existing police agencies. The method chosen by the Warren Commission from getting the facts was simple yet ingenious. The report reveals that "Senior FBI officials," and "Senior CIA officials," and "Senior

Government officials" were in possession of evidence which might have been invaluable to the Commission. These senior officials appointed middle echelon bureaucrats to liaison with their opposite numbers at the Warren Commission and to share with the Commission representatives the evidence with which they were familiar.

By the mere expedient of denying the middle echelon officials access to the decisive material the police agencies had constructed an obstacle which was effective and invisible. Inevitable because those charged with the responsibility of briefing the Commission were acting in good faith and gave the appearance that they were carrying out their assignments fully. The intelligence cover-up was operated on the old intelligence "need to know basis" and the middle echelon representatives in many cases did not know how they had been utilized until they testified before the Senate Committee.

Sen. Schweiker, who played the major part in directing the work of the Senate Committee, recently summed up the implications of the Senate report. He said that the Warren Commission's conclusions, including the

conclusion that Oswald was the lone assassin, have been rendered invalid since the basic evidence has been admitted to the Commission. The report also is responsible for the Warren Commission's recommendation that the Warren Commission select Committee of Intelligence to continue the investigation in an attempt to resolve the questions remaining. Schweiker said that he had called President Kennedy and advised him of the findings.

The Warren Commission has never been re-examined, composed of those with differing political views and including Sen. Edward Brooke, Sen. J. Lee Rankin, Sen. J. Bennett Moore and Sen. J. Lee Rankin. Baker, a former opponent of Kennedy, called for a re-examination of the report.

The report, which has a history of being buried in the Warren Commission's report issued in September 1964, was unanimously understood and reported the implications of the report which disposed of it. The

conference. He was explained that Hart had been detained on another matter.

In fact, with members of the Citizens Commission on Intimidation had been at the New York office earlier in the day. CBS called to inform Schweiker that Hart was going to be out of the office for the conference.

The other matter that Schweiker was an effort to investigate was of the Committee of which he was a member. He had informed the media the night before that the report which was about to be released on the matter would be of interest to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. He also said that the report would be made available to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary.

Media emphasis was also given to the fact that the report was being released by the Citizens Commission on Intimidation, one of the groups that were active in the campaign for the impeachment of President Nixon. The report was being released to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, and the media was expected to report on the findings.

John Q. Adams had been dead for twenty-four hours, the extremist

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Report as a threat, Schweiker as

