

RADIO-TV COVERAGE OF RELEASE OF HSC REPORT

17 July 1979

PLH

CBS Radio, approx. 5:04 p.m.

(In its final report on the ass'n's of JFK and MLK, the HSCA) challenged the views of the Warren Commission and the FBI. The Committee concluded that there were probably conspiracies in both murders, saying the Kennedy assassination could 'possibly' be traced to an individual organized crime figure, or a small underworld group. The King ass'n, the Committee said, was possibly the result of a conspiracy allegedly organized by a St. Louis business group which offered a \$50,000 bounty for King's death.

CBS TV, approx. 15 min. into the news:

(Mudd) The House Assassinations Committee today formally reported its findings that the murders of President John Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. probably involved conspiracies. It suggested that organized crime was behind the Kennedy assassination, and that a second gunman fired a shot which missed the President's motorcade. The Committee said it found evidence to establish the existence of a St. Louis based conspiracy to finance the murder of Dr. King. Three members of the Committee dissented, one of them saying the conclusions were based on "supposition upon supposition upon supposition."

(Followed by fairly long story on EMK and Chappaquiddick.)

ABC TV: (a few minutes before the CBS story)

(Reynolds?) After two and one half years of investigation, and the expenditure of nearly five and a half million dollars, the House Assassinations Committee released its final report today, on the murders of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King. Here's a report from Brit Hume:

(Hume) The final report sets forth in detail the conclusions the Assassinations Committee reached last December, and the reasons for them. The conclusions: President Kennedy's murder was 'probably' the result of a conspiracy, 'conceivably' by elements of organized crime. Martin Luther King Jr's slaying was also likely the result of a conspiracy, possibly by two St. Louis businessmen. The Warren Commission, which found no conspiracy in the Kennedy case, and J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, which found none in King's, are faulted for failing to explore fully the conspiracy angles, & the FBI is blamed as well for fomenting an anti-King atmosphere. There is a detailed explanation of the elaborate acoustical tests the Committee made of a Dallas Police tape recording, which brought it to the conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald fired three shots at President Kennedy, including the fatal one, from the Dallas School Book Depository, while an unknown gunman fired one more from the grassy knoll down the street. Lee Harvey Oswald's associations with organized crime figures are discussed at length, and the Committee notes that Jack Ruby, the man who killed Oswald, was well known in the underworld also, but it finds Oswald was not a hired killer, that he was mainly politically motivated, and that the organized crime evidence is far short of proof of involvement in a conspiracy. In the King murder, the Committee finds that James Earl Ray, the confessed killer, is the real killer. Ray's brothers, John and Jerry, are named as likely partners, the motives believed to be their racism, and a standing offer of \$50,000 to kill King, from two St. Louis businessmen, John Sutherland and John Kauffman.

So the longest, largest, and most expensive congressional investigation in history has finally ended, leaving key questions about these cases still unanswered. The Committee would like the Justice Department to take over from here. Brit Hume, ABC News, on Capitol Hill.

NBC TV also had a story, which I missed.

Channel 2 News, 10:14 p.m.

(Dennis Richmond) After months of hearings and millions of dollars of public funds, the House Assassinations Committee today wrapped up its investigation of the murders of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. The Committee members concluded that, although they couldn't prove it, the killings probably involved conspiracies. Mary Tillotson reports:

(Tillotson) After John Kennedy was killed in Dallas, the Warren Commission concluded Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin. After Martin Luther King was murdered in Memphis, the FBI decided James Earl Ray acted alone in killing him. The final House Assassinations Committee report agrees that Ray and Oswald were killers, but in a radical departure from previous official conclusions, the Committee decided, on a vote of 7 to 2, that other people were 'probably' involved in both assassinations - two conspiracies. The report says the Committee was unable to identify the other members, or the extent of those conspiracies, but the Committee did rule several groups out of its conspiracy theories. The Committee said it found no evidence that agencies such as the CIA or the FBI, no evidence that Cuba or Russia, or organized crime were involved in the two murders. [Sic - photo for last part of this was Trafficante walking into the hearing room!] The Committee suggested that the Justice Department further investigate both assassinations.

The Assassinations Committee based its finding of a conspiracy in the Kennedy killing on new scientific acoustical evidence. The Committee interpreted that evidence as showing there were probably two gunmen in Dallas. The Committee said a conspiracy was likely in the King assassination because of circumstantial evidence. Criticism of the Warren Commission's findings was a chief reason for the House Committee's two year, almost \$6 million retroactive investigation. The new assassinations report has already found its critics: [Robert Groden, "Photo Expert," wearing coat & tie] "... and the organized crime figures mentioned by the report, I believe were involved, and also the anti-Castro Cuban connection I think is involved. (What) I find difficult is to say that there was absolutely no involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency, or any of the government agencies involved at all - certainly in the coverup, there had to be."

The final House report - 28 volumes, thousands of pages - will be available to the public through the Government Printing Office within a few days - fresh meat for assassination buffs. In Washington, Mary Tillotson.

[I think Ch. 2, KTVU, is Westinghouse.]

Ch. 4 (NBC), local news, 11:08 p.m.

(Hambrick?) In Washington, the House Assassinations Committee has finally finished its probe, and its report is a real blockbuster - totally contradicts the Warren Commission's report, and the FBI's investigation of Dr. Martin Luther King's killing. Conspiracy - that is the key word. It says that in all likelihood, both President John F. Kennedy and Dr. King were the victims of a conspiracy, and it advises the Justice Department to follow up on that basis.

Ch. 7 (ABC), local news, 11:12 p.m.

... and the FBI investigations, a majority of the ten panel members concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald did not act alone, nor did James Earl Ray. Now, in the Kennedy assassination, the conspiracy, they say, may have involved organized crime, but some of the Congressmen believe that there was no conspiracy at all. We talked tonight to Rep. Harold Sawyer of Michigan; he said that he does not go along with the acoustical evidence that led to the Kennedy conspiracy theory. [END]