

# Panel Points to Organized Crime Figures in Final Report on Kennedy Assassination

BY RONALD J. OSTROW

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WASHINGTON—The House Assassinations Committee, fleshing out its conclusion that a conspiracy probably lay behind President John F. Kennedy's assassination, Tuesday pointed to organized crime figures and left-wing associates of Lee Harvey Oswald as possible culprits.

But in issuing its final report, the committee emphasized the tenuous nature of its evidence and acknowledged that it "falls considerably short" of the kind that would establish criminal conspiracy.

At the same time, the committee said the weight of evidence in the killing of Martin Luther King "established the likelihood of a conspiracy" in his death.

The committee termed "significant" evidence bearing on the conspiracy in King's death of the two brothers of the convicted assassin, James Earl Ray—John and Jerry Ray.

Its report said the committee believed that word of an alleged \$50,000 standing offer to kill King by two since-deceased St. Louis area businessmen had reached Ray before the 1963 assassination.

The committee's 686-page final report, to be followed by 25 additional volumes of hearing transcripts, staff reports and evidence, did not alter the conclusions announced by the panel last Dec. 30 when it officially went out of business.

Three congressmen on the 12-member committee would not go along with the conclusion that a sec-

ond gunman took part in Kennedy's assassination, contending that the evidence was insufficient.

The three—Reps. Samuel L. Devine (R-Ohio), Robert W. Edgar (I-Pa.), and Harold S. Sawyer (R-Mich)—also rejected the conclusion that King died as the result of a conspiracy.

A fourth member, Rep. Christopher J. Dodd (D-Conn.), contended that the committee had not pursued the Kennedy evidence far enough and disassociated himself from naming individuals as possible conspirators in King's murder.

The committee called for the Justice Department to review its findings, analyze some evidence and decide whether further official investigation is warranted.

A Justice Department spokesman, Robert J. Hevel, said a copy of the final report and the supporting volumes had not yet been received by the department. "It will be reviewed and we will decide what further action is to be taken," he said.

In concluding that Kennedy probably was killed as a result of a conspiracy, the committee rested heavily on disputed acoustic evidence that two gunmen had fired at Kennedy in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963.

In listing possible culprits in the Kennedy assassination, the committee gave a clean bill of health to the Soviet Union, the Cuban government and former Teamsters Union President James R. Hoffa.

On the basis of available evidence,

the committee also said it believed that anti-Castro Cuban groups, acting as groups, and organized crime as a group, were not involved in the Kennedy assassination.

But it added that "available evidence does not preclude the possibility that individual members" of either group "may have been involved."

The committee concluded that two organized crime leaders, Carlos Marcello of New Orleans and Santos Trafficante, a Mafia chief in Florida, had the motive, means and opportunity to assassinate Kennedy.

Oswald, identified by both the Warren Commission and the committee as the man who fired the fatal shots at Kennedy, had ties to organized crime, according to the committee. So, too, did Jack Ruby, who murdered Oswald.

Nevertheless, the report said, "the committee felt compelled to stress that knowledge (of organized crime) or availability through association falls considerably short of the sort of evidence that would be necessary to establish criminal responsibility for a conspiracy in the assassination."

In analyzing evidence in King's death, the report disputed the commonly held belief that James Earl Ray was a virulent racist and concluded instead that he "was a financially motivated criminal."

The report said that John, Jerry and James Ray "consistently attempted to conceal the true scope of their pre-assassination contact with each other . . . this conduct could be explained by a sense of family loyalty."

Nevertheless, it also raised the possibility that pre-assassination contact, if revealed, would lead to implication in a conspiracy.

The committee also noted that James Earl Ray had refused to provide credible evidence on the subject of conspiracy, despite an offer of assistance from the Justice Department. "His self-sacrificial posture was possibly explained as an effort to protect his brother," the report said.

Despite what the committee described as an "exhaustive and far-reaching field investigation," investigators were unable to identify significant associates of James Earl Ray other than his two brothers.

HW

Comments by Kenneth Bode

4 June 1979

[Typed by PLH from an almost illegible transcript. In particular, there are some quite illegible handwritten emendations which I haven't picked up. This was provided by Sylvia Neagher, through the AIR. Bode is some sort of editor of the New Republic.]

The report on the assassination of Pres. Kennedy that the House of Rep. spent \$5 million and took 2 1/2 years to produce will be released in a few days. What's in the report [illegible change] is leaking all over Washington. What the report says, in essence, is that another official myth perpetrated by our government is not true. The Warren Commission was wrong. Pres. Kennedy was probably not killed by Lee Harvey Oswald acting alone. There was more than one gunman. The assassination was a conspiracy, and organized crime probably had a hand in it. In other words, those crackpot assassination buffs were right all along and investigations -- air k100ry and --b or purposely misleading. Both NBC and the N.Y. Times have sources on the Committee and each has issued a preview of the report. It will say there is still no smoking gun. No final evidence where the assassination was actually planned. But there is a substantial web of circumstantial evidence to link the death of the President to movements of organized crime. Organized crime figures had vowed revenge on both John and Robert Kennedy. Both Oswald and Jack Ruby had syndicate connections. Phone records confirm Ruby's connections at the time of the shooting. Ruby had help from [line missing] when he appeared out of the crowd and shot Oswald on national television. And his entire alibi was a concoction by his lawyer. All this is in the report. The chief counsel for the Committee told the ~~N+Y~~ Times Assoc. Press, "I think the mob did it" unquote. Cut and dried. Another staff member told NBC that there are still enough people alive that it would be possible to establish conclusively who killed Pres. Kennedy. But the House Committee has gone out of business.. recommending that the Justice Dept. take over. That would be good enough for me. But if the next gov't investigation doesn't turn over every remain[ing] stone to get all the answers, then we deserve the judgment of history that 15 years later the American people weren't sufficiently interested in learning who really killed their President.

I'm Ken Bode.

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6/4/79 (Date unclear - known to be before June 9.)  
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