

Crosby S. Noyes

Revived JFK inquiries: search for truth or . . .

You can't help wondering about the motivation of those who are calling for the reopening of the investigation of the assassination of John F. Kennedy 13 years ago. I suspect, however, that it involves something more than a pure devotion to historical truth.

If there is one valid supposition, it is that the truth will not be established at this late date. The so-called "leads" which the Senate Select Committee claims to have uncovered and which it demands be followed up consist of little more than fragments of unverified information. The committee itself concedes that it has discovered no evidence "sufficient to justify a conclusion that there was a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy."

What the committee may have succeeded in doing — and indeed this appears to have been the main purpose — has been to cast doubt on the findings of the Warren Commission that Lee Harvey Oswald was the lone assassin and to encourage suspicion that a conspiracy was, in fact, involved. The major charge is that the investigatory agencies involved — the FBI and CIA — deliberately withheld information from the Warren Commission which pointed in this direction.

Specifically, the CIA is accused of withholding the information that it had been trying for some time and

without success to assassinate Cuba's Fidel Castro — a fact which the Senate committee established in its inquiry. The FBI, for its part, is charged with bungling its investigation of the Kennedy assassination. Instead of making a serious attempt to uncover all possible ramifications of the affair, it was chiefly concerned, in the committee's view, with protecting its own image.

There is, in fact, a certain fragile plausibility to the scenario that the senators are suggesting. If Rolando Cubelo, a high Cuban official with whom the CIA was dealing in its assassination plot against Castro, was a double agent, the Cuban prime minister would have been well aware of the CIA effort. It is a matter of public record that on September 7, 1963, Castro warned an Associated Press reporter that if American leaders "are aiding terrorist plans to eliminate Cuban leaders, they themselves will not be safe."

There are other bits of "evidence." There was the Cuban-American who entered Mexico from Texas on November 23, 1963, the day after the assassination, and went on to Cuba. There was the even more mysterious passenger to Cuba, arriving nine days later from points unknown, for whom an airliner was held five hours in Mexico City, and who made the trip in the plane's cock-

pit, presumably to avoid being identified by the other passengers.

And so it goes. It is all undoubtedly stuff of which the most extravagant theories can be spun. It is also the stuff of which not a little political mischief can be made in the context of current American politics.

But who really stands to gain? Assuming that it could be established beyond reasonable doubt that Oswald was acting as the agent of Fidel Castro, who would be better off for that discovery?

The intelligence agencies, no doubt, would be the big losers. And since this is open season on the CIA and the FBI, particularly from liberal Democratic-led congressional committees, perhaps that is justification enough.

At the same time, it has been pretty well established that, whatever the intelligence agencies were up to, their superiors in the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson administrations knew all about it. It is also clear that top officials of the Johnson administration were exceedingly anxious to discourage any suggestion of a conspiracy in the Kennedy assassination.

Pursuit of the truth is a laudable objective. But in this case — where the truth is most unlikely to be discovered — it is legitimate to ask what purpose is served in keeping the issue alive.