

New McCarthyites see killing conspiracies

The House committee slated to investigate assassinations has become a place of rather frantic charge and countercharge. Investigators would now have a hard time getting at the truth of the committee's troubles.

Those troubles are supposed to stem mainly from the life and times of the chief investigator chosen, Richard Sprague. And partly from the committee chairman, Henry Gonzalez of Texas.

But the committee was in trouble even before their squabbles came to light. Reaction to the major assassinations is keyed more to change in the national mood than to any evidence presented new or old.

The urgency to investigate has decreased in this time of a new administration's honeymoon. Any

renewed zeal for investigation has come to mean, by now, that the nation is feeling uneasy and wants some conspiracy to blame.

The enthusiasts for investigation believe mere crazies could not pull off the three or four major killings of our time.

I do not know why crazies are not allowed to assassinate leaders. They seem to monopolize the investigation of those assassinations.

The trouble with most conspiratorialists is that they believe too much in the virtue of their secret enemy.

In the fifties, the anti-Communist zealots believed there were shrewd and silent infiltrators at dozens of points in our government.

It was a time to check for a Communist under the bed before going to sleep at night. How the clever fellow

got there was beyond our knowing. Though every one was 10 feet tall, he was quick as a dust ball at gliding invisibly under beds.

The McCarthyite believers in conspiracy were actually more sensible than our present crop of assassination buffs. At least Joe McCarthy could point to a real locus of anti-American power, to real Russian gains, to the real spies (most of them bumlbers) that all nations do in fact employ.

The assassination buffs have a far more shadowy enemy to fear. He is everywhere, but unidentifiable. He has the CIA and FBI, the Mafia and the bureaucracy working for him, but from some higher (unidentified) vantage point. Presidents and bureaus do his will, sometimes without knowing it — but always

effectively, and with secrecy preserved.

Any scenario of the conspiratorialist depends on dozens of perfectly placed agents of the conspiracy, all doing their job well, keeping silent, covering tracks. This secret government is unlike all other governments known to the world. It works.

The strange thing is that our new McCarthyites are often the loudest in denunciation of the old ones. Yet what is there to choose between a man who says General Marshall helped betray his own country and one who says Chief Justice Earl Warren helped kill his own president?

"Twenty years of treason," Joe McCarthy called it. The new McCarthyites call it "a decade of killings" — all traceable to one set of killers. The New Deal

was infiltrated by Communists, McCarthy charged. The new McCarthyite says our bureaucracy is shot through with presidential killers and their accomplices.

In both cases, one wonders why there had to be any conspiracy at all. Schemers in such high places, with such skill and resources, no longer need to overthrow the government. They are the government. (The Birch Society ended up believing America is no longer in danger of Communists, because it is Communist itself.)

At any rate, the national mood is serener now, and the committee's investigation will probably go nowhere. But as that mood sours, we shall get a new fit of the new McCarthyites, almost like the quartan fever.