

Merry-Go-Round**A Rumor Persists
About Assassination****Drew Pearson**

Today's column is by Jack Anderson

PRESIDENT JOHNSON is sitting on a political H-bomb—an unconfirmed report that Senator Robert Kennedy (Dem.-N.Y.) may have approved an assassination plot which then possibly backfired against his late brother.

Top officials, queried by this column, agreed that a plot to assassinate Cuban dictator Fidel Castro was "considered" at the highest levels of the Central Intelligence Agency at the time Bobby was riding herd on the agency. The officials disagreed, however, over whether the plan was approved and implemented.

One version claims that underworld figures actually were recruited to carry out the plot. Another rumor has it that three hired assassins were caught in Havana where a lone survivor is still supposed to be languishing in prison. These stories have been investigated and discounted by the FBI.

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YET THE RUMOR persists, whispered by people in a position to know, that Castro did become aware of an American plot upon his life and decided to retaliate against President Kennedy.

This report may have started New Orleans' flamboyant District Attorney Jim Garrison on his investigation of the Kennedy assassination, but insiders believe he is following the wrong trails.

1. President Kennedy was so disillusioned with the CIA after the Bay of Pigs fiasco that he swore to friends he would like "to splinter the CIA in a thousand

pieces and scatter it to the winds." The President's watchdog was his brother Bobby, who ended up calling the shots at the CIA.

2. During this period, the CIA hatched a plot to knock off Castro. It would have been impossible for this to reach the high levels it did, say insiders, without being taken up with the younger Kennedy. Indeed, one source insists that Bobby, eager to avenge the Bay of Pigs fiasco, played a key role in the planning.

3. Some insiders are convinced that Castro learned enough at least to believe the CIA was seeking to kill him. With characteristic fury, he is reported to have cooked up a counterplot against President Kennedy.

4. Shortly after Mr. Kennedy was gunned down, the FBI handed President Johnson a memo reporting that Cuban leaders had hoped for Mr. Kennedy's death.

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SOME SOURCES consider Robert Kennedy's behavior after the assassination to be significant. He seemed to be tormented, they say, by more than the natural grief over the murder of his brother.

For weeks after the tragedy, this column was told, Bobby was morose and refused to see people. Could he have been plagued by the terrible thought that he had helped put into motion forces that indirectly may have brought about his brother's martyrdom? Some insiders think so.

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Compare same column, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 3 Mar. 1967.

Filed Garrison.