

Merry-Go-Round

Some Questions About Plot to Kill Castro



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THE PLOT to kill Cuban dictator Fidel Castro, hidden for 10 years from the public, raises some ugly questions that high officials would rather keep buried deep inside the Central Intelligence Agency.

• **Has the CIA tried to assassinate any other leaders?** John McCone, who headed the CIA during the six attempts to knock off Castro, denied emphatically that the CIA has tried to kill anyone. But ex-Senator George Smathers, one of John F. Kennedy's closest friends, told us the late President suspected that the CIA had arranged the shootings of the Dominican Republic's Rafael Trujillo in 1961 and South Vietnam's Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963.

• **Did President Kennedy personally sanction the plot against Castro?** The preparations to assassinate the Cuban dictator began during the last months of the Eisenhower administration as part of the Bay of Pigs scheme. All six attempts, however, were made during 1961-63 when Kennedy occupied the White House. Smathers told us he once spoke to the late President about assassinating Castro. Mr. Kennedy merely rolled back his eyes, recalled Smathers, as if to indicate the idea was too wild to discuss. Subsequently, Mr. Kennedy told Smathers of his suspicion that the CIA may have been behind the Trujillo and Diem assassinations.

• **Did the late Robert Kennedy know about the assassination attempts?** After

the Bay of Pigs fiasco, President Kennedy swore to friends he would like "to splinter the CIA in a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds." He put his brother, Robert, in charge of the CIA with instructions to shake it up. The CIA made five attempts on Castro's life after the Bay of Pigs while Robert Kennedy was riding herd on the agency.

• **Could the plot against Castro have backfired against President Kennedy?** The late President was murdered nine months after the last assassination team was caught on a Havana rooftop with high-powered rifles.

Former associates recall that Robert Kennedy, deeply despondent, went into semi-seclusion after his brother's assassination. Could he have been tormented by more than natural grief? He certainly learned that the assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, had been active in the pro-Castro movement and had traveled to Mexico to visit the Cuban Embassy a few weeks before the dreadful day in Dallas. Could Bob Kennedy have been plagued by the terrible thought that the CIA plot, which he must at least have condoned, put into motion forces that may have brought about his brother's martyrdom?

The last surviving brother, Senator Ted Kennedy (Dem.-Mass.), could give us no insight. His brothers had never spoken to him about any assassination attempts against Castro, he said.

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