

Opinion:



THE PLOT THICKENS

by William Turner

A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR in New Orleans, District Attorney Jim Garrison is an ominous threat to the Warren Report establishment, which includes about every distinguished ear-bender and bureaucrat from Washington to Dallas. Ramsey Clark, the new attorney general, said Garrison was just treading on ground the FBI had already investigated and discounted. Most Warren Commission members expressed cautious doubts that he had anything, and Congressman Gerald Ford, whose book *Portrait of the Assassin*, concludes unequivocally that Oswald did it alone, demanded that Garrison turn over to the FBI whatever he did have. "What?" boomed Garrison, "and wait another three years?"

Except for some discreet checks here and there, the FBI has not re-opened its investigation, but is waiting and hoping Garrison falls flat on his face. Should it get involved in further inquiry and again come up with nothing, it reasons, it would again leave itself open to white-wash charges. Even more discomfiting to the prestige-conscious bureau is the prospect that Garrison does have a case—which would make the G-men look like the rankest of amateurs. Garrison has complained that he has received absolutely no cooperation from the FBI; it refused, for example, to make available the results of its investigation of the enigmatic David Ferrie immediately following the assassination.

This solid wall of antipathy and, at times, hostility, could in the end block Garrison from getting at the whole truth even though his New Orleans theory is

soundly structured. "We have no authority outside of Orleans Parish," explained a Garrison investigator—"and not only the FBI but the Dallas police and district attorney have refused to cooperate with us." The possibility that agencies are not only snubbing Garrison, but trying to learn his moves in order to checkmate them has occurred to his investigators.

"There goes that FBI voice relay," remarked one, picking up the phone and referring to the automatic devices to start tape recorders. "We have to assume everything is monitored."

That Garrison should buck a formidable segment of the establishment seems singularly inappropriate for a politician with further political aspirations. Skeptics say he is trying to make political hay out of his investigation, and is aiming beyond it at the governorship of Louisiana. But by the same token, if his case should fall flat, he would plunge into political oblivion. In truth, Garrison seems to possess rare courage: he has successfully bucked the powers-that-be before, and is supremely confident that he can do it again. The six and a half foot giant from Dennison, Iowa (his father stood close to seven feet) has exhibited an independent streak ever since graduating from Tulane Law School. He ran as an underdog independent for district attorney, blasting the corruptness of the incumbent administration. He reformed a parole system in which paroles could be bought, has collected more bail bond forfeitures from bondsmen than all of his predecessors, and has never lost a murder case. Once known as a Bourbon Street swinger, he aroused the ire of French Quarter inhabitants when he became D.A. by padlocking a number of girlie joints. Garrison's most celebrated bout was with the city's judges, whom he accused of taking overly extensive vacations and running too short sessions. The judges sued for defamation, but Garrison won out in the Supreme Court.

Garrison is obviously a tough, competent investigator, and it was the series of implausibilities in the Warren Report, such as the close spacing of the shots and the theory that one bullet penetrated both Kennedy and Connally, that first aroused his curiosity. Once into the 26 volumes, he discovered the incredible number of loose ends to the investigation. "Garrison doesn't believe there was an express conspiracy in government to

suppress the truth," says Louis Gurvich who, with his brother William, operates the largest detective agency in the South, "but he does believe there was a tacit understanding that to delve too deep might not be in the 'national interest.'" This was implicit, Gurvich points out, in the premature conclusion of J. Edgar Hoover, barely three weeks after the assassination, that Oswald and Ruby both acted independently.

The Gurvichs, quiet-spoken men in their mid-forties like Garrison, have been key confidants to Garrison and prime movers of his investigative task force. Louis, who once aspired to become a history professor, sees an analogy to the Dreyfus case in the government's initially superficial inquiry and its refusal to re-open the case.

Gurvich scoffs at Attorney General Clark's statement that David Ferrie and Clay Shaw, whom Garrison claims figured in the assassination scheme, were investigated and cleared by the FBI in 1963. "What do they mean by investigated?" he asks. "Shaw was a big man in this town—head of the International Trade Mart—and they may have asked him some questions in a deferential manner. But I doubt that they really interrogated him hard and kicked over every stone as they would have in the case of a less prestigious suspect." And both he and Garrison are convinced, says Gurvich, that the Commission's probe was fatally flawed by undue haste ("The FBI buzzed around here like every day was the last," he recalled) and the lack of someone with an overview to correlate the mass of reports and memoranda, most of them wholly irrelevant, that poured in from the FBI.

What is Garrison's theory? The D.A. and his men are wisely keeping their own counsel. When Ed Gutman, the former press secretary to Bobby Kennedy in the Department of Justice and now an editor of the Los Angeles Times, dropped into New Orleans on his way to New York, Garrison and Gurvich took him to lunch but didn't drop any facts. "He probably was sizing up our intelligence quotient for Bobby," said Gurvich. "Bobby's always been leery of the kooky critics." About all that is certain is that Garrison's suspects include Cubans as well as Americans.

When the Cuban angle first became evident, Garrison was besieged by right wingers and anti-Castroites who assumed

he had detected the hand of Castro in the affair. Now they have backed off, since it is palpable that he is on the spoor of anti-Castro fanatics. His sleuths have spent considerable time in Miami, another center of emigre activity. One theory attributed to Garrison is that Oswald was importuned by an anti-Castro faction to get a Cuban visa in Mexico City in order to assassinate Castro and, failing that, was turned on Kennedy, whose lack of overt action against Castro made him unpopular among the more volatile emigres. This theory necessarily renders Oswald a phony leftist, which is not a far-fetched idea.

The testimony of Mrs. Sylvia Odio that she was visited by two Latins and Oswald in Dallas in late September 1963, is apparently an integral part of Garrison's investigation. Mrs. Odio was a member of the Jure faction led by Manuel Ray; her parents have been imprisoned in Cuba since 1961, for contributing to Ray. The Odio family was aristocratic and wealthy, and Mrs. Odio suspects the purpose of the visit was to sound her out about funds. The next day, she said, one of the men, Leopoldo, telephoned her to mention that Oswald, an ex-Marine, had asserted that Kennedy should be killed for the way he had ignored the emigres. Mrs. Odio was unenthusiastic, and no further contact was made. The Warren Commission put little stock in her story, contending it was highly unlikely Oswald could have been in Dallas at the time. Yet she insisted that it was Oswald, and her sister, who was also present, concurred. Recently CBS Television interviewed her at San Juan, Puerto Rico, where she now lives. She still maintains the Warren Commission was wrong, and complains of being "harrassed and hounded" by the FBI.

Also, Garrison is said to have a photograph which shows several of the same Cubans with whom Oswald associated in New Orleans on the Kennedy motorcade route in Dallas. His investigators attempted to question a Cuban now living in Dallas, but the man refused without District Attorney Bill Alexander and Dallas police being present. And Garrison admittedly is strongly interested in Jack Ruby and his possible connection with Cuban gun-running. Nancy Perrin Rich told the Warren Commission that her late husband Jack Perrin had been offered \$10,000 by a group which included Ruby to run Enfield rifles into

Cuba for use by insurgents. Perrin died in New Orleans in 1962 of arsenic poisoning; the coroner decided the poison was voluntarily consumed. Ramparts has furnished Garrison information suggesting that a Ruby employee was in New Orleans recruiting people to come to Dallas prior to the assassination.

Garrison has not overlooked the possibility that Oswald was framed. "When he kept repeating, 'I'm just a patsy,'" says Louis Gurvich, "he may just have been right." The false Oswald theory has considerable substance. One angle Garrison is working on is that a look-alike for Oswald was seen with David Ferrie—at the time Oswald was in Minsk.

So Jim Garrison, who found the Warren Report an insult to his integrity, continues to play his lone hand. If he manages to rake in the chips, the Warren Report, intended as a national catharsis, will look more like the bordereau.

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My Father & Stokely Carmichael

MY FATHER, at whose house I had spent the night after arriving in Chicago, accompanied me to the SNCC office. “Jesus,” he said, “this is really rock bottom. This is the poorest section of the Negro part of town. Why would anyone want to set up an office down here?” My father is not too hep to the action these days. He’s like many old Negroes: they woke up on the white man late in their lives and are very bitter to learn that they have been tricked.

The building was an old wooden apartment house about five stories high with a faded brownstone exterior. You had second thoughts about opening the door to go in. SNCC was on the third floor. We made our way up the dark stairs and knocked on the door.

“Who is it?” A girl’s voice filtered through the door. It must have been only a ritual you go through before opening your door to anyone, because when I answered “Eldridge” the door was opened. She’d never seen me, but she stepped back to let us come in. Inside, a record player was booming out John Coltrane. A chubby little baby was romping about on the floor, and an intense young black man was hunched over a typewriter painfully pecking at the keys. I explained who I was, and said I had arranged to meet Stokely Carmichael.

The girl regarded me narrowly for a moment, her intelligent brown eyes emitting a very soft twinkle. Softness was her central quality. She looked soft and warm, soft and brown, and her hair was worn in the natural style of blacks who are no longer ashamed of the hair with which their race is endowed. We took off our coats and the girl got on the phone and started calling people to find out where Stokely was. “I know he’s supposed to be here at twelve thirty,” she said.

The youth at the typewriter turned out to be the son of Sarah Wright, the noted black poet. He was busy working on an essay attacking American imperialism both abroad and in the black ghettos. He kept picking up books from his desk and asking me if I had read them: *Das Kapital*, Nkrumah’s *Neo-Colonialism*, *The Wretched of the Earth*.

“I want to go to Africa to study,” he kept saying. “I got to get ready. I got to get my stuff together.”

by Eldridge Cleaver

