

Exploiting Profits From a Tragedy

By Marquis Childs

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ON HIS recent trip to four South American countries—Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia—Chief Justice Earl Warren was startled to find that at the press conferences he held in each country only one subject was raised—the Warren Commission Report on President Kennedy's assassination.

Had the Commission really considered all the evidence? Shouldn't the inquiry be reopened in view of charges of a conspiracy involving persons other than Lee Harvey Oswald? The questions came hot and heavy at each stop.

At one of his most-crowded conferences, with some 50 reporters bearing down on the assassination theme, the Chief Justice got in a question of his own. How many of those present, he asked, had read the Warren Report? Two hands were raised.

"How many of you have examined the 25 volumes of evidence on which the report was based?" No hand was raised.

"I know these volumes are available to you," the Chief Justice said, "because I saw to it myself that the full set was sent to the principal library in every capital of the world."

This is a sad commentary, not so much on world opinions as on those in this country who have exploited the Kennedy tragedy for profit. The exploiters have fed the conspiracy theory which opinion abroad has been only too eager to seize on. Particularly in the Communist countries it has been a rich propaganda mine—unstable, lawless America with right-wing conspirators powerful enough to plot against the life of a president. Throw in a dash of the CIA and you have a mixture brewed here at home that could hardly be more self-destructive.

THE LATEST manifestation comes in the antics of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison. He has been making the headlines with weird tales of plot and counterplot and constant promises of new sensations that are like lurid rockets against a night sky. And they endure for just about as long.

Opinion in this country can discount the Garrison sensations. After all, district attorneys, who are fairly far down in the law-enforcement hierarchy, have political ambitions. But for opinion overseas Garrison gives a gloss of officialdom to the belief that conspirators must have plotted the crime long in advance.

It may be that all this was inevitable. After Lincoln's assassination tales of plotters in high places persisted for many years. But no evidence was un-

earthed to incriminate anyone other than the half-dereanged haters around the assassin, John Wilkes Booth. This was our own personal and family preoccupation as were the trials and tribulations of that other Johnson, Andrew, who inherited the Presidency upon Lincoln's death in 1865.

The United States was still regarded as a new, fledgling Nation that had managed to survive a terrible Civil War. Today the United States is a world power with every move, every whisper, communicated to the ends of the earth. That is why the attack on the credibility of the Warren Report has such consequences and why it must seem at times a willful essay in self-destruction.

To believe that there were plotters in a conspiracy to murder the President and to believe further than another assassin or assassins fired shots is to believe that the principal law-enforcement agencies in this country—the FBI, the Secret Service—are, to say the least, incompetent. Or, for those who prefer the dark conspiratorial side, any evidence casting doubt on the Warren Commission findings was suppressed.

WHEN PRESIDENT Johnson first sent an emissary to the Chief Justice shortly after the Kennedy assassination to ask him to head a Commission of Inquiry, the answer was a firm no. Warren felt strongly that the Court should not be involved in controversies outside the jurisdiction of the high tribunal. He cited chapter and verse on the harm such involvement had caused in the past. Later that same day Johnson asked Warren to come to the White House. He solemnly invoked the patriotism of the Chief Justice who, as the President noted, had worn the uniform of his country in World War II. With this appeal Warren agreed to be chairman of the Commission of Inquiry.

The Warren Report can be faulted. The Commission might have taken longer. The Commission members, all of them busy at other jobs, should perhaps have devoted more time to the hearings. There are suppositions—holes in the testimony—frankly acknowledged in view of the fact that Oswald was dead. But, until solid evidence contradicting the Warren findings comes to light, the exploiters who would discredit the report serve a dubious cause.

- Tolson
- DeLoach
- Mohr
- Casper
- Callahan
- Conrad
- Felt
- Gale
- Rosen
- Sullivan
- Tavel
- Trotter
- Tele. Room
- Holmes
- Gandy

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Sanford [unclear]
Warren [unclear]

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- The Washington Post Times Herald A24
- The Washington Daily News
- The Evening Star (Washington)
- The Sunday Star (Washington)
- Daily News (New York)
- Sunday News (New York)
- New York Post
- The New York Times
- World Journal Tribune (New York)
- The Sun (Baltimore)
- The Worker
- The New Leader
- The Wall Street Journal
- The National Observer
- People's World

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Garrison allowed two assistants to question the first witnesses, three police officers who identified pictures of Oswald and Ferrie and Ferrie's home here. Then the 6-foot-6 DA took over.

Leaning back in his chair, puffing a pipe, he called Perry Russo as the fourth witness.

An Insurance Man

Russo, dark-haired, 5-foot-10, 170 pounds, with sharp fallow features, walked to the stand and identified himself as an insurance man from Baton Rouge, the capital. Until his appearance on the stand, he had been accommodated in the Orleans Parish (County) Prison, which is connected to the court house by an enclosed bridge known as the Bridge of Sighs.

In answer to Garrison's questions, Russo said he was born in New Orleans, finished high school and went on to Tulane University, majoring in political science. Then he transferred to Loyola University here.

Speaking in a Southern drawl, Russo said he met Ferrie in 1960 and continued to associate with him until 1964. Asked how he met Ferrie, he said: "I had a friend in the Civil Air Patrol and he had made mention—" At this point, the defense began a series of objections to hearsay evidence.

Russo said the friend introduced them and he attended a number of Civil Air Patrol meetings at Kenna, a suburb of New Orleans, La., where Russo described as a leader of the CAP, put on a couple of demonstrations "to impress me."

In one of these, Russo said, Ferrie put a man into a hypnotic trance and proved it by sticking a pin, then a draftsman's compass, into him. The subject had no recollection of any pain.

At this time, Ferrie was living in Kenna and Russo and he visited him there. Later, Ferrie moved into the city apartment where he was to die and Russo said he visited Ferrie there on a number of occasions in 1962 and 1963.

"We could visit each other whenever we wanted," Russo said. "He indicated to me he was obsessed with this President Kennedy thing. He had clippings and photographs of the President which Dave carried around with him."

Party Narrowed Down

Russo said that in the middle of September, 1963, he went to Ferrie's home and found a party in progress with about eight or 10 people present.

"People began to leave," he said, "and it narrowed down to three people besides myself. I remained because I had no ride."

Garrison asked him who were the other three. "Dave Ferrie, Leon Oswald and Clem Bertrand," Russo said. He explained that Leon Oswald turned out later to be Lee Harvey Oswald.

Then came the dramatic moment which sent a shock wave through the court room. Garrison asked Russo if Clem Bertrand was in the court room. The witness looked at the accused, Clay Shaw, said yes and then pointed at him. This appeared to be the vital link between Oswald and Shaw.

Court officials had to call for silence.

Continuing, Russo said Ferrie took the initiative in the conversation that followed, pacing back and forth, talking to both Bertrand and Oswald.

The three then talked about the getaway after the assassination, according to Russo, with Ferrie saying that the scapegoat would give the others in the plot just enough time to escape.

Ferrie said, Russo went on, that they would either fly to Mexico and refuel for the hop to Brazil or go directly to Cuba, but there were objections to the flight to Cuba because they might be shot down.



Clay Shaw puffs nervously on cigaret as he enters court.

(UPI Telefoto)

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Lee Harvey Oswald
arrested at the meeting



The late David S. Ferrel
Expert named at hearing



District Attorney Garrison
Brings forth his testimony