

NEW ORLEANS SETTING

Aura of Conspiracy Fits Garrison Probe

BY NICHOLAS C. CHRISS and JERRY COHEN

Times Staff Writers

NEW ORLEANS —

Hollywood's best cinematic minds couldn't have planned a more perfect backdrop than New Orleans for Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's provocative investigation into the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Three flags — Spanish, French and American — have flown over this sophisticated old port city, and each has shaped its personality — gay and abandoned, yet moody and conspiratorial.

It's a city which always has been characterized by sin, violence and mystery.

Probe Has All Three

The Garrison investigation literally crackles with these qualities.

The probe has centered, at least in part, on homosexual activity in the city, revolves around murder — the murder of a President — and is as baffling now as it was when it began.

Since the investigation was revealed a little more than two weeks ago, day-by-day developments have become more and more bizarre.

Perhaps the major thunderstroke was the arrest last week of one of New Orleans' leading citizens, Clay L. Shaw, and Garrison's accusation that he conspired with the sleaziest sort of characters to murder President Kennedy.

Possibility Stunning

If what Garrison alleges is true, and if developments continue as they have thus far, the potential climax is staggering.

Should the Garrison investigation prove there was a conspiracy to assassinate

Mr. Kennedy, it would strike at the heart of the Warren Commission report — which held that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone.

Such an eventuality also would reflect on the investigative prowess of the prestigious FBI, whose agents in the months after the assassination could find no evidence of a conspiracy.

And it also might shake the faith of many Americans in the integrity of their government, since the government sponsored the Warren investigation.

Informer's Data

Apparently Garrison's case, at this point, is based on information supplied him by a confidential informer, a man who may have been among the alleged plotters.

Speculation about his identity has ranged from a man Garrison may have spirited out of the state to a convict immediately available to him, steps from Garrison's office.

The latter is Miguel Torres, now in custody in the Orleans Parish (county) prison hospital.

Torres was brought to New Orleans in late January from Angola, the state prison farm, by

Garrison's investigators, who questioned him at length in the parish prison. However, not long after Torres' arrival here, the investigators appeared to lose interest in him. Garrison has described Torres as "an unworthy witness."

Never Sent Back

The fact remains, however, that Torres

never has been returned to Angola.

Even public officials, highly skeptical at first of Garrison's motives, admit now that they no longer casually dismiss the flamboyant district attorney's claims.

Everybody in town has a theory — and that includes other top law-enforcement officials who insist they know no more than private citizens about what Garrison is doing.

One of the most intriguing of these theories, far-fetched as it sounds, is that the assassination of the President was carried out by emissaries of Fidel Castro. Playing the role of disgruntled exiles, these men are supposed to have used Oswald as a dupe. As the story goes, Castro sent his assassins to this country in retaliation against a plot by the Central Intelligence Agency to assassinate him.

Homosexuals and Cuban

exiles, thus far, have played the biggest roles in the investigation. There even is talk that the mysterious disappearance from Cuba of Ernesto (Che) Guevara, about a year ago, may be linked to it in some way.

If one is to follow this tortuous theory, Clay Shaw figures in the plot because of his many contacts in Latin America during his 18 years as managing director of the International Trade Mart here.

The possibility — and it still seems remote — that Garrison has developed evidence that eluded both the FBI and the Warren Commission has made officials super-cautious about downgrading the Garrison investigation, except behind closed doors.

Changing Theories

"Every night now I go home and play detective," said one high-placed law enforcement officer. "Every night I get a new theory. But every morning

something happens to change that theory."

Said another, who actually was present at the questioning under sodium pentathol of the informer upon whom Garrison is basing his case:

"At first, I too thought Jim was grabbing for headlines, but now . . ." he said, in dead seriousness, "don't forget what Jim has said about not betting money against him because you'll lose if you do."

For some unexplained reason, Garrison dropped from the public eye toward the middle of last week but the investigation coursed along on its own momentum — witnesses continued to be subpoenaed, new rumors surfaced and Garrison remained oddly silent.

Probe Under Cover

To the already devious nature of the investigation, Garrison's absence from his office added a new dimension. What looked like a normal police investigation a week ago suddenly was transformed into a cloak-and-dagger caper.

There was vast speculation over the weekend about how Garrison might personally profit.

Many close to him insist he is simply a dedicated public servant. Others contend his motivations are purely political.

One man who has been close to him said, where once he confined his ambi-

tions to a state level, Garrison now is convinced the investigation will project him into national politics.

"He sees himself as another Tom Dewey, maybe not a Presidential contender but at least as a Vice Presidential possibility on a ticket with Bobby Kennedy," the man said.

The governor of the state, John McKeithen, a close friend of Garrison, explained why he has chosen to remain silent:

"I have learned that

most of Jim Garrison's enemies — politically speaking — are buried, and I don't propose to join the list of the deceased."

Focus of Garrison's in-

vestigation is his office in the grimy old Criminal Courts Building.

Its cavernous corridors have been awash daily with swarms of reporters from all over the world — Norway, Great Britain, Japan, even Hungary, Poland and Yugoslavia.

Many old courthouse hands frown on Garrison's

conduct, calling him a "big counterfeit."

They tittered when a shiny new sign with tall, glittering letters appeared above the otherwise austere attorney's office door. The bold sign read simply: Jim Garrison.

Particularly in the gloomy Criminal Courts Building, theories and ru-

mors revolving around the probe and the assassination are argued, discarded or simply left hanging in air.

For a multitude of reasons, most people here are cautious about criticizing Garrison because of a wide belief that somehow, in some way, the Warren Commission and the FBI may have mishandled their investigation into the President's death.

But Chief Justice Earl Warren said only last week nothing that has happened in New Orleans has changed his mind one iota:

"I have not heard anything which would change the report in any way, shape or form." *EMD*

Witnesses in Kennedy Probe Disappear, Garrison Aide Says

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NEW ORLEANS — Prospective witnesses in Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's investigation into President John F. Kennedy's assassination have disappeared from New Orleans, Garrison's chief aide said Monday.

The disappearances have occurred since the arrest Wednesday of civic leader Clay L. Shaw, who is accused with Lee Harvey Oswald and others, of plotting the assassination, William Gurvich said.

The fifth person subpoenaed in Garrison's investigation was questioned for more than an hour Monday. He is J. B. Dauenhauer, like Shaw a prominent figure in international trade circles here. Upon his release by district attorney's investigators, Dauenhauer refused comment.

But his attorney said, "Mr.

Dauenhauer has cooperated with the district attorney's staff to the utmost. But unfortunately he was not able to shed much light. It is my opinion that he had nothing to do with any conspiracy—if one existed."

Gurvich said Dauenhauer was called primarily because of close past associations with Clay, who retired 18 months ago as director of New Orleans' prestigious International Trade Mart.

Dauenhauer, a distinguished-looking man in his 50s, was Shaw's top assistant at the trade mart before Shaw retired. He has remained as a leading official with the mart.

Shaw is scheduled to appear at a preliminary hearing a week from today at which, Gurvich said, possibly as many as three confidential

informants will testify against him.

This marked the first time the district attorney's office had disclosed that it had more than one confidential informant able to testify he knew of a plot to assassinate the President.

At least one of these informants has sworn that he was present at meet-

ings attended by Shaw, Oswald, David William Ferrie, a homosexual who died here Feb. 22, and "others." Garrison has alleged the murder of the President was plotted at these meetings in Ferrie's apartment in September, 1963.

Other Witnesses

Gurvich said the district attorney can produce witnesses other than confidential informers, but declined to specify the number.

"Some of the witnesses are receiving police protection — and some are not," he said.

Gurvich's statements

Monday constituted the first time in more than a week that a member of the district attorney's office has divulged information about the cloak-and-dagger investigation. The district attorney dropped out of sight last week and has not been seen since.

The investigation has aroused worldwide interest, has been greeted with skepticism in Washington, and has added to the swelling controversy over the Warren Commission Report, which said Oswald acted alone in the assassination.

'Roman Circus'

The American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana Monday called the investigation a "Roman circus" and said Garrison had committed "serious breaches of professional ethics" that could jeopardize any convictions that may result from his probe.

The ACLU, in a statement, said it had criticized Garrison last August for attempting to retry two men "in the press rather than in the courtroom."

Gurvich's disclosure



AFTER QUESTIONING—J. B. Dauenhauer, left, a onetime assistant to Clay L. Shaw in New Orleans, squeezes past Andrew Sciombra, center, and James L. Alcock of the New Orleans district attorney's office. Dauenhauer was questioned for more than an hour in connection with the Kennedy death probe.

(AP Wirephoto)

about disappearing witnesses came during an impromptu question-and-answer session that began when he was asked if anyone whom Garrison had hoped to question had left New Orleans recently.

"Yes," he replied during the brief session in the Criminal Courts Building, where Garrison's office is situated.

"Since the arrest of Clay Shaw?" he was asked.

"Yes."

Asked about the identity of the disappearing witnesses, he replied: "I can't tell you that."

Gurvich also was asked why Garrison's office had sought a preliminary hearing, at which it must present some of its con-

fidential evidence against Shaw.

"We want to show the world we've got something," Gurvich said.

Three Judges Wanted

Partially for this same reason he disclosed that Garrison's office has asked that three judges preside at the hearing, rather than one. The judges would determine if there is probable cause to try Shaw for "participating in a conspiracy to murder John F. Kennedy." Shaw is free on \$10,000 bond.

"There is a distinct possibility other arrests will be made this week," Gurvich said. "We anticipate charging other people with conspiracy, but do not necessarily anticipate trying

them together."

Another "two or three persons," he declared, will be charged with being "accessories after the fact."

Gurvich said that, while Shaw is the most prominent person, in social and civic circles, involved in the investigation, he is not the "heavy" in the alleged plot.

Gurvich also disclosed for the first time Monday that Garrison knows the exact dates and times of the alleged plotters' meetings. "Everybody was a planner, a conspirator who sat in on the meetings," he said. *END*