

Garrison and the JFK Plot

Why CIA Became Target in 'JFK Plot'

For more than a year, Jim Garrison, the flamboyant New Orleans district attorney, has befuddled the American public by firing off one sensation after another in his effort to prove that a widespread conspiracy was behind the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. To separate fact from sensation, a top-ranking journalist, Richard N. Billings, was assigned to do an in-depth report on "Garrison and the JFK Plot." This is the third article in his exciting and illuminating series.

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By RICHARD N. BILLINGS
Special to The Press

Jim Garrison, an experienced expert at vilification warfare, has opened an offensive on the government of



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sworn in by his father, Supreme Court...
throughout the...

the United States
Who else has charged that the Central Intelligence Agency was deeply involved in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy?

Who has alleged the Warren Commission was packed with CIA-oriented men whose function it was to "conceal the assassination of the President by an ambush of CIA employees?"

Who has insisted the FBI had advance notice of the assassination and did nothing to stop it?

Who has accused the attorney general of hiding his best to torpedo the case of the State of Louisiana?

Who has implied that Lyndon Johnson's "promotion to the presidency will appear more legitimate?"

Who else but the district attorney from New Orleans?

To understand why Garrison has carried his attack to the seat of the federal government, it is necessary to examine three alternatives:

● It is an example of his sledgeman method.

● He honestly believes in a national conspiracy.

● The U.S. government actually has something to hide.

THERE IS probably an element of truth in each of the answers. The first two are partly explained by an examination of Garrison.

Lack of restraint, tendency to bluster out of control when angered, a penchant for block-buster phraseology and vindictive vituperation are essential qualities of the man.

In Louisiana a list of Garrison's verbal assault victims reads like a directory of officialdom. He has leveled blasts indiscriminately at governors, mayors and judges and he is especially fond of attacking what he considers to be the New Orleans establishment.

Outrageous as it may seem, therefore, it is not surprising that the Washington establishment would get the same treatment. It is entirely in character for Garrison to call Ramsey Clark, the attorney general of the United

States, "a political appointee who, if his father Tom Clark had not been on the Supreme Court, would probably be cleaning the streets with a broom."

THE JUSTIFICATION for this can't be shared by many thinking people, although Garrison's following around the country is surprisingly large. But it must be said that Garrison sincerely believes a good deal of the indictment. He is obsessed with the idea that high officials in Washington are covering up important facts about the assassination, and he is convinced that federal agencies, the CIA and FBI in particular are working actively to frustrate his case.

The latter point, Washington's counterattack, will be the subject of a later article. For the moment, careful scrutiny must be applied to a crucial question: Is there any substance to Garrison's charge of Washington subterfuge?

Actual participation by high officials is dangerous escalation of an old suspicion among assassination buffs who would contend there was low level government involvement in the plot. The national leadership—perhaps even the President—knew this so, the story goes, and it became engaged in an enormous cover-up.

This in itself is an ominous suggestion, in that it isn't sufficiently explained away by characterizing its exponents as demonologists and kooks.

IN THE VERY early days of his investigation when he was acting quite rationally, Garrison was persuaded that Lee Harvey Oswald had been a government agent. He concluded that Oswald was taught Russian while in the Marine Corps and was sent to the Soviet Union on an intelligence mission. Oswald, Garrison argued, had detected with

secret information about the radio systems yet when he supposedly died of life under Communism, he was allowed to return with his Russian wife. The State Department, even paid his way home.

The \$435.71 loan Oswald got from the State Department intrigued Garrison for another reason. The manner of repayment Oswald started paying it off in August 1962 in monthly installments of \$10, and amount that seems quite in line with his \$60 a week salary. Then in December he mailed out two money orders totaling \$190. Then in early January 1963, he paid \$100, and later that month he erased the debt with a \$100 payment of \$106.

Even Garrison would admit nothing conclusive can be drawn from Oswald's sudden impulse to square a debt, but it perhaps suggests an unknown benefactor wanted Oswald to be financially independent of the U.S. government before moving to New Orleans in April.

WELL BEFORE Garrison had seen read the Warren Report, there was speculation that Oswald had worked for the government. "Oswald Rumored as Informant for the U.S.," headlined the Houston Post on Jan. 1, 1964, over a story by Lonnie Hudkins.

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover told the Warren Commission on May 14 his agents had questioned Hudkins. "I was trying to nail down where this [he started] Hoover testified Hoover must have known very well the 'He' originated in the Dallas prosecutor's office. A Jan. 3 Secret Service report detailed it for him.

It stated that on Dec. 17, Hudkins advised he had heard from the chief of the criminal division in the Dallas sheriff's office that Oswald "was being paid \$200 a month by the FBI as an informant in connection with various investigations."

On Jan. 28 Dallas Dist. Atty. Henry Wade disclosed to the commission that he too had heard the rumor and that Oswald had been assigned symbol Number 178. Hoover denied

