

*Anonymous editorial in
The Minority of One*

Garrison and Warren:

Anything in Common?

When, in February of this year, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison assured the public that he had "solved" the enigma of the Kennedy assassination and gave us his word of honor that he would make arrests and obtain convictions, he certainly sounded like a sincere man who knew what he was talking about. Not only his personal style was reassuring but also his speaking, not as a private man or amateur researcher, but as a law officer. Here seemed to be a man who had no ideological incentive to reject the Warren Commission's findings and whose conclusions derived from no critical general view of the U.S. power structure; here was a cop who, having come across criminal evidence, was determined to proceed professionally. Mr. Garrison was no social philosopher, no social critic, and no political dissenter. He was a district attorney and acted as such. And as such, he seemed to be adding a new dimension to the dissent from the Warren findings: positive evidential material was soon to supercede negative analytical conjecture.

Promises on record, the district attorney made his first move by arresting Clay Shaw on a charge of conspiracy to assassinate the late President. In going about justifying this charge, Mr. Garrison appeared to be proceeding with all too understandable caution. Certainly, he would not let haste ruin his case. Certainly, he would not let premature legal steps offer an opportunity for the enemies of truth to block its exposure. These imputations appeared to justify a patiently tolerant attitude toward Mr. Garrison. When he produced witnesses of as questionable a character and caliber as Perry Russo and Vernon Bundy, one "knew" by instinct that surely this was not all the district attorney had up his sleeve and that he was merely exposing their non-essential, perhaps even expendable, part of his evidence. The real, overwhelming truth was yet to come: Garrison, while in court presenting the fringes, must be masterminding such an expose as would preclude failure by intrigue, suppression, or violence. The Big Case was in Garrison's hands and before long would be fully known.

Then factors began to emerge that did not quite square with this view of the Garrison investigation and the presumptions that formed a part of it. Days of waiting for the Big Disclosure grew into weeks and then months. The convergence of disquieting symptoms sharpened an observer's critical faculty in reviewing

Garrison's performance and in registering ~~new~~ its new phases. The reliability of new witnesses was by no means better than that of the first ones; characters were paraded each of whom was in one way or another vulnerable to manipulation or blackmail. The thin web first assumed to be the mere fringes of the body of Garrison's evidence was now emerging as its heart. There were signs of growing desperation on his part, such as distressingly frequent accusations of attempts to influence or outright coerce witnesses. The district attorney's "scientific" methods, such as administration of sodium pentothal, use of hypnosis, and lie detectors, on witnesses, hardly bespoke a man aware of the differences between scientifically determined evidence and black magic.

Cop or Researcher?

At the same time, Mr. Garrison was ever more heavily relying on independent, private researchers of the published evidence. These people fall basically into two categories: students of the released Hearings and Exhibits of the Warren Commission and other related evidence, and political hypothesizers. Garrison wanted them all in his corner and carefully cultivated their friendship and support. He has been doing this with such determined solicitude as to suggest dependence on their work. Indeed, he seems to have become one of them.

Evidential analysis and informed speculation are, of course, perfectly legitimate, nay, indispensable, preoccupations in criminal cases, especially when involving the most powerful country's most powerful man. Those who have undertaken these ostracism-inviting tasks will eventually be thanked by historians. But Mr. Garrison's own emergency in this capacity is disillusioning. For he was not to be a social critic, nor even an analyst of the 26 Warren Commission volumes; he had promised us not speculation, however intelligent and plausible, but an official investigator's solution of a mystery, prosecution of the guilty, and vindication of evidence in due process of law.

The more Garrison was quoting the independent researchers, displaying equal attention for serious and frivolous people, the more did they reciprocate. Often mocked and ostracized, many of these individuals derived desperately needed reassurance from personal closeness to a man in office and power. Flattered, some did not remember to demand from Garrison and his evidence such rigorous standards of objectivity as they criticized the Warren Commission for not having. They were basking in the power attractions of the ~~the~~ only law enforcement officer in the country who would show them respect, and that was enough for some, at least, to be less procedurally meticulous and ethically demanding than they had been when facing adversaries.

in some instances by people with considerable mastery of impersonation and impressive acquaintance with the voluminous assassination evidence.

Their eagerness to be "used," in dramatic press conferences, for instance, was only thinly veiled in a pretense of being in personal danger.

This publication, as others that have been exposed to these phony characters, concluded that they had been trained and delegated by some authority to trick the critics of the Warren Report into compromising themselves and their criticism.

It is conceivable that Jim Garrison did fall into the trap which other people were smart enough to avoid. It is equally conceivable that once publicly committed, he kept sinking into the trap ever deeper, becoming a case rather than solving one. But whether or not ~~sm~~ such is in fact the genesis of the Garrison investigation, more than Mr. Garrison's personal future depends on its outcome. Having received more public notice than any other non-believer in Warren, Mr. Garrison, if finally compromised, may well take with him a great deal of the popular distrust of the solitary assassin theory. However unfounded such a reaction, it is nonetheless likely. Indeed, such precisely may have been the intent of whomever got Garrison into these deep waters in the first place.

But no single individual should be allowed to serve as a foolproof lightning rod for the Warren story tellers. However counter-productive his involvement in the case, this does not add even one iota of evidence in favor of the Warren Report. That tale is discredited irrelevant of whether or not the Warren critics will ever produce positive evidence as to what really happened in Dallas on November 22, 1963. Whether positive evidence will be produced does not merely depend on the astuteness or correctness of the Warren critics. Nor does it depend exclusively on its potential availability. It also depends on the effectiveness of the conspiracy to preclude disclosure. Other historic conspiracies are known to have remained effective for a period of four, fourteen, or forty years. Some probably remained effective forever, for who could allege that every last political assassination in history has in the end been resolved? The fact that Jim Garrison may not have resolved this particular one, least of all suggests that Earl Warren has. The Warren theory is ~~na~~ discredited by virtue of its own presumptions, inconsistencies, and fallacies. Even at worst, Garrison's investigation may merely turn out to be as compromised as Warren's investigation has been.