

Commonweal

THE CHURCH IN CUBA
ANNE POWER

Meagher p. 712

BACKGROUND ON BERLIN
CZARINA WILPERT

ACCORDING TO PASOLINI
LEONARD J. BERRY

'TRAGEDY AND PHILOSOPHY'
KENNETH REXROTH

GARRISON, WEAPONS & BALTHAZAR B
SYLVIA MEAGHER JEREMY J. STONE JOHN DEEDY

**GUARANTEED
WAGES**

**A
MODEST
PROPOSAL**

JONATHAN KESSELMAN



the later time when Donleavy is busy with the romance of Balthazar and classmate Elizabeth Fitzdare. Again Donleavy puts aside highjinks and settles down to some sober story-telling. But soon he is bored and impatient, so Fitzdare is thrown from a horse, dies and is buried. Balthazar and the reader are back in the hands of the impulsive stunt man.

Trinity by this time has had its fill of Balthazar and Beefy, and vice versa, so Donleavy marries them off—Beefy to a “rich” girl who turns out, of course, to have not a sausage to her name; Balthazar to a promising but disappointing miss with four Christian names, a double-barreled last name, and a frigidity which cracks in a chapter that reads like a script for the Three Stooges. The consummation scene shatters the tale completely—and irreparably. The reader is left holding a book that is neither good farce nor good fiction, but the burlesque of an extraordinarily clever writer. And that is sadder than the sad lot of Balthazar B.

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The Kennedy Conspiracy

PARIS FLAMMONDE

Meredith Press, \$6.95

SYLVIA MEAGHER

Paris Flammonde subtitles his book “an uncommissioned report on the Jim Garrison investigation.” Uncommissioned it may be; unfavorable, it is not. If Garrison had commissioned a report on his “investigation,” it might have turned out a pinch more rhapsodic than *The Kennedy Conspiracy*; but the only essential difference would probably be found in the motivation of the writer. The uncommissioned book glows with Flammonde's sincere enthusiasm and faith in Garrison and his “case.” Undoubtedly his intention was to produce an unweighted presentation; but he failed, and produced one that is totally uncritical. By accepting “facts” that are not facts at all, by equating unsupported or insupportable allegations with demonstrable truth, and by overlooking at times parts of the record which are destructive to his theses, Flammonde has built a structure that leans so precariously toward Garrison and rests on so insubstantial a foundation as to doom it to collapse.

Take, for example, Garrison's absurd remark in his *Playboy* interview of October 1967 that deLesseps Morrison, then mayor of New Orleans, had introduced Clay Shaw to President Kennedy on an airplane flight in 1963. Obviously President Kennedy was not to be encountered on commercial aircraft during his presidency; nor would a New Orleans businessman, unacquainted with the President, have been a passenger on Air Force One. As Edward Jay Epstein said in his article on Garrison in *The New Yorker* (July 13, 1968), the statement is a demonstrable falsehood. Flammonde takes issue with Epstein's critique of Garrison, presumably having read it; but his predisposition toward Garrison is such that he faithfully repeats in his book that “Morrison had previously introduced Clay Shaw to President Kennedy on an airplane flight in 1963,” seemingly unaware that it is a demonstrable falsehood and that, as I

have been told, Garrison has disclaimed it entirely, although the transcript of his interview in *Playboy* is verbatim.

More serious is the attempt made in this uncommissioned report to inculcate the late David Ferrie in the assassination of President Kennedy and to demonstrate that the Secret Service (and therefore the federal government) had prior knowledge of Ferrie's involvement. Basing himself on Harold Weisberg's published works, Flammonde points out that the Secret Service asked Marina Oswald on November 24, 1963, if she knew “a Mr. David Farry.” (Here he is not faithful to his acknowledged source, which states correctly that the question referred to “a Mr. Farry.”) Flammonde argues that the Secret Service question in fact concerned Captain David Ferrie, and that the question was put one day before Ferrie first came to the attention of the Secret Service by reason of his arrest in New Orleans.

The anachronism would be curious, were it real. Flammonde has overlooked one simple fact that removes the incident from the realm of the unexplained and ominous: that a Secret Service report of December 13, 1963 on file in the National Archives states that the Secret Service received a call on November 24, 1963 from an informant who alleged that Ferrie was connected with Oswald and was implicated in the assassination (Richard Popkin, *New York Review of Books*, September 14, 1967).

The Kennedy Conspiracy unhappily abounds in such examples of incomplete scholarship, as it also seeks to elevate and dignify mere speculation (“it was rumored that he had piloted Oswald . . . the district attorney's office is supposed to have autopsy photographs . . . the assertion has been made . . . it is more than likely that Ferrie could have . . .” etc.) into an inexorable series of proofs incriminating this or that so-called conspirator accused by Garrison in progressive extravagance (which led a cynical observer to chant, Hey, Hey, Jolly D.A.; how many assassins did you catch today?). All too often, Flammonde tells us that “Garrison has evidence”—evidence which he does not specify, sug-

gest or vouch for personally. But we have heard from the horse's mouth of that so-called evidence—we have even heard Garrison announce in February 1967 that he had "solved the case" of assassination—without assuming any obligation to take these boasts as proven. To do so would be the quintessence of folly, given the kind of "evidence" that Garrison has detailed on occasion. His claim that he had decoded a "cryptogram" of Ruby's unlisted phone number in the Oswald and the Clay Shaw address-books (as "PO 19106") disintegrated in the first impact of critical scrutiny and has been characterized, quite justly, as nothing but a variation on the old shell game.

Nevertheless, Mr. Flammonde has devoted four pages of his book to the episode of the so-called code, including a step-by-step guide to the conversion of "PO 19106" into "Wh 1-5601." Nowhere in those four pages is there a mention of the contention [by critics of the Warren Report who are also critics of Garrison] that the entry in Oswald's book was "DD 19106" (the Cyrillic "D"), and that the entry was made while Oswald was in the Soviet Union, years before he could have known Ruby and possibly before Ruby had the Wh 1-5601 phone number. Also omitted are the passages from Garrison's press release on the decoding of "PO 19106" in which he reiterates that the system was rigid and undeviating, although he subsequently used completely different and arbitrary systems to decode the next two alleged cryptograms in Oswald's notebook—the phone numbers of the FBI and the CIA offices in New Orleans. Nor is the fact mentioned that the latter two numbers are published in the

New Orleans directory in the first place. This is hardly the promised presentation of "all the criticism, positive and negative" nor is it "unweighted."

What is most lamentable about *The Kennedy Conspiracy*, part from its infatuation with the fatuous, is that like the Garrison divertissement itself it distracts attention from the genuine problem of what really happened in Dallas and rechannels energies that should properly be focused there into a dizzying maze of sordid irrelevancies.

The Warren Report was a cunning, sophisticated, ponderous vehicle for falsehood and fraud, whose pseudo-legal and pseudo-scientific retentions gained it a short-lived credibility. The Garrison "investigation" is a crude parody of the investigative and legal process—blatantly unprofessional, incoherent, blundering and blustering. An unmesmerized eye easily recognizes that it is an externalization of megalomania, demagoguery and frail attachment to reality. But the fact that the Garrison af-

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REVIEWERS

KENNETH REXROTH's most recent book is *An Autobiographical Novel* (Doubleday).

JOHN DEEDY is Managing Editor of *Commonweal*.

SYLVIA MEAGHER is the author of the *Subject Index to the Warren Report and the Hearings and Exhibits* (Scarecrow Press) and *Accessories After the Fact* (Bobbs-Merrill).

JEREMY J. STONE is the author of *Containing the Arms Race* (M.I.T. Press).

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fair is preposterous chicanery in no way invests the Warren Report with validity. Rather, the New Orleans "investigation," by its very absurd and cruel nature, only underlines the urgent need for a responsible, competent, and impartial new inquiry into the unsolved Dallas crimes of November 22-24, 1963.

Unless Peace Comes

EDIT. NIGEL CALDER

Viking, \$5.95; \$1.95 paper

JEREMY J. STONE

Unless Peace Comes is a readable collection of 15 short chapters on different aspects of the possible applications of science to warfare: computers,

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air warfare, nuclear explosives, chemical and biological warfare, robots, "geophysical" warfare, conventional warfare, guerrilla war, undersea warfare, etc.

Parts of it read like science fiction, as when Mr. Thring discusses "walking bombs" set in motion at one end of a continent marching inexorably across it to destroy the missile sites or cities of an opponent who had better cry uncle before they get there. Professor Gordon J. F. MacDonald discusses the wrecking of the environment: changing the climate, opening up holes in the ozone layer—above a society that would subsequently be fatally "sunburnt" by otherwise absorbed ultraviolet—melting the oceans, or starting earthquakes.

Other parts of it would have read like science fiction to most of us some years ago: the fears of LSD dropped in the reservoirs; the computers that seek to collate information on the location of virtually everyone and everything in a country like Vietnam.

And the rest of it would certainly have seemed science fiction to those watching the Cold War emerge. *Unless Peace Comes* calls to mind Vannevar Bush's 1949 classic extrapolation of the potential of science for warfare in *Modern Arms and Free Men*. Scientifically, and intellectually also, Bush's book was on a slightly higher plane. The greatest scientist-administrator of his day, Bush had enormous grasp not only of possibilities but of the trends and rates of change in the application of science to war. His work, the product of a single mind, was able to apply consistent standards to the prospects of innovation in quite different fields. And he was at pains as much to counterbalance exaggerated fears and expectations as he was to suggest novel possibilities.

But even his careful analysis that the intercontinental guided missile would not become a reality has been eroded by time: the accuracy of missiles now improved by a factor of more than two over his most optimistic calculations; the cost of atomic explosives perhaps smaller by a hundred; the feasibility of intercontinental missiles themselves now proven; and the political readiness to spend 10% of an even larger gross na-

tional product on peacetime defense established.

Undoubtedly, future warfare and future preparation for warfare will contain much that seems science fiction to us; equally clearly not all that is science fiction will happen. What one wants is some way of distinguishing—and this is very difficult indeed. As Bush noted, much depends on a competition between weapons; he thought bombers would be used to do most of what a missile could do. As the biological warfare people realize, much depends also upon emotional reactions to the kinds of damage weapons produce. As Admiral Rickover learned, in almost single-handedly pushing strategic warfare under the oceans, much depends upon the resistance of vested interests. And as we learned in watching Admiral Rickover, much depends upon the determined individual.

Much depends also upon the temperature of the Cold War. No serious consideration will be given to perturbing the ozone layer over the Russians of the sixties. But if we felt seriously menaced by totally malevolent and determined thugs, it might. And much depends upon fashions, accidents of cost-effectiveness, political leadership and interlocking personalities.

This is all to say that there is room for arms control; this is simply manipulation of these factors in the interests of a safer world. It is not true for example, as our author suggested, that "once the assumption that war is an affair for humans has been shaken, the military incentives to develop robot weapons will become irresistible." A very complicated and subtle understanding of many details—technical, economic, political and sociological—is necessary to reach such conclusions.

We need an unclassified book that takes over where *Unless Peace Comes* leaves off. It ought to examine the context in which the weapons might, or might not, emerge, applying to them all a common approach. Since today no one man can survey even the technical aspects of weaponry, much would be demanded of the editor. And still more of the contributors.