

MY PARANOIA AND ME

BY GAETON FONZI

THESE HAVE NOT BEEN the best of times for those of us who suffer a paranoia derived from an acceptance of the Kennedy Assassination Conspiracy Thesis. Recently, there have just been too many revelations which have done nothing to alleviate our condition. Alleviate? Hell, they have damn near *confirmed* every wild fear that fed it. And, to top it all off, I happened to run into Charlie Rogovin in Philadelphia the other day.

Charlie Rogovin used to be an assistant district attorney here, a top-flight lawyer who handled the grand jury investigation during the Market Street El scandal. He was eventually tapped by President Nixon to be the first boss of the Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Agency. I had heard that he had resigned not long ago to take on the prestigious assignment of getting the Police Foundation off the ground. The Police Foundation, Rogovin told me, was set up by the Ford Foundation as an independent funding agency which, hopefully, will one day play an important role in the quality of urban law enforcement. It was a feather in Charlie Rogovin's cap to be selected as the Police Foundation's first chief, a big job that normally keeps him busy in his Washington headquarters. It was just coincidental that family business brought him back to Philadelphia just when my paranoia was being aggravated by recent news events.

Like Jim Garrison being arrested in New Orleans, for example, charged with taking bribes from gamblers. I

couldn't help thinking that the move was mad credit him, coming as it did when the released Pentagon Papers was revealing that his content the direction of this country being in the hands of a military-intelligence combine wasn't as incredible as first was made to appear. The charges against Garrison were brought by the federal government and he immediately reminded me of a conversation I had had with Philadelphia lawyer Vince Salandria. Salandria first began his investigation into the Kennedy assassination. Contrary to the Warren Commission's conclusion, the evidence indicated that the President's murder was the work of a highly skilled team, an apparatus, organized by a cabal of key figures in the military and federal intelligence agencies. Garrison asked Salandria if he thought that might be the best way to handle the investigation. Salandria said he thought that it would learn less about the assassination from the way the evidence reacted to him and his investigation.

Salandria was right. Garrison at first was paid as a publicity-seeking opportunist. Then, when his investigation produced evidence that both Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby had been involved in Central Intelligence Agency operations,



GARRISON



FASSNACHT



OSWALD



BUNDY



ROGOVIN

son really began feeling the pressure. More than a year ago Salandria told me that Garrison himself felt that he would be eliminated. Last month, when he was arrested, Garrison was quoted as saying, "Sooner or later I had to be charged. I thought a few years ago they'd shoot me."

Is Jim Garrison paranoid also? That's pretty tough to accept considering what really is happening to the guy. Is the degradation of his reputation and his arrest by federal agents completely unrelated to his Kennedy assassination investigation? Of course, says the federal government. Would our own government lie to us?

Now how the hell can I comfort my paranoia when, even before Garrison's arrest, the Pentagon Papers revealed that our government *did* lie to us? And that, Jim Garrison said in *A Heritage of Stone* (see review, April), is what it has been doing all along.

In fact, reading the Pentagon Papers in the total perspective of the contentions Garrison sets forth in his book is an exercise in paranoia aggravation. Garrison views the assassination of John F. Kennedy as nothing less than a coup d'état, a concept Americans will accept as capable of happening anywhere but in their own country. The coup, says Garrison, brought to power a military-intelligence combine that secretly orchestrated the events which led to massive involvement in Vietnam.

And what do the Pentagon Papers reveal about what happened after Kennedy was assassinated in November of 1963? Among other things: That by February of 1964 "an elaborate program of covert military operations against the state of North Vietnam" had begun; that the new Administration began plans to wage an overt war in the spring of 1964, a full year before it publicly revealed the depth of its involvement; that the destroyer patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin were an "element in the covert military pressures against North Vietnam" and that the whole Tonkin incident might have been staged as a pretext to whip Congress into a crisis fever so that it would pass a resolution that the Pentagon had drawn up months before; that even before the Tonkin incident planes bearing Laotian Air Force markings but manned by pilots of Air America (a pseudo-private airline run by the CIA) bombed and strafed North Vietnamese villages; that Johnson's military and intelligence advisors were planning the very actions to expand the war that Johnson, in the election campaign, was condemning his opponent for even suggesting; and that, in general, there was so much secret intrigue and manipulation within the government that, at one point, Pentagon intelligence officials were tapping Defense Secretary McNamara's telephone.

This is what Garrison wrote *before* the revelations of the Pentagon Papers:

"The assassination resulted in insulating the people from making decisions over foreign policy and war. . . . Henceforth, the President would be a broker for the war machine. He would be an advocate and spokesman for the Pentagon. All Presidents who followed Kennedy would have to know their impotence, no matter what their public role. . . . Presidents will come and go but the warfare machine and its extensive intelligence tentacles, domestic as well as foreign, will remain in control. . . ."

Staid *New Yorker* magazine, a publication not particularly known for wild flights of editorial paranoia, noted after the revelations of the Pentagon Papers:

"But what is most shocking of all is the growing independence of a bureaucratic machine—its feeling free enough from constraint to make decisions like these. What had emerged at the highest levels of government was a conspiracy. The weaknesses of 'the conspiracy theory of history' have often been pointed out, but what other word than 'conspiracy' can you use when a small group of men

seize virtual control of the nation's foreign policy, and take the country into war by devising and executing elaborate plans that are carefully concealed from the public, the press, and the Congress?"

When I first read that, my paranoid eye lingered, of course, on the phrase "a small group of men." Garrison had contended that the conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy included elements from the Central Intelligence Agency. He maintained that Kennedy had become disillusioned with the agency and its growing monolithic power and he pointed out that the *New York Times* splintered the President as saying that he was going "to splinter the CIA into 1000 pieces and scatter it to the winds."

There is nothing in the Pentagon Papers so far released to support or refute Garrison's contention. As the newspapers daily revealed more and more of their content last month I looked very closely for it, and, for a while there, I thought my paranoia would die of starvation. Then, about a week after the last installment of the Pentagon Papers, the *Inquirer* carried a United Press International report from London which quoted a former Pentagon liaison officer as contending that Kennedy incurred the hatred of the CIA because of his attempts to harness its power after the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion. Kennedy, the official said, had issued two directives designed to limit the agency's power but both were ignored.

Thus my paranoia knew no rest. In fact, where the CIA was concerned, it got a jolt that struck even closer to home. For instance, here is one of the key points Garrison makes in *A Heritage of Stone*: "As our military adventures become more absurd in terms of cost and failure to achieve worthwhile results, it will be increasingly necessary for the CIA to engage in domestic activity in order to continue to provide reasons for the power elite to maintain its control.

"Just as the cold war provides reasons for the existence of autocratic power, so does chaos within the nation operate as a source of power. As chaos continues, the populace will tend to be less concerned about abridgement of individual rights and will more willingly grant to a strong centralized government such power it claims it needs. . . . The government's domestic intelligence can supply chaos in good measure by stirring the embers wherever there is social discontent, and in a society depleted by years of war there will be much of that."

Garrison reportedly believes that "stirring the embers" means that the CIA will go so far as infiltrating various extremist groups, supplying arms and ammunition to them, planting rumors and manipulating events that will result in violent clashes between different social, ethnic and racial classes.

That's going pretty far and you would think that you'd have to be exceptionally paranoid even to find anything that might be interpreted as relating to that wild contention. But, as I said, these have not been the best of times and it was difficult not to suffer a twinge of paranoia last month when Philadelphia police raided the Fox Chase home of one of its former ballistics experts and uncovered the largest cache of guns and munitions, including hand grenades and plastic explosives, in the city's history. It still is not known why George Fassnacht had such an arsenal in his home, but his wife reportedly claimed that after he left the police department he became something of a world traveler, hopping casually from Saigon to Singapore, working for the CIA. Fassnacht's attorney would neither confirm nor deny the CIA connection, said only that "national security" may be involved in the case.

Now what does all this have to do with running into Charlie Rogovin the other day? It just cont. on page 94

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goes to show how a completely unaware and innocent guy like Charlie can get caught up in the currents of my anxieties after a barrage of coincidental events has pushed my paranoia to the point where just the slightest additional suspicion can shove it—kerplunk!—over the edge.

That's what Charlie Rogovin did. He shoved it—kerplunk!—over the edge. And the poor guy didn't even realize it.

I mean, there we were just chatting amiably down on Spruce Street when I happened to ask Charlie what this new Police Foundation he headed was all about and how it came into being. He explained how it was set up to channel funds for innovative and research programs in law enforcement to worthy police departments across the nation, how it was established as a stepchild of the big daddy of fund grantors, the Ford Foundation, and how, yes, McGeorge Bundy, who is now head of the Ford Foundation, was instrumental in getting the Police Foundation off the ground.

McGeorge Bundy. Ahh, how those little cogs in the machinery of my now well-oiled paranoia began whirling! McGeorge Bundy, the cool, high-browed strategic intelligence expert, is one of the principal characters in the Pentagon Papers. As President Johnson's national-security advisor, his part in the escalation of American involvement in Vietnam is detailed in various memoranda. "Too much a proponent of the Defense and State Department plans that reached him," concluded *Time* magazine's analysis, "McGeorge Bundy failed to perform his role of giving the President a wide and honest range of choices."

The Pentagon Papers reveal that McGeorge Bundy was capable of highly calculating thinking. At the same time that the White House was publicly declaring that it sought "no wider war" in its reprisal air strikes against North Vietnam following the attacks on the U.S. base at Pleiku, McGeorge Bundy was scripting the scenario for future military actions. "We believe that the best available way of increasing our chance of success in Vietnam is the development and execution of a policy of sustained reprisal against North Vietnam," he wrote in a memorandum to Johnson early in 1965. "We may wish at the outset to relate our reprisals to those acts of relative high visibility such as the Pleiku incident. Later we might retaliate against the assassination of a province chief . . . we might

retaliate against a grenade thrown into a crowded cafe in Saigon. . . . Once a program of reprisals is clearly underway, it should not be necessary to connect each specific act against North Vietnam to a particular outrage in the South. . . ."

Those of us who have developed a paranoia from the Kennedy Assassination Conspiracy Thesis are especially intrigued by a slew of unanswered questions and mysterious events surrounding the assassination itself. One of the most fascinating incidents was revealed in Theodore H. White's book, *The Making of the President 1964*. White discovered that Johnson was first told that Lee Harvey Oswald killed Kennedy, that Oswald acted alone and that there was no conspiracy, while he was still aboard *Air Force One* on the way back to Washington from Dallas. Oswald had just been captured in a movie theater, he had consistently denied that he killed the President, he had not yet been charged with the murder (and wouldn't be until the next morning) and he had not yet been given a paraffin test to determine whether he had fired a gun that day. (The tests would later prove negative.) Yet *Air Force One* received word that Oswald was the lone assassin.

The word came by radio from the top-secret Situation Room in the White House. Where the Situation Room got the word has not yet been revealed. As Garrison says, "Since there was not yet evidence nor even rumor to support it, the transmitters of the message deserve credit for this foresight in knowing so soon what the conclusion of the federal investigation was going to be." The Situation Room at the White House was under the aegis of national-security advisor McGeorge Bundy.

Another area of intriguing questions surrounding the assassination involves the role of the Dallas police or, at least, certain key members of it. A description of Oswald, for instance, went out over the police radio within 15 minutes after Kennedy was killed. Captain W. P. Gannaway, in charge of the police's special service bureau, later explained that Oswald's description was broadcast because he was missing from a "roll call" of Book Depository employees. "He was the only one who didn't show up and couldn't be accounted for," Gannaway said.

The facts are that there was no "roll call," that 48 of the 75 employees were outside when the President

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was shot and many couldn't get back in after the assassination and, even among the employees known to have been on the sixth floor earlier that day, Oswald was not "the only one who didn't show up and couldn't be accounted for."

Dallas Police Chief Jesse Curry, on the other hand, claimed Oswald's description was broadcast after the police found what was believed to be the murder weapon. Yet the broadcast was made at 12:45 p.m. and the rifle was not discovered until 1:22 p.m.

Another mystery surrounds the discovery of the rifle itself. A news film cameraman photographed a Dallas policeman carrying the alleged murder weapon out of the Book Depository Building shortly after it was found. Unlike the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle later produced as Oswald's weapon, that one had no telescopic sight on it.

A sworn affidavit signed by Sheriff Deputy Seymour Weitzman the day after the assassination said that while searching the sixth floor of the Depository Building he found a hidden weapon which he described as a 7.65 Mauser. Weitzman was formerly in the sporting goods business and knew guns. The Mauser is a German rifle, as Weitzman well knew. The 6.5 Mannlicher-Carcano later produced as Oswald's had "Made in Italy" boldly stamped on the side. Somehow the weapon that was first described as a Mauser disappeared within the labyrinth of the Dallas police force bureaucracy.

Another interesting incident involving the Dallas police that day: Within minutes after the assassination, news photographs and witnesses reveal that police officers made several arrests of men running away in back of the grassy knoll, from where the overwhelming majority of spectators later would testify they heard gunfire emanate. Although police officials denied that anyone except Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested that day, records indicate that at least nine men were arrested in the vicinity after the assassination. All except one were quietly turned loose after Oswald's arrest, the other was kept in jail for days for further investigation of his involvement and then freed. Dallas police still refuse to reveal his name.

There were other incidents of unusual behavior on the part of the Dallas police following the assassination. On the night before Oswald was shot, Jack Ruby was permitted to be in the room where the suspect was brought for presentation to newsmen (an un-

usual procedure in itself), yet police officials later claim they couldn't explain how Ruby entered their guarded basement the next morning. They also said they have no record of the radio broadcasts transmitted on one of their two radio channels during the critical minutes before and after Kennedy was killed. They claim they kept no notes, no stenographic records or tape recordings during the 12 hours in which Oswald was questioned about the murder of the President. The Dallas police at first disclaimed knowledge of three bullets in their files which had been recovered during the Tippit autopsy and then transmitted them to the FBI after a delay of nearly four months. The Dallas chief of police inaccurately reported the meaning of the paraffin test results and predicted "favorable" results from the ballistic tests. Police files claim that a witness to the Tippit killing made a positive identification of Oswald although he swore that he had not. In at least three cases, police made witnesses sign affidavits identifying Oswald from a lineup which they had not yet viewed.

So there I was one day last month down on Spruce Street talking with Charlie Rogovin, my paranoia battered by recent news events and then jolted to the edge of reality by Charlie mentioning the fact that McGeorge Bundy was instrumental in setting up the Police Foundation. But, to be serious about it, I do have a rather firm grasp on reality and would never permit my paranoia to slip out of control by a series of coincidental revelations. So I shoved it as far back in my mind as I could and focused my interest on Charlie Rogovin talking about his important new job. He said he had been working for several months, primarily on setting up the Foundation's organizational system, but that a study had been made of various urban police departments to determine which were most worthy of receiving grants. After intensive study, he said, only one department had been selected. That department would receive an initial grant of a few hundred thousand dollars and then, perhaps, subsequent funds that could run to several million over the next five years or so. It would be a golden windfall for the lucky police department.

You wouldn't believe what Charlie Rogovin said when I asked what city's lucky police force was selected to receive the first windfall.

"Dallas," he said.

Kerplunk! ■ ■