

The Mystery of the Black Books

by Warren Hinckle III

A saga of hotshot international espionage from the great days of Ramparts

In New Orleans, as you probably know, the D.A. is called the "Jolly Green Giant." Jim Garrison is tall enough, and normally jolly enough, and, in his dealings with a cheating government and an ambush-primed press in the months and years after the Kennedy assassination, he showed himself green enough to earn the title, whatever the significance of the original nickname.

Most everyone also knows, in some snickering fashionable way, what happened to the District Attorney and his assassination investigation. In New York terms, he closed opening night. But somewhere back in the primordial ooze of the Garrison investigation there lingers a story that has never been told before. It is not an assassination story, it is primarily a mystery story, and it is not even a story about Garrison himself, although his interests at the time spurred on the events. There have been good reasons for the long silence of the participants, or victims, as the telling places certain people where they perhaps should not have been, and involves the violation, or alleged violation, of several laws of the land, among them those proscribing the unauthorized dealings by private citizens with the governments of unfriendly foreign powers. By now, though, Richard Nixon the Elder has left pecker tracks all over those previously clear ground rules, and one no longer knows if one is dealing with an old enemy or a new friend until one picks up the morning paper. So I will be indiscreet.

As the story quickly becomes caught up in the whirlpools and rapids of international intrigue, I will begin, as simply as possible, at the beginning—which, as is the case in many mysteries, was a conversation over a friendly drink about a proposition of dubious legality.

In the New Orleans Summer of 1968, Bill Turner, an ex-F.B.I. man

then working for *Ramparts* magazine, was chewing the conspiracy fat with Jim Garrison and enjoying a Southern bourbon without benefit of mint. Turner suggested that it would be nice to know what the Russians knew about the murder of John F. Kennedy. Assuming that they didn't do it, they doubtless had a pretty good idea who did. The thought of the K.G.B.'s bulging files on the C.I.A. lit Garrison up.

"Even if they'd cooperate," Turner said, "we could never make the approach from the D.A.'s office. The wolves out there would never stop howling if they caught us asking the time of day of the K.G.B." Garrison frowned.

Never mind that, said Turner. *Ramparts* would make the Russians an offer they couldn't refuse. I was the editor at *Ramparts* in those days, so what happened after that inevitably involved me.

It was a week later. In hot pursuit of his goal, Turner was having coffee in a San Francisco restaurant with a young man who had no name. He was the shady side of thirty-five, tall, tanned, sandy-haired, with high raw cheekbones and polished turquoise eyes. He was not a professional mystery man, although he was mysterious about his profession, and it would be as accurate to say he had several names as none, because names to him were as paper plates, to be used and then discarded. His primary employment, in the year and a half that *Ramparts* had known him, was that of a contract combat pilot for the C.I.A. He flew a Douglas B-26 out of Miami on itinerant bombing raids against the Cuban coastline. His targets were usually pedestrian objects such as oil tanks, although once he made a pass over a Russian-built radar installation. He had also flown aerial reconnaissance missions over Cuba out of Central and South American airfields.

He had flown and fought in many

other places in the world at the drop of a dollar. His disillusion with the C.I.A. began when he worked for them in the Congo. "You can rescue nuns," the Agency had told him. He found himself shooting up supply boats instead. But he kept flying, partly for the money, which was good, partly because he was hooked on adventure, and the C.I.A. was the big Connection.

It is testimony to the perverseness of his world that—although he came to see himself as working for the bad guys, an employment he was loath to give up because he enjoyed the means if not the end—his dangerous compulsion to simultaneously do something for the good guys was limited by his inability to find any. He had once tried an undercover assignment for the federal narcs, but their bumbling ways nearly got him killed. Given the paucity of angels, he latched onto *Ramparts* as a reasonable alternative to evil and a place where double agents were granted instant status as war heroes. As often as he was in the office, and visiting our homes, there remained a restive quality about him, a separateness, as if he were lonely out there in the cold and wanted companionship, yet didn't want to come all the way in.

We called him Jim Rose. At least that was the name by which he was known to everyone on the magazine, including one of the secretaries with whom he took up housekeeping between derrings-do. But he had a name for every day of the week. He was Jack Carter when he worked in Miami, until later he became too hot and decided to "kill off" Carter by simulating a plane crash at sea, thus discouraging the spoilsports in the F.A.A. from inquiring further into the checkered history of Carter's flight plans. He had several newspaper clippings reporting his own death, which he would exhibit with the eager shyness of someone showing you an appendix scar or bottled gallstone.

It is not because I couldn't find the time to complete Minckle's piece on Farewell America at one sitting. Esquire articles are not all that long. After three attacks I have the 7th of 7 pages to read. As some of you know, I have fairly extensive first-hand knowledge of this affair and did a bit of investigating. There are portions about which I can speak unequivocally. That I speak no further at this point is because I solicit untainted evaluations. To a degree I believe no knowledge of the book and circumstances is required. Among the opinions solicited is whether there seems to be any special timing, aside from the scheduled appearance of the Minckle-Turner-Asinov book. I do not propose a complete analysis at this time, but I will record opinions in a letter to one with personal interest. I have also been marking my copy up as I read it. If a copy is desired, I'll supply it. I do believe serious thought and the time this takes may be justified. HW 3/26/73

Esquire

I have the Minckle Ramparts piece on Farewell America, The Mystery of the Black Books. After reading 2 1/2 of the 7 pages I laid it aside, took some Maalox, and wondered if there is any mystery other than about Hinkle and Turner. This is a remarkable if unintended self-condemnation, for much more than the gorssesst and most infantile incompetence. It also lacks honesty and unless it comes in later, is deliberately incomplete about "Rose" and Nagell, another of the great diversions of Garrison's interest and drain on his finances. Also, like "Rose", also CIA. How Minckle (and Turner) could avoid in that long list of aliases E. Carl McHabb, Rose's name when he was working with Nagell, I leave to you to ponder. You might also ask yourself if you read this how a Ramparts, a Turner and a Minckle could let all this rest on an unchecked and uncheckable CIA man and can still print his unsupported word as gospel. Even fail to report how "Rose" got to them. It was that way. They did not find him. HW 3/26/73

He was also known as Dawes, also as McLeish, also as several other people, among which I was always partial to Rose, because of Gertrude Stein and all. But by any name he was, as Damon Runyan said about those types who stand out among other types of their type, the "genuine item." He loved adventure, and second only to that he loved talking about adventure.

This Rose with no name was the man we tapped to send to the Russians.

Turner hardly had time to raise the subject over coffee that morning when Rose, indicating a devil-may-care willingness to make the approach to the K.G.B., said he would volunteer.

Anyone who has seen a good spy movie knows how to get in touch with the K.G.B. All you do is go to a Russian Embassy and ask to see the Second Secretary, who is invariably the resident Soviet intelligence chief. (If you're looking in an American Embassy for the C.I.A., best try the Cultural Attaché first.)

Anyway, that's what we did. And it worked.

There was, however, some hesitation before the fateful knock at the K.G.B. door. Rose quite understandably gave thought to the damage possible to his C.I.A. meal ticket, or his person, lest word get back to Langley, Virginia, that one of their pilots was fraternizing with the enemy. But the lure of rubbing noses with the K.G.B. eventually overshadowed any cautionary reserves in his nature. When he said he was ready to go, we took extreme steps to insure that the man with no name would leave no trail should any untoward or unfortunate event occur while he was dealing with the enemy. We bought his airline ticket with cash, so it could not be traced back to *Ramparts*. We even shook him down for incriminating matchbook covers. When we were satisfied he could not be connected to any organiza-

tion in America, save perhaps the C.I.A., he boarded a jet for Mexico City, on his way along the yellow brick road to see the wizard of espionage at the Russian Embassy. It had been agreed all around that the act of asking to borrow a cup of intelligence from the K.G.B. had best take place in another country.

By the estimate of the *Reader's Digest*, the Russian Embassy in Mexico City is "one of the world's great sanctuaries of subversion." It has the appearance of a giant cuckoo clock that has been put under house arrest. A grey Victorian mansion bedecked with gingerbread cupolas, it is cut off from the outside world by grounds dotted with peach trees and patrolled by sentries with a do-not-touch look about them, who are in turn cut off from the street by an iron fence unsuitable for pole vaulting. The twenty-four-hour work of the Embassy is carried out behind shuttered windows to the sound of crickets at night, melting into the click and whir of camera shutters by day, as most of the handsome houses across the street on the Calzada de Tacubaya are apparently in the possession of camera bugs of various intelligence services who have made a hobby of photographing everyone including the milkman who approaches the Russian Embassy. Not to be outdone, the Russians also photograph everyone who comes through their main gate, and occasionally even photograph the hidden photographers across the street.

Rose walked chin high through the moat of cameras. Once inside, he asked to see someone who could get word back to Moscow. He was ushered to a monastic waiting room. A stocky, owl-eyed man with the look of a well-groomed card mechanic soon entered, blinking in a formal, quizzical manner which gave the impression that he only blinked during working hours.

The visitor introduced himself as the undercover emissary that he

was and explained the peculiar circumstances of his mission. The Russian warily asked for the camera which hung around Rose's neck, and said he would return it when their conversation was completed. Rose got it back later, "in better working order than when I gave it to him."

The Russian and the young American without a name talked for two hours. Rose explained Garrison's theory of the assassination, and the Russian nodded on occasion at the mention of the C.I.A. Rose made his plea for "sanitized" information from the K.G.B. files on Oswald and others.

"Our assumption is that you must have information about these matters that we do not," he said.

The Russian rose from his seat unblinking. He asked Rose where he was staying, and suggested he stick to his hotel and not do too much touring. "It may be necessary for you to stay in Mexico City for a few days."

Rose was followed when he left the Embassy for the hotel. "They used a tail on a tail," he said. "It was a very professional job."

When Rose went down to dinner that evening, a burly man in a rumpled suit sat down directly across from his table, making no pretense that he was doing anything but watching Rose. Rose sent him a complimentary vodka, and the big man smiled, displaying several gold teeth in a setting of black teeth.

The next day Rose received a request to visit the Embassy.

The Russian was blinking again. He spoke in careful, circumventive, translated-from-the-Martian phrases, as if his every word was being broadcast that instant to a stadium full of hostile people. His caution was taken by Rose as some sort of a signal, because the Russian hardly said anything more than, "Don't call us, we'll call you."

"What you request is not impossible. But it is not necessary that

it will happen. The only way that it could possibly occur is in a way that would be most unexpected, and untraceable to its source. Something might be left in your hands, for instance, by a visitor to your country. That is all for now."

The official smiled, extended his hand, and gave Rose his camera. "Do you like books?" he asked. Rose said that he did. The Russian gave him several books, "all about how the East and West could get along together." Rose reached in his knapsack. The only reading material he had was an R. Crumb comic book, which he presented to the appreciative Russian, who, expressing unfamiliarity with some of the idiom, in particular the phrase "Gimme some reds," said that he would have it translated.

Rose was en route back to San Francisco when there occurred one of those bollixes that come from too much sucking on the snow cone of paranoia. He was about to go through customs in the crowded Los Angeles International Airport, one of the seven plastic wonders of the world, when he suddenly found himself staring into the bloodshot recesses of my own one good eye. Rose came up and gave me what I suppose was the password for his secret mission. He instantly assumed that my extraordinary presence in the customs area was meant to head him off at the pass from some certain disaster that had befallen our comrades.

He repeated the password. I looked at him as if he were panhandling in Swahili. I snarled something nasty and incoherent to the effect that if he shaved his legs he might get a job in the chorus of the *Nutcracker Suite*. The atomic pile behind his turquoise eyes flared into critical mass, and he stepped back as if his toes had just dissolved before his eyes. He was gone before I could remember who he was, for if truth be told, I had forgotten—so hung over and generally dissipated was I, an empty egg carton that had just been helped off the plane from Ireland, whence I had fled in a deep funk to drink my way through the apocalypse of turning thirty. I was twenty-nine when I left and a human junk heap when I returned, and could not even recognize the most unforgettable person I had ever met. But Rose knew none of that. Believing my cata-tonic hello to be a signal that we were all in the gravest peril, he went underground from his underground assignment. That began a carnival of pixilation, a lost week-

end of paranoia. The *Ramparts* people assumed Rose's disappearance meant death, or a double cross. Rose, seeing no report of our arrest under the Espionage Act in the papers, assumed the government was suppressing the news until they hunted him down. Each non-fact reinforced another non-fact, with me not speaking all the while lest the aftertaste of Guinness escape my mouth.

It was straightened out several hundred corkscrews later. But it was a Second letdown when we learned, upon Rose's belated surfacing, that all we could do was wait some more for some sign from the K.G.B. that might or might not come.

The only concrete result of that traumatic mission to the Russian Embassy was an invitation for the editors of *Ramparts* to attend the Red Army Ball in Mexico City, which was graciously declined.

S ometime later, Jim Garrison took a long-distance call in his New Orleans office. The caller identified himself as the traveling representative of the Frontiers Publishing Company of Geneva. That firm had, the caller said, an important four-volume original work on the Kennedy assassination which was about to be published in Europe. Would Mr. Garrison be interested in seeing the manuscript? Yeah, sure, send it, Garrison said, hanging up. Another nut.

The United States mails deposited a fat package in the New Orleans District Attorney's office. It contained three thick volumes of manuscript, each bound in black.

When this manuscript later emerged in book form, its title was *Farewell America*. The author, according to the book jacket, was James Hepburn, a thirty-four-year-old writer, former acquaintance of Jacqueline Bouvier, and former student at the London School of Economics and the Institute of Political Studies in Paris.

Garrison's office called *Ramparts* to say that the Miracle of Fatima had occurred. Instead of a lovely lady, the creator had sent down something to read.

The next day a courier arrived from New Orleans lugging a Xerox of the sign from the K.G.B. It was a heavy sign: a thousand-odd pages of flawless typescript, as if part of an I.B.M. demonstration at a convention of old-maid office managers, or from the Pope. Book manuscripts normally have at the minimum a few peanut butter and jelly

stains on them, not to mention hen scratchings and other placental alterations. No author since the dawn of movable type has got himself together enough to dam the babbling brook of creativity, settle the last word and position the final comma, and then had the time or the money to completely and perfectly retype his manuscript before sending it to the publishers, or they to the printers. This masterpiece of the touch system was patently the product of some boiler-plate rewrite bank in the basement of an intelligence factory.

The content of the manuscript confirmed the validity of the superficial assessment of its origin. This unheard-of publishing outfit had as well-developed and documented a conspiracy theory as Garrison's own—with many of the same villains by name, and others of the same faces, but different aliases. The shock waves were equally as great at *Ramparts*. The mystery manuscript was as sprinkled with details as an ice cream cone dipped in chocolate jimmies. There were names and addresses, where relevant, about the clandestine operations of the Central Intelligence Agency. A *Ramparts* team of New Left researchers had been digging into the internal operations of the C.I.A. for the better part of a year and had scavenged numerous scraps of available information, save whatever was tattooed on the inside of John McCone's belly button. A large part of the material in our files was unknown to the general press or public. But these manicured pages so inexplicably handed down from the mountain repeated, in a matter-of-fact manner, many of our zealously acquired C.I.A. supersecrets—and revealed many more, all of which subsequently checked out. Whoever James Hepburn was, he had reliable sources of information about the inner workings of American intelligence.

The poop on the C.I.A. was plotted in with the subtlety of a Vincent Price movie. The book's text gasped for breath as it crawled through hills and valleys created by mountainous footnotes, which were as jam-packed as a lifeboat with whole file drawers full of classified data. The manuscript revealed the locations of secret C.I.A. schools for sabotage; exposed C.I.A.-owned newspapers, radio stations and publishing houses in Cyprus, Beirut, Aden, Jordan, Kenya and other countries in Africa, the Middle East and the Far East; named the C.I.A.'s clandestine commercial

"covers" in the United States, and recorded the Agency's role as co-director of the Eisenhower Administration, and examined its links—through Kermit Roosevelt in the Fifties and John McCone in the Sixties—to the oil industry. Among other epithets, the manuscript alleged that former "specialists" for the C.I.A.'s D.C.A. (Department of Covert Activity) were members of an assassination "team" at Dallas.

Similar working details were disclosed about the K.G.B., the assessments being quite favorable. This supported our belief that the manuscript had been typed on Russian typewriters fitted with American characters.

Many sections of the book were non sequiturs which reminded me of Groucho Marx's line in *Duck Soup*: "A child of five would understand this. Send somebody to fetch a child of five." The gratuitous mention of a 1931 Paris detective story by an author who used the premonitory pseudonym "Oswald Dallas" made at least impish sense. But I couldn't figure the humor of numerous out-of-context references to Roy Cohn, the former boy witch-hunter, whose selected quotations merited several vague footnotes with citations such as "Roy Cohn, at the Stork Club in 1963."

Later, after we had gone scuba diving in the black waters of the manuscript's authorship, much of this strangeness was to be cleared up somewhat, as was the motivation behind a puzzling chapter alleging astonishing Secret Service foul-ups which made the Dallas assassination almost a pushover. The critique amounted to a white paper on the deficiencies of the Secret Service, and was obviously prepared by someone very much on the Inside. The mystery book provided a lengthy analysis of the demonstrably superior security arrangements of other nations, particularly France and Russia, for protecting the lives of their chief executives. There was a puzzling hurrah for Daniel P. Moynihan, a professional thinker of moderate means, who so far as I knew had zero to do with guarding the President: "Only Daniel P. Moynihan, a former longshoreman, had some idea of such things."

The thesis of the mystery text was that of John F. Kennedy as the good guy-golden boy of American democracy, whose honest policies were so at odds with the power-mad and corrupt C.I.A. and its billionaire oilmen kingmakers that he was accordingly snuffed. But by whom?

The three-volume manuscript was accompanied by a cryptic note: if we were interested in seeing the fourth volume, we should cable a law firm in Geneva, and arrangements would be made.

An obvious deduction, Watson: the fourth volume would name the murderers.

We cabled. We waited. A week later Garrison's office telephoned: "You know that fourth volume? Well, it just walked in the door."

There was to be a further complication. The messenger who had arrived in New Orleans from Geneva did not have the final volume with him. We would have to send a representative to Geneva to inspect it in person.

At that, I began to wonder if this were a present from the K.G.B., or a booby trap from somebody else.

My plans to convene a meeting of the paranoia bureau were aborted when I learned that Garrison had already sent a young volunteer packing off to Europe to collect the tainted goods. The innocent sent abroad was Steve Jaffee, the brother of a *Newsweek* reporter in Los Angeles, the peach-fuzz side of twenty-five, who had been working with Mark Lane on another assassination theory.

Jaffee was told to go to Paris, interview James Hepburn, and find out his sources.

The answer came from Paris: it is impossible to meet the author. The author is a "composite."

Cables between Jaffee and his contact weaved back and forth like carrier pigeons drunk on elderberries. Such facts or allegations of fact as reached us from this static across the Atlantic made only one thing clear: we were shadowboxing with a high-level intelligence operation—although not necessarily the K.G.B. French intelligence was suddenly in the running, and even the C.I.A. became suspect.

In his search for the Paris "editorial offices" of the publisher, Jaffee found himself at one point in the modern offices of a fat-cat international law firm. Some of the people he had met in Paris told him that financial interests were involved. He even heard that the Kennedy family itself had underwritten the cost of the book, but he was unable to substantiate this.

Farewell America was published in Germany, with fanfare but without the final volume, and became a moderate best seller. The phony book was syndicated in *Bild*, Germany's largest daily newspaper, which is owned by Axel Springer,

who is not exactly a raving Bolshevik. Why would Springer authenticate such a force-fed K.G.B. book? The inevitable thought arose that this might be a superior triple-decker C.I.A. cake with Ian Flemming icing to somehow entrap *Ramparts*.

Further investigation revealed that Frontiers Publishing Company had never published a book before, and apparently had no plans to publish anything else in the future.

Farewell America was then published in France in a hard-cover edition by Frontiers. The review in *L'Express* called the book "... the most violent indictment ever written by a man about his country, out of love for that country." Not a bad notice for a composite.

Finally, a memo by Jaffee found its way to our offices. It was filled with disconcerting information, including a thumbnail sketch of the publisher of Frontiers, one R—, who had taken our man in tow and was apparently treating him to all the secrets of Paris, save the one we were after.

R— published a magazine during the early Sixties. He was in his thirties, had been in the French army, and had studied for a time at Harvard. Jaffee felt he was the key to the preparation of the manuscript and added that R— was highly placed in French intelligence, specializing in American oil interests.

The individual so described took his thumbnail biographer crawling to places high and low in Paris, all in the line of duty. R— said they would drop in on General de Gaulle at the Elysée Palace and see if he was busy. He was. Then R— arranged a meeting with André Ducret, the head of the French Secret Service. Ducret was most gracious, and told the young American that he was ducking down the hall to see the General for a second and would say hello for him. The Secret Service Chief returned shortly and handed Jaffee de Gaulle's card, with a personal note scribbled by the General:

GENERAL DE GAULLE

Je suis très sensible à la confiance que vous m'exprimez.

Before Jaffee left, the Secret Service head also told him how important his mission was and how France appreciated his efforts. Jaffee was duly impressed, despite the fact that he himself did not know what he was doing.

R— indicated that the documents on which the book was based were all (*Continued on page 170*)

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(Continued from page 131) locked up for safekeeping in a Liechtenstein bank vault, but they were in luck as one of the sources, a French intelligence agent named "Philippe," was in town, and they would have a drink. He brought Jaffee to a dingy Latin Quarter bar at midnight, where Philippe, speaking only in metaphor, told how he had interviewed one of the men who had been in the Kennedy ambush group at a hotel in Mexico City, where they had Cuban music and dangerous "instruments."

There was one more little thing before we got to see the fourth volume. R— said it was being "rewritten." Frontiers was anxious to publish *Farewell America* in America—and wanted *Ramparts* to publish it, just as Axel Springer had been so kind in Germany.

It was time either to retreat or send in reinforcements, so I bludgeoned Larry Bensky, the current victim on the *Ramparts* sacrificial altar of the Managing Editor's chair, into catching a night plane to Paris. Bensky was not all that happy about going, since he had been a founder of a Franco-American anti-war group during his previous residence as an editor of the *Paris Review* and had reason to think the French police would be watching him carefully.

Bensky found R— to be a very average-looking Frenchman with very bad teeth, a chain smoker of Gitanes, a chain lover of women, with a strong taste for luxury, a seemingly inexhaustible supply of pocket money, and many flashily dressed friends with nice apartments and no visible means of support. He was an expert in "pillow-talk intelligence," having been assigned by French intelligence, with its concern for industrial counterespionage, to infiltrate the social circles of the oil industry in New York and Texas by seducing the daughters of the petroleum magnates. "I learned English to screw them," the Frenchman told Bensky.

The French intelligence agent came on as an orgy freak, or, more precisely, he came on as a combination self-voyeur and fetishist about being an orgy freak. He sat in Paris sidewalk cafés ostentatiously picking his teeth, and otherwise acting the part of Terry-Thomas playing the stud. His conversation was that of an after-dinner speaker in a bordello catering to civil servants. He would preface intimate accounts of the sexual proclivities of prominent politicians with the phrase, "It is known in French intelligence that . . ." then proceed to the nitty gritty about several prominent American politicians and their boyfriends.

Bensky rolled up his sleeves, and went to beat the devil. He ducked R—'s efforts to lure him to the whorehouses, where he was certain a trap lay germinating for him, pleading a Benedictine vow of celibacy from a previous incarnation, and instead maneuvered the Frenchman into successive cat-and-mouse encounter sessions of drinking cognac in bistros of Bensky's choice. On the third night, he beat the French-

man at the endurance game. As the sensuous intelligence agent wandered drunkenly around the bistro, having left his jacket on the chair, Bensky went through his pockets, discovering business cards and press cards in several identities, only a few of them in R—'s own name, and a British passport in yet another name.

Bensky dropped these identities on R— in subsequent conversations, which caused the Frenchman to raise ever so slightly his egg-skin eyebrows and compliment the Managing Editor on *Ramparts*' "excellent sources" of information.

Back home, we at last developed a good hunch about who was dealing in the bridge game in which *Ramparts* was playing a dummy hand. The droopy fleur-de-lys of French intelligence overshadowed the cardboard publishing house of Frontiers, but that in itself was of little specific help in tracing the river of data in *Farewell America* to its source, because the French S.D.E.C.E. was so notoriously, and almost hilariously, ridden with K.G.B. double agents that, as a matter of course, Frenchmen were offered vodka before wine at international spy gatherings.

There were also some noisy cross signals indicating that the book's brewmasters might be in the private sector of international espionage. A dandruff-collared crew of former French spies, tossed in the garbage when the rotten apple that had been French intelligence was drawn and quartered after World War II, had been hired en bloc by the French oil cartel. The paté of flab around their midsections was strengthened by the addition of Marseilles thugs and floating assassins to their number, creating a relatively sophisticated and vicious chorus line of Harry Palmers in berets ready to do whatever was necessary that the Frenchies might gain a bigger share of the world oil lamp, Standard Oil be damned.

This was something by the way of cherries on the matzos, as the S.D.E.C.E. itself assumed as a prime part of its raison d'être the protection and furtherance of French petroleum interests. (It remains an object of bar bets in Paris whether it was the S.D.E.C.E. proper or the free-lance French oil agents who erased Enrico Mattei, the Italian oil magnate whose North African holdings encroached on French vital interests, and who conveniently perished in a plane crash near Milan in 1962 which had the suspicious markings of that other political plane crash of General Sikorski off Gibraltar in 1943, in which Winston Churchill was alleged to have pulled the fatal coter pin.) At any rate, such types as these, who possessed sufficient rough magic to make the Moroccan leftist Ben Barka disappear from the Left Bank and from the face of the earth in 1965, had the financing if not the suavity (that apparently was R—'s function) to palm off *Farewell America* on the public libraries of the world. This was something they might wish to do inasmuch

as the book contained between its hard covers considerable dirt on the American oil industry, including the not very nice suggestion that the kingpins of American petroleum got together to knock off the President of the United States.

It sounds mad, I know, but when you get into it, and down to it, all real madness takes place in some factual context. The French are not the only ones who have found other uses for old spies. Everywhere, former intelligence agents for hire constitute a black belt of over-privileged crud. What really goes on in the world is made all the more dreadfully complicated when one becomes aware of the existence of this private half-world on top, or rather beneath, that other half-world of officially sanitized clandestine intelligence work and subversion.

We never learned for certain whether R— worked for the French intelligence, with or without its K.G.B. brandy float, or for the Watergate division of French private intelligence, or, for that matter, for some other squad of Flying Dutchmen. Someone substantial was paying his whoring and typesetting bills. He admitted to being a plant but would not say who potted him. All his identities were phony. He had never been the publisher of a French magazine. But in his earnest efforts to get *Ramparts* to publish his thing, R— did clear up several of the minor mysteries about the black books. He said the extraordinary detail about the C.I.A. had come from the files of the S.D.E.C.E., which of course kept tabs on the competition. The information in the book about the K.G.B. had come from the same source; he denied it came directly from the K.G.B. The nasty details about the American petroleum industry were the product of the same files, and from R—'s own years of spying and snookering his way into the inner social circles of the filthy oil rich. He also explained the derivation of James Hepburn, the pseudo-author of *Farewell America*. James was from the French "j'aime," and Hepburn was added in tribute to at least one of R—'s favorite cinema actresses.

On the basis of this less than complete information, *Ramparts* purchased an option to publish *Farewell America* in America, paying for it with a post-dated check drawn on a bank with which we no longer had an account. I had never bounced a check on an intelligence agency before and it seemed somehow a fair idea. If the truth be told, the cables I was sending, Bensky urging him to hurry up and make haste so we could go to press with James Hepburn's exclusive were in that grey area between little white lies and big black lies. It was in for a dime, in for a dollar, and I couldn't see the harm in hanging tough and trying to find out just who had gone to all this expense and effort to bloody up the good name of the C.I.A. and eminent American oilmen.

There being no Geneva Convention of publishing, I figured that if the culprits

finally coughed up Volume Four, with the names and numbers of the players in the Dallas assassination bowl, and if we succeeded in pinning the goods on one intelligence agency as opposed to another, then we could screw James Hepburn and run the story with its proper by-line—"Who Killed Kennedy, by the K.G.B." I thought that would make a terrific *Ramparts* cover.

Under prodding, the proprietorship of Frontiers Publishing came clean as to their most extraordinary source: the material on the internal foul-ups of the Secret Service—detailed down to the number of bourbons a Secret Serviceman had had the night before and how many aspirins he took the morning after—was hand delivered from the inner councils of the Kennedy family. The chapter was based on a private, unpublished and undistributed memorandum prepared for Attorney General Robert Kennedy after his brother's murder. Bobby had convened a select committee the day after the assassination, which was to conduct a secret investigation of the Secret Service, independent of the work of other federal agencies such as the F.B.I. or the C.I.A.

Bobby suspected someone had got to the Secret Service and prepped the murder of his brother, and he trusted none but his own men to tell him if his worst fears were groundless.

This committee's report excoriated the Secret Service for organizational and functional deficiencies, R— said, but cleared it of involvement in any plot. Once he was assured, Bobby apparently lost all interest in the investigation. He didn't even turn the report over to the Warren Commission, although it was far more critical of the Secret Service than the Warren Report.

This astonishing memorandum had lain hidden somewhere in the file cabinets of Camelot ever since. Through

"personal friendships" developed within the Kennedy inner circle, R— would not say with whom, it had come to rest in the hands of French intelligence, which had made this expert use of it.

That is everything there is to know about the mystery of the black books except who did it.

Bensky returned from the Paris talks with little more substantial than a fervent dislike for the other side. When pressed to the wall, R— handed over the long-awaited fourth volume, which consisted of one double-spaced page, and here is what it said:

("The Man of November Fifth")

"The choice made by the people of the United States on November 5th, 1968, will have profound and far-reaching consequences for the life, liberty and happiness of the universe. The peoples of the earth are awaiting new decisions. The man of November 5th cannot escape the conflicts of the modern world. If he chooses to ignore them, he will only delay their consequences. If he is prepared to confront them, he can overcome them.

"John and Robert Kennedy had the courage to meet these problems and break down the doors to the future. They were stopped by the frightened confederates of the traditions on which they infringed.

"When John Fitzgerald Kennedy's head exploded, it was for some the signal for toasts. The funeral did not go unnoticed. One November morning the cannon boomed, the Panama Canal was closed, flags flew at half-mast, and even Andrei Gromyko wept. Adlai Stevenson declared that he would bear the sorrow of his death till the day of his own, and the Special Forces added a black band to their green berets. Almost five years passed, and another bullet

shattered the brain and stopped the heart of another Kennedy who had taken up the fight.

"There was another funeral. Once again the Green Berets formed the Honor Guard; once again the Stars and Stripes flew at half-mast. On an evening in June, Robert Kennedy joined his brother beneath the hill at Arlington, and those who pass by can bring them flowers.

"The tombs are splendid, but the scores have not been settled.

"Who killed them?"

"And why?"

It is perhaps indicative of the nature of the real knowledge of the Kennedy assassinations on the part of the authors of *Farewell America* that their manuscript finally ended on a question mark.

At that, it remained chock-full of an odd lot of goodies. Stalemated in the attempt to determine to which intelligence agency to award the by-line, I adopted a new tactic which, in retrospect, may have been counter-productive: I told the truth. Frontiers Publishing was informed via its Geneva, Paris and Vaduz, Liechtenstein, addresses that *Ramparts* would regretfully not publish its book as it would not tell us which brand name of espionage it represented. R— said that Frontiers would publish the book itself in America, as it had successfully done elsewhere. They proceeded to print a hard-cover, 418-page English-language edition of *Farewell America* in Belgium which was airfreighted to Canada, warehoused and prepared for distribution in America.

For reasons best known to Frontiers—a publishing firm which, needless to say, has ceased to answer its telephones—the book was never brought into the United States. I fear now that its failure to surface may have had something to do with my promise to R— to "write about" the book when it was published in the United States. I meant that as a promise, not a threat, but they may have interpreted it otherwise.

The plot died lingering. A month after the events just described, R— showed up in California. He telephoned Bill Turner, with whom he had had no previous contact. Turner was getting ready to fly to New York, but offered to stop by R—'s hotel on the way to the airport. Jim Rose—our supersecret emissary—was driving Turner to the airport, and he joined the meeting. The encounter was light on substantive conversation, but the next evening R— called Rose, who had let it slip that he was staying in Sausalito, and said that he was leaving town but had "a present" for the gang at *Ramparts*. Typically, although R— was staying at the Fairmont Hotel, the present was in the hands of the bell captain of the St. Francis Hotel. From the bellboy Rose retrieved a can of 16-millimeter film. It was a perfect print of the famous Zapruder film, at that time off limits to the world at large and under lock and key in the vaults of the National Archives in Washington and at *Life* magazine, which had paid Zapruder a tidy sum for

all the prints in existence.

Bensky volunteered the most articulate explanation of these strange goings-on. The Bensky Theory is the product of his tiptoeing through the intelligence poppy fields of Paris without getting dizzy from the fragrance. He believes R— was working with a politicized wing of the French intelligence service which had become the last bastion of gainful employment for various supporters of the right-wing militarists who lost out to reality in the French Indochina and Algerian colonial wars. These types were all young-to-middle-aged rightist playboys of the intelligence world, grinning Fascists with souped-up cars and a hand in the till of private business deals, of whom R— was a specimen. A thinking cult among their number, anxious to develop some ploy that would appeal to de Gaulle, hit upon the black books to worm their way into favor. The General was of course very anti-American, but was known to have achieved something of a personal rapprochement with Jack Kennedy, whom he liked and who he was convinced was the murder victim of a conspiracy within the United States. General de Gaulle was also extremely concerned about France's future sources of energy, which he saw at the mercy of the American and British petroleum cartels. Industrial counter-espionage, both oil and nuclear, was an important function of French intelligence. The object of the black books, therefore, was to show de Gaulle that he was right in his views about the conspiracy to kill Kennedy, and at the same time create a scandal both in Europe and the United States by linking the hated American oilmen to the assassination. Neat, no?

There are differences of opinion about the Bensky Theory, but I will refrain. If that was the purpose of the black books, the perpetrators were at least

partially successful. They managed to con the largest daily newspaper in Germany and newsmagazine in France into buying their poke, not to mention thousands of book buyers in both countries who were taken along for the ride. And although *Farewell America* has never been reviewed or written about in the United States, for reasons now familiar to the readers of this history, numerous copies of the book have somehow wormed their way into the public libraries and card catalogs of the nation, including the Library of Congress.

I do not know what happened to the shipment of books in Canada, except that six hundred of them ended up in Bill Turner's basement. R— had asked him at their breakfast tête-à-tête if Turner would like "some copies" of the book. Turner said sure, of course. Two months later he received a notice from a freight forwarder in San Francisco that they were holding something for him. It was a considerable poundage of *Farewell America*, sent via Montreal to Turner's Mill Valley home. Turner refused to accept the skid of books, since there was a \$282 shipping tag to be paid, and he did not feel like subsidizing a foreign government to that amount. He so notified R—. R— wired back telling him where to pick up money to pay the shipping cost. Following R—'s instructions, Jim Rose went to a Swiss bank in San Francisco and got the money.

So the ex-F.B.I. man keeps the only known extant stash of the black books next to his lawn mower. It is a slowly dwindling pile, as he is constantly bothered by requests to send copies through the mail. Most of these orders come from bookstores near college campuses, one shop apparently getting his address from another. He mails out a dozen or more copies each month, at \$6.95 a pop. The Los Angeles City Library has five copies. #

Kennedy, R.F. Asson

An interview with the L.A. County Coroner

Noguchi talks about smog, speed, weed, RFK, inquests

PAUL EBERLE

During his brief term as Los Angeles County Coroner, Dr. Tom Noguchi has made a lot of headlines, some very sensational ones, and some that I'm sure he would have preferred to forego. His testimony in the Bobby Kennedy murder trial was the first to rupture the credibility of the State's case against Sirhan Sirhan (but not the last). Shortly thereafter, the County's chief administrative officer moved to oust Dr. Noguchi from his job. Charges of insanity, drug addiction and even more bizarre accusations were made. Noguchi fought back, demanding a hearing.

The County Supervisors tried to hold the hearing behind locked doors, barring cameras and sound equipment, but the media screamed so loudly that the county was forced to hold open public hearings. I was there. Even conservative establishment newsmen shook their heads in disbelief and indignation at the County's total lack of any substantial case against Noguchi. He was reinstated.

Why did they try to oust him? Was it the Kennedy thing? Was it racism? Was it simply because he didn't belong to the "country club" that exercises great power and control over the local medical profession? Was it because he made no secret of the fact that he wanted to change the procedures in coroner's inquests, so that policemen would not always be automatically whitewashed after shooting a civilian?

Probably all of the above.

He has been described by medical men from all over the world as one of the finest pathologists. He is a gentle, quiet man. He is also a man of considerable courage and integrity.

-P.E.

(The following interview between Dr. Noguchi and the Free Press was conducted in late August at the coroner's office.)

F.P.: At the time you did the autopsy on Sen. Robert Kennedy, the County Supervisors voted a resolution commending you on the outstanding job you had done, and some of the leading pathologists from all over the world, who were observers, also congratulated you publicly because they felt it was an outstanding job. Yet, only a few weeks later, they moved to oust you from your job. Why?

Noguchi: I probably should not get into that. I don't think it would serve any constructive purpose.

F.P.: Fine. We won't go into that then. There are a number of investigators and journalists who believe that Sirhan Sirhan definitely did not kill Sen. Kennedy. At the time of your autopsy you made a statement about the fatal wound and how close the muzzle of the gun was to Kennedy's skull when it was fired.

Noguchi: Yes. I formed an opinion, based on the examination of the remains, and also from test-firing the weapon, using a similar ammunition. I have testified that the muzzle distance was most likely less than three inches from the back of the right ear, and more likely ONE inch in distance.

F.P.: And there were two other wounds on the right chest?

Noguchi: There were two other wounds in the right axillar.

F.P.: That's under the armpit?

Noguchi: Yes.

F.P.: And were they fired from the side or from behind?

Noguchi: From a back-to-front direction.

F.P.: How many wounds were there?

Noguchi: A total of three gunshot wounds. There was an additional hole in the senator's suit where the bullet just went through the shoulder padding without damaging him.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Eye witnesses have reported that Sirhan was at all times in FRONT of Sen. Kennedy and never closer than about four or five feet from him, and therefore could not possibly have fired the fatal shots.)

F.P.: Did you find anything else in the autopsy that seems to contradict the findings of the court?

Noguchi: I have very little to do with finding who has done it. My job is to tell what I found and what was the cause of death, and the scientific evidence, and there are a number of contradictory statements that have been made. However, my area of knowledge ends almost entirely with the autopsy findings.

F.P.: At the time you testified at the Sirhan trial, it was felt by many people that you were cut off—that you were not allowed to give the full information on the cause of death. Was that true?

Noguchi: I don't really know. There was a detail that was not asked. Of course, I am not supposed to volunteer information. However, it appeared that the court and both defense counsel had accepted the report by my department and no detailed cross-examination was made. I don't know whether I should say "cut out" or just not asked.

F.P.: So there was no lengthy, vigorous cross-examination on your findings?

Noguchi: Not at all. Very brief. As I recall, there were only a few questions.