

LOUISIANA

'We Will Prove It'

One more log was tossed last week onto the blaze that had been burning bright ever since last summer, fueled by a succession of post-assassination books and stories.

But this one could be the biggest. The episode began ten days ago, when a story leaked by the New Orleans States-Item disclosed that the District Attorney's office had been "pouring out-of-the-ordinary sums of money into a probe of a possible assassination plot."

The States-Item story claimed that the District Attorney's office had spent more than \$8000 on unexplained travel and investigative expenses since last November, most of it in connection with trips to Dallas, Houston, Miami, Washington, San Francisco and Angola, the Louisiana State Penitentiary.

Behind a Billboard

The newspaper reported that District Attorney Jim Garrison's office was seeking a "physically powerful and dangerous Cuban man, who is believed to be one of a group of Cubans who reportedly hid behind a billboard along the parade route in Dallas."

"The investigators," the paper continued, "searched Miami inside and out for the Cuban, flashing his picture taken on a New Orleans street while he was distributing Fair Play for Cuba pamphlets with (Lee Harvey) Oswald."

(Oswald had lived in New Orleans the summer before the assassination. While there, he claimed to represent the pro-Castro Fair Play for Cuba Committee, made no attempt to conceal his activities, was photographed passing out leaflets, and got involved in a street altercation with anti-Castro elements.)

"The possibility of a well-organized assassination plot," concluded the Item, "in which New Orleans residents were somehow directly involved, is said to be at the center of the investigation."

Garrison's office promptly denied it. "There is no basis for the story," said a terse official statement. "Mr. Garrison assumes the story is based on rumor."

Next day, however, Garrison told a different story.

He declared that an investigation by his office showed the Warren Commission report was inaccurate in stating Oswald acted alone in the assassination of President Kennedy. "We already have the names of the people in the initial planning," Garrison told the Associated Press. "We are not wasting our time and we will prove it. Arrests will be made. Charges will be filed and convictions will be obtained."

Turn It Over

How had Garrison gotten involved in the first place? "Last November," he explained, "I began looking into the question because Oswald had spent six months in New Orleans shortly before the assassination. I went through the 26 volumes of the Warren Report and there were some questions raised. As a result, I began the investigation. The investigation led to new leads, which we followed out, and other leads were uncovered."

Others were also more than mildly interested in Garrison's private investigation. In Washington, a former member of the Warren Commission insisted that any new evidence uncovered by the New Orleans District Attorney's office into the death of President Kennedy should be "immediately" transmitted to officials in Washington.

House Republican Leader Gerald Ford demanded that "whatever evidence is found be transmitted to the U. S. Attorney General and to the President for consideration."

Garrison, however, had no such intention. In a television interview filmed at his home, the 44-year-old prosecutor said he was not about to turn the investigation over to anyone. He insisted that his office had jurisdiction in the case because of a Louisiana law "which forbids conspiracy of any kind."

Wait and See

Most Warren Commission members, meantime, were reserving judgment until Garrison released something specific. "Let's see what his evidence is," said former Commissioner John J. McCloy.

But one of the Warren Commission's investigators, who was familiar with Oswald's movements in New Orleans, told The Chronicle that he believed Garrison had stumbled across information which the Commission was well aware of — although Garrison didn't know it.

The reason: the evidence against one of Garrison's suspects — a Civil Air Patrol pilot who had gone from Louisiana to Houston on the day of the assassination — is contained in an extensive FBI dossier, but not in the Commission volumes.

453 A and B

As for the pictures which Garrison's men had been showing around Miami and New Orleans, the mysterious missing Cuban was actually shown in exhibits 453 A and 453-B and Bringuier Exhibit I in the 26 volumes. * P1220?

The Warren Commission was never able to establish the identity of the man in the picture who helped Oswald pass out handbills. But since Oswald was found to have gone to the State of Louisiana Employment office, offering \$2 to anyone who would help him hand out leaflets, the Commission finally concluded that the man probably was a drifter whom Oswald picked up and not a "conspirator."

However, one thing the investigator was convinced of: The next phase of the New Orleans story would involve a vicious battle between pro and anti-Castro elements, each trying to exploit the assassination for political purposes, each trying to pin the blame on the other.

Battle of Cubans

And last week it began. Carlos Bringuier, a Cuban exile leader, declared that he was "more convinced than ever that Castro's hand" would be found in the assassination.

Bringuier, the man who brawled with Oswald in the street, said he had tried to get a Congressional investigation of Oswald as "a confessed Marxist and a Castro agent in the United States," but nothing came of it.

"Since Nov. 22, 1963," said Bringuier, "I have told them when everything is cleared up, Castro's hand will be found."

Then, at midweek, the Garrison investigation leak claimed its first victim. The pilot whose identity had been revealed to the Chronicle by a Warren Commission investigator as David Ferrie — an alleged New Orleans homosexual who had known Oswald as a teenager in the Civil Air Patrol, and who was considered "at most, a tangential figure in the case" — was found dead in his apartment.

The coroner ascribed the death of Ferrie, who had hypertensive cardiovascular disease, to a ruptured blood vessel in the brain, but said further tests were being made — particularly in the light of an apparent suicide note found in his apartment.

"The District Attorney is interested in me," Ferrie had said a few days before he died, "because, supposedly, I have been pegged as the getaway pilot in an elaborate plot to kill Kennedy. It's a big joke."