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BRAQUETTE
Lenox, Massachusetts

heads, or their nerve, or their tempers, and produced the most brutality since the battle of the Selma Bridge two and a half years ago in Alabama.

The great police riot, as it is now called, sits uneasily on the conscience of the city. The Los Angeles Times did its own hatchet-job on the march in its first-day story, but the reporters who covered it, and were profoundly disturbed, staged a quiet editorial revolt. A week later, they in effect rewrote the story, with an about-face in point of view. The original report ended with a quote from a press photographer: "These people [the marchers] were like animals. All I can say is that the police did one hell of a good job." The revised version ended with a line from a demonstrator: "All the violence was initiated by the police."

The City Council, bitterly divided, voted in midweek to support the police. The police chief's rationalization for the attack was that he had "inside information" that "agitators" were planning to rush the hotel and, presumably, threat-

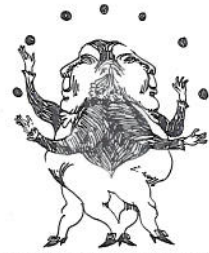
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t of an
undercover agent who infiltrated the march committee makes no mention of any such scheme. In any case, there was no evidence of it in the behavior of the crowd. The American Civil Liberties Union is preparing a broad legal assault, and the big local "rock" radio station is raising funds for it. Governor Ronald Reagan, on the other hand, thinks that "the police did not use excessive brutality." Just the ordinary kind. For some reason, police in Southern California have always been extraordinarily aggressive—the common phrase is "blue fascism." It shows up everywhere: people strolling in Beverly Hills in the evening are often stopped, frisked and questioned on the assumption that only thieves, murderers and subversives don't ride in cars.

But what aggravates even that natural tendency of the police to aggression is the war mood. It is not confined to Los Angeles. Raids in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Atlanta and Newark and a score of smaller cities suggest that there is a "new brutalism" in the way authority acts to put down resistance. Some claim it is an inevitable "backlash," and the antidote is more caution and moderation on the part of the resisters. More likely, it is a response, perhaps, an inevitable one, to the fragmentation of a national consensus, the breaking of trust, the death of hope.

There is a sense this summer that the society is approaching a point of crisis, an historical moment which will divide that which went before from that which follows. For more than two decades, the U.S. has known the luxury of continuity: despite the small wars, the economic dips and the nasty incidents, this is still the post-war era. There has been no sharp break, nothing like 1929-1932 or 1941-1945. But the rocking and the rolling that many now feel may be the beginning of the new social earthquake. The war triggered it, but there were obviously deeper causes. It is not inappropriate that in California, which gave the world Watts, the hippies and Ronald Reagan, the major cracks are appearing.

Andrew Kopkind, Washington correspondent for the New Statesman (from which this is reprinted), will write a regular column for Ramparts.

Media:



THE PRESS VERSUS GARRISON

by William W. Turner

LEE HARVEY OSWALD assassinated President Kennedy "beyond a reasonable doubt," intoned Walter Cronkite during the four-night CBS special series on the Warren Report which began on June 26. Presenting an expertly blended mixture of gimmickry, dubious experimentation and selectivity of witnesses, CBS rubber-stamped the Warren Report practically point by point without giving its critics a chance for specific rebuttal. Only a week before, NBC had broadcast its own special, a slapdash but nonetheless damaging flat-out attack on New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison and his assassination conspiracy probe. The charges and conclusions of both programs were widely reported in the daily press; what Americans witnessed was a strange and dangerous new phenomenon in which the networks synthesized news—leaving it to the television/radio columnists to pass judgment on the accuracy of their exposition of evidence.

One could sense an urgency in both productions that betrayed any pretense at objectivity. Why? When Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment* and Edward Jay Epstein's *Inquest* were published last summer, casting a national pall of doubt on the Commission's findings, there were no signs of panic in the Establishment. It was only when Jim Garrison propounded a counter theory to the Report, produced evidence tending to support it, and indicated that he would use the full powers of his office to prosecute the conspirators that beads of sweat started rolling down Washington foreheads.

Six months in the making, at a cost of a quarter million dollars, the CBS series was obviously designed to revitalize sagging public confidence in the Warren Report—polls showed that a meager 35 per cent were true believers. The CBS effort was not without internal struggles.

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Field Director Robert Richter, who exhaustively interviewed scores of critics and proponents of the Report alike, seemed genuinely inclined towards the critics' point of view when he talked with me, but he allowed that he was having trouble convincing Leslie Midgley, the executive producer in New York, that the critics should get a fair hearing.

They didn't. The script was rewritten four times, and when the series finally unfolded, it was not until the end of the third night that the audience saw a live critic. Thirty-minute tapes had been filmed of Mark Lane and myself, from which were sliced one-minute segments. Meanwhile a string of handpicked witnesses and "experts" were heard from, and Cronkite donned the black cap and pronounced Oswald guilty as charged.

Aware that the skepticism over the Report stemmed from three major inconsistencies—the manifestation of the Zapruder film that the three shots (it was assumed there were only three) had to have been fired within 5.6 seconds, the implausible "magic bullet" theory, and the secrecy over the autopsy x-rays—CBS set out to dispel all doubt.

On the Zapruder film dilemma, CBS trumped the Warren Report by stretching the time constraint to a readily believable nine seconds. At least it thought it did. One technique was to suggest that Oswald may have fired the first shot at frame 186, when the President momentarily appeared through a gap in the tree foliage. Even the Commission had discounted this possibility, but—CBS discovered that the Zapruder film was noticeably blurred at frames 190, 227 and 318. Kennedy was behind a freeway sign at 190, but 227 and 318 are several frames after the film shows Kennedy's reaction to the impact of bullets. The blurs, CBS posited, were caused by Zapruder's reflexive "jumping" at the crack of the rifle. A startling discovery—especially considering that frames 195 and 203 show equal blurring, raising the presumption of five shots.

Determined to elongate the time element, CBS further suggested that Zapruder may have inadvertently flipped his camera lever to its slow motion setting; thus his footage represents a time span of up to nine seconds. In point of fact, the faster-running film would have compressed the time to no more than 5.3 and as little as 4.3 seconds.

The "magic bullet" simulation was, on

the face of it, impressive. With the help of an outside consultant, CBS laid four blocks of gelatin separated by Masonite slabs end to end; the arrangement was supposed to represent the muscle, flesh, bone and fiber of the bodies of Kennedy and Connally, the governor's wrist, and finally the governor's thigh, all of which the "magic bullet" allegedly passed through. In slow motion, the camera followed the path of the bullet through the four blocks. In each test, the announcer said, the test bullet lodged in the third block, but he quickly pointed out that with *just a bit of extra energy* it would have made it through—and therefore the single bullet theory was possible. But CBS did not insert a "rib cage" to synthesize the one shattered by a bullet. Furthermore, it did not announce the distance from which the test shots were fired (the penetrating ability of a bullet drops off sharply as the distance increases); didn't let its viewers look at the test bullet to compare it with the almost pristine condition of the actual "magic bullet" (CE 399); and neglected to duplicate the eccentric path the "magic bullet" would have had to prescribe.

As for the withheld autopsy photos and x-rays, CBS conceded that the Commission was remiss and sloppy in certain phases of its inquiry, and elicited from John McCloy, a Commission member, the statement that if he had it all to do over again, he would insist that the material be subpoenaed.

The critics' contention that shots came from the Grassy Knoll was dismissed by CBS with what amounted to a haughty wave of the hand; this despite the fact that Ray Marcus, one of the more persistent critics, dropped in on CBS' Midgley when the program was in production and showed him an enlarged photograph of the head and shoulders of a man against a foliage background. "Ah," exclaimed the unsuspecting Midgley, "that's a picture of the man who shot James Meredith from ambush in Mississippi." It wasn't; it was an enlargement from a spectator's photograph showing the Grassy Knoll at the moment the President was shot—and the Warren Commission had insisted no one was on top of the Knoll. Yet on the program Midgley gave his viewers a quick look at the photograph—not a closeup of the enlargement—in effect saying there was no one there, as any fool could plainly see.

CBS's egregious talents were also put

to work on D.A. Jim Garrison, who came off as a ruthless opportunist trying to convert malpractice into political advantage, and Mike Wallace grilled him with staccato questions along the line of, "Do you still beat your wife?" Garrison, however, happens to be unflappable, and he didn't rise to the bait. In response to one loaded question about a prisoner who claimed to have been offered a deal to say the right thing, he fired back deadpan, "As a matter of fact, this is part of our incentive program for convicts. We also have six weeks in the Bahamas. We give them LSD to get there."

The gross injustice of CBS' treatment of Garrison came into focus when it preempted considerable air time to afford William Gurvich, a newly defected Garrison aide, the opportunity to level a broadside of charges against the D.A. and his investigation, without giving Garrison the opportunity to reply. Garrison had "no case," Gurvich contended, was employing "illegal and unethical methods," and was in fact "paranoiac." Gurvich himself had been "sickened," he claimed, by the arrest of Clay Shaw (it was Gurvich who had proudly announced the arrest). The day following his CBS appearance, Gurvich repeated his charges to a New Orleans grand jury, which decided they had no substance. CBS didn't bother to interrupt its wrap-up program that night to let the nation know.

Although Gurvich preferred to think of himself as Garrison's chief investigator, the facts are somewhat different. He materialized at Garrison's office just before Christmas and offered his services in the investigation. Sorely understaffed, Garrison accepted. Gurvich was never on salary, but his enthusiasm was unquestioned. At one point, when a warrant was obtained for the arrest of Sergio Arcacha-Smith, a former leader of a CIA-sponsored anti-Castro front, Gurvich told Garrison he wanted to go to Dallas and personally make the arrest so he could say, "I've gotcha, Arcacha." (Governor Connally refused to sign extradition papers, and the trip was never made.) But Gurvich, it developed, had never read the Warren Report and its volumes, and had only a shaky grasp of the investigation. Garrison kept the investigation in the hands of his actual chief sleuth, Louis Ivon, a police detective posted to the D.A.'s office. Gurvich's interest began to fade, and for the six

weeks prior to his defection he hardly showed up at the office.

During this period Gurvich was meeting frequently in New Orleans with Walter Sheridan, Bobby Kennedy's former "get Hoffa" operative, now evidently NBC's "get Garrison" ramrod. On June 25, Gurvich had a private meeting in New York with Bobby Kennedy, and although both declined comment, the fact that he was defecting leaked to NBC. It was Newsday, the Long Island newspaper for which Bill Moyers left the White House, that broke the story.

THE HASTILY-CONTRIVED NBC special had been scheduled for June 20 in anticipation of Gurvich's defection, but he balked past the deadline. As a surrogate, Saturday Evening Post writer Jim Phelan anchored the program. His article "Rush to Judgment In New Orleans" in the May 6 issue had thrown a cloud of doubt over the testimony of key Garrison witness Perry Russo as to whether he was present when Shaw, David Ferrie and Oswald discussed a scheme to assassinate President Kennedy. Russo had first been interviewed by young Assistant D.A. Andrew J. Sciambra. Phelan contended that Russo had mentioned nothing about the Shaw-Ferrie-Oswald discussion to Sciambra, that the notion of a plot had been implanted in Russo's mind by Garrison while he was under Sodium Pentothal and hypnosis.

As *prima facie* evidence, Phelan introduced a memorandum by Sciambra, reporting his initial interview with Russo which indeed made no mention of the plot discussion. The memorandum had been rather casually handed to Phelan by Garrison; and reading Phelan's piece, one gets the impression he not only assumed it was a complete memorandum, but presumed he had been cut in on *all* of Garrison's case.

The full story is this. Sciambra thoroughly interviewed Russo on Saturday, February 25, at which time the plot discussion was revealed. He reported the interview to Garrison, who, realizing its importance, had Russo come to the office first thing Monday. At that time, Russo repeated the entire story in the presence of a stenographer. To settle the question of Russo's veracity in his own mind as far as possible, Garrison ordered a "truth serum" (Sodium Pentothal) test, which turned out favorable. Then,

since over three years had elapsed since the event, Russo was hypnotized to facilitate his recollection of details. Meanwhile the harried Sciambra, trying to keep up with the tide of work engulfing the office, started to dictate his memorandum in bits and snatches. It was half-completed when thrust at Phelan.

Perry Russo claims he was contacted by Jim Phelan, acting on behalf of NBC, to persuade him to recant his testimony. Russo also says Walter Sheridan showed up at his residence shortly before the NBC special and sought his help "to wreck the Garrison investigation." Sheridan dangled a carrot, asserted Russo, in the form of an offer "to set me up in California, protect my job, and guarantee Garrison would never get me extradited back to Louisiana." When he stuck to his story, Richard Townley of NBC's New Orleans affiliate approached him brandishing a stick. Townley threatened, Russo says, to ruin his personal reputation. Garrison has filed criminal charges against Sheridan and Townley for attempting to suborn, but he is keeping his fingers crossed. "Perry asked us for a couple of hundred dollars to get started on a job," Garrison explains, "and we turned him down as a matter of policy. I know it's awful hard for a young man to turn down big offers."

The massive propaganda barrage has been aided not only by the NBC and CBS networks, but by the press at large. Hugh Aynesworth of Newsweek wrote that Garrison was shamelessly preying on the "vulnerability of homosexuals," and the Associated Press disseminated a tendentious series whitewashing the Report—the longest tome in AP history. As for NBC's slanted coverage, Garrison offers the theory that "NBC is owned by RCA, and RCA is one of the top ten government contractors."

Jim Garrison is a duly elected district attorney prosecuting a homicide conspiracy case. That his evidence is not whimsical or unfounded has been confirmed by a New Orleans grand jury and a three-judge panel. In a grotesque twist, the networks and press have not only convicted the *prosecutor* in a "trial by newspaper," they have judged a court case before millions of viewers and thus possibly prejudiced venire men who will hear the case.

Such tactics smack of desperation—and indicate there is much to hide.