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THE KENNEDY CONSPIRACY

An Uncommissioned Report on
the Jim Garrison Investigation

BY PARIS FLAMMONDE

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE IN FULL



Appreciation is expressed to the New Orleans *States-Item*, and Chief Photographer O. J. Valetton and A. P. Vidocovich, Jr.; the Winnipeg *Free Press* and Gerry Cairns; Wide World Photos and William Edell; and Tom Bethell of Mr. Garrison's staff.

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR
MEREDITH PRESS

JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY

1917-1963

ROBERT FRANCIS KENNEDY

1925-1968

Camelot and Avalon

CHAPTER SIX

THE CUBANS

In the early morning hours of July 31, 1963, FBI agents swooped down on a small summer cottage in the resort town of Lacombe, Louisiana, north of Lake Pontchartrain, and seized a cache of arms including forty-eight cases of dynamite, twenty 100-pound bomb casings, napalm, blasting caps, and primer cord. According to an Associated Press account of the raid, "An informed source said the explosives were part of a cache to be used in an attack on Cuba."¹ But FBI spokesmen would say only that the war material was "seized in connection with an investigation of an effort to carry out a military operation from the United States against a country with which the United States is at peace." The FBI declined to reveal if any arrests had been made or name the owner of the single-storied cottage, who was subsequently identified as William Julius McLaney of New Orleans. McLaney was inaccessible to the press, but his wife told reporters that the cottage had been "loaned" to a Cuban exile friend named José Juarez. Mrs. McLaney said that she and her husband had operated a tourist business in Havana but left Cuba in 1960 "because Castro made things impossible down there."²

In those days of feverish intrigue against the Castro regime by Cuban exiles in the southwestern United States the Lacombe raid received little attention. It has, however, assumed a prominent role in Jim Garrison's investigation of the Kennedy assassination. Garrison believes that Cuban exiles were involved in the alleged conspiracy to kill Kennedy, and contends that a Cuban exile group training north of Lake Pontchartrain for an assassination attempt on Fidel Castro later "spun off" into the suc-

¹ *Washington Post*, August 1, 1963.

² *New Orleans States-Item*, May 4, 1967.

cessful attempt on Kennedy. Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Haynes Johnson, whose book *The Bay of Pigs* was written with the cooperation of top Cuban exile leaders, summarized Garrison's thesis in the Washington *Sunday Star* of February 26, 1967:

The thread that winds through the story involves one of the central problems of John F. Kennedy's two years, ten months and two days in the White House—the problem of Cuba. It is Garrison's obvious contention that Cubans were somehow involved in the President's death. . . . His case appears to rest on one theory about the assassination: That Oswald was working with an anti-Castro right-wing organization and actually intended to kill Fidel; that Oswald's publicly pro-Communist activities in New Orleans and his attempt to enter Mexico and secure a Cuban visa were a ruse to enable him to carry out that Castro assassination objective; that when Oswald was denied entrance to Cuba, the plot shifted, and Kennedy, accused of letting down the anti-Castro Cubans at the Bay of Pigs, became the target.

Garrison charges that David Ferrie, Jack Ruby, and Lee Oswald were involved in training two paramilitary groups of Cuban exiles and American "neo-Nazis" north of Lake Pontchartrain, in the immediate vicinity of the McLaney home. He believes that after Kennedy ordered a crack-down on such CIA-supported activities, the fanatic anti-Castroites turned their rifle sights on the President.

In Garrison's scenario, the raid on the McLaney cottage in Lacombe may well have signed Kennedy's death warrant. The McLaneys thus deserve closer scrutiny than the press afforded them in the aftermath of the incident.

Garrison's investigators have discovered that Julius McLaney's brother, Mike McLaney, operated a plush gambling casino in Havana during the Batista regime. In an article entitled "How Castro Double-Crossed the Gambling Syndicate," in *Parade* on April 23, 1963, three months before the FBI raid, Jack Anderson reported that McLaney's casino in the Hotel Nacional was nationalized by the Castro government at an investment loss of over \$7 million to its owners. McLaney and his associates were reimbursed in Cuban pesos—worthless outside Cuba, where the gamblers are *persona non grata*. Mike McLaney subsequently ran a gambling club in Las Vegas, but he never forgot that he had a score to settle with Castro. Jack Anderson reported in his column of May 4, 1963, that during the Bay of Pigs invasion American oilmen, still hoping to regain their nationalized installations in Cuba, had pressured the government to forestall planned firebomb raids on the Esso,

Texaco, and Shell refineries in Cuba. According to Anderson, "Destruction of the three big facilities would have paralyzed the Castro war machine within weeks. But the CIA command post ordered the plane to ignore the refineries and look for gun emplacements to bomb. Later, Mike McLaney, an American gambler . . . sent the CIA a detailed plan for knocking out the three refineries. But instead of getting his plan approved, McLaney got an urgent phone call warning him not to attempt such a thing under any circumstances." McLaney subsequently was one of the organizers of a multimillion-dollar effort to take over gambling casinos in the Bahamas on behalf of a Las Vegas gambling syndicate with close Mafia connections. The syndicate's bribery of public officials in Nassau was exposed by local political reformers and led to the fall of the Bahamian government and a scandal that had serious political repercussions in London. On November 20, 1967, the Bahamian commissioner of police issued a report declaring that "Mr. McLaney was an unscrupulous individual. . . . We regard Mr. McLaney as a thoroughly dangerous person who is likely to do nothing but harm to the Bahamas."³

Garrison suspects that in 1963 both Mike and Julius McLaney were serving the interests of the CIA by providing Cuban exiles with a training site and arms cache for a prospective raid on Cuba. He says there were two anti-Castro groups training north of Lake Pontchartrain, one "overt," the other "covert." The covert group, according to Garrison, was led by David Ferrie, who drilled five-man commando teams in guerrilla warfare practice and infiltration techniques on a site adjacent to the McLaney cottage. But, according to the *New Orleans States-Item*,⁴ "Immediately after the Lacombe raid, the so-called 'overt' Cuban group disappeared." An organizer of both groups, Loran Eugene Hall, was shortly afterward arrested near Key Largo, Florida, and a cache of arms and drugs in his possession was confiscated.

Hall, a shadowy character, is one of the many links tying Lee Harvey Oswald to anti-Castro Cuban exiles in New Orleans and Dallas. Hall's involvement in the events leading to President Kennedy's death first came to light through the testimony of Mrs. Sylvia Odio, a twenty-six-year-old Cuban exile living in Dallas, who in 1963 was active in Manolo Ray's JURE (*Junta Revolucionaria*), the most liberal of the anti-Castro exile groups. Mrs. Odio testified before the Warren Commission that on September 26, 1963, three men visited her Dallas apartment, said they had just come from New Orleans and were "leaving for a

³ *The New York Times*, November 21, 1963.

⁴ *New Orleans States-Item*, May 5, 1967.

trip." They delivered intimate information about Mrs. Odio's father, then imprisoned by Castro on the Isle of Pines, that could have come only from underground or CIA sources, and requested her aid in clandestine anti-Castro activities. Two of the men appeared to be Latins, possibly Mexican, and they called themselves by their "war names" of "Leopoldo" and "Angelo." The third man was an American, whom "Leopoldo" introduced as "Leon Oswald," and later identified as an ex-Marine and crack shot. Leopoldo told Mrs. Odio, "You know our idea is to introduce him to the underground in Cuba, because he is great, he is kind of nuts. He has told us we don't have any guts . . . because President Kennedy should have been assassinated after the Bay of Pigs, and some Cuban should have done that, because he was the one that was holding the freedom of Cuba . . . and he said, 'It is so easy to do it.' He has told us. . . ." ⁵

When Mrs. Odio saw Lee Harvey Oswald on television the day after the assassination both she and her sister Annie, who had been present during the September 26 meeting, recognized him as "Leon Oswald." Mrs. Odio was so traumatized that she collapsed. But she didn't notify the FBI or Secret Service about her information, probably because she "feared that the Cuban exiles might be accused of the President's death." ⁶ A friend who had heard of the encounter informed the authorities on November 29, 1963.

When Mrs. Odio was finally called before the Warren Commission on July 22, 1964, ten months after she had met "Leon Oswald," Commission Counsel Wesley Liebeler inquired: ". . . You had made the connection in your mind between these three men that came to your apartment and the assassination?" Mrs. Odio replied: "Yes." ⁷ Shown photographs of Oswald she was asked if she had "any doubts" in her mind "after looking at these pictures that the man that was in your apartment was Lee Harvey Oswald." Mrs. Odio replied: "I don't have any doubts."

The Commission, however, concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald could not have been the man Mrs. Odio encountered in Dallas on September 26 because it was established that between 6 A.M. and 2 P.M. on that day he had crossed the Mexican border. Nor could the meeting have occurred the preceding day—Mrs. Odio was not certain whether it was the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth—because the record of Oswald's movements proved that he had been in New Orleans on the twenty-fifth. As Sylvia

⁵ Warren Commission Hearings, Vol. 11, p. 372.

⁶ Warren Commission Exhibit No. 3147.

⁷ Warren Commission Hearings, Vol. 11, p. 382.

Meagher writes in her exhaustive analysis of the Warren Commission's evidence:⁸

The Commission acknowledges that there is no firm evidence of the means by which Oswald traveled to Houston on the first leg of his trip from New Orleans to Mexico but claims that his only time which is unaccounted for was between the morning of Wednesday the 25th . . . and 2:35 A.M. on Thursday the 26th, when he boarded a bus in Houston headed for Laredo. The only way Oswald could have gone to Dallas, visited Mrs. Odio, and still arrived in Houston in time to catch the 2:35 bus to Laredo on Thursday the 26th was to fly, and investigation disclosed no indication that Oswald had traveled between those points by air.

But if Lee Harvey Oswald was not the "Leon Oswald" Mrs. Odio met in Dallas, who was? Could there have been a "second Oswald," deliberately impersonating the real Oswald in order to implicate him in advance of the assassination? Garrison believes there was, and his first leads in the direction of the so-called second Oswald were provided by the FBI. According to the Warren Report, "The Commission specifically requested the FBI to attempt to locate and identify the two men who Mrs. Odio stated were with the man she thought was Oswald. On September 16, 1964, the FBI located Loran Eugene Hall in Johnsandale, California." It goes on: "He told the FBI that in September, 1963, he was in Dallas, soliciting aid in connection with anti-Castro activities. He said he had visited Mrs. Odio. He was accompanied by Lawrence Howard, a Mexican-American from East Los Angeles, and one William Seymour from Arizona. He stated that Seymour is similar in appearance to Lee Harvey Oswald; he speaks only a few words of Spanish, as Mrs. Odio had testified one of the men who visited her did." Although the FBI "had not yet completed its investigation into this matter at the time the report went to press," the Commission concluded "that Lee Harvey Oswald was not at Mrs. Odio's apartment in September, 1963."⁹

The FBI's studied disinterest in Mrs. Odio's enigmatic visitors is reflected elsewhere in its investigation of the Kennedy assassination. Former *Life* reporter Richard Billings reveals in his five-part examination of the Garrison case in the *Chicago Daily News*: "An FBI report dated November 23, 1963, . . . tells of an informant who advised that in September Loran Hall had redeemed a .30-06 rifle from a pawn shop in

⁸ *Accessories After the Fact* (New York, Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), p. 377.

⁹ Warren Commission Report, p. 324.

Los Angeles. . . . What the FBI concluded . . . is astounding. The closing paragraph of the report reads: 'No further investigation was conducted, as it is obvious that the rifle mentioned above was not used in connection with the assassination of President Kennedy.' " Concludes Billings aridly: "The day after the assassination was a trifle early for the FBI to be making decisions like that."

Sylvia Meagher comments: "If any aspect of the investigation was more crucial in its implications, it is not readily apparent. . . . The Commission's failure to get to the bottom of this affair, with its inescapable implications, is inexcusable. If the Commission could leave such business unfinished, we are entitled to ask whether its members were ever determined to uncover the truth." ¹⁰

While the Commission evidence is far from conclusive, Jim Garrison believes that it is not improbable that William Seymour, deliberately impersonating Oswald in order to implicate him in the President's assassination, was the "Leon Oswald" Mrs. Odio met in Dallas. According to Garrison, Howard, Hall, and Seymour are all elements of a human weapon pieced together by anti-Castro Cuban exiles, American neo-Fascists and lower echelon CIA operatives—a weapon that on November 22, 1963, fatally struck down John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Garrison has revealed countless contacts between Lee Oswald and the anti-Castro underground in New Orleans and Dallas. One connection centers about the elusive careers of the late Guy Bannister and Hugh Ward, who operated a private detective agency in New Orleans while Oswald was residing in the city. (Bannister died of a heart attack in 1964 and Ward was killed when a plane he was piloting for former New Orleans Mayor Delesseps Morrison crashed mysteriously in Mexico on May 23, 1965. Morrison had previously introduced Clay Shaw to President Kennedy on an airplane flight in 1963.) According to Garrison, "Guy Bannister was one of the most militant right-wing anti-Communists in New Orleans. He was a former FBI agent and his headquarters at 544 Camp Street was a clearing-house for Cuban exile and paramilitary right-wing activities. . . . Bannister also published a newsletter for his clients that included virulent anti-Kennedy polemics." ¹¹ The *New Orleans States-Item* ¹² reported that "Bannister . . . is believed to have worked in cooperation with a U.S. military intelligence office here," "and Garrison's office has developed evidence that Bannister had close ties with both the CIA and the office of Naval Intelli-

¹⁰ *Accessories After the Fact*, p. 379.

¹¹ *Playboy*, October, 1967.

¹² May 5, 1967.

gence. According to the New Orleans *States-Item*,¹³ "A close friend and adviser of Bannister's told the *States-Item* the veteran FBI agent was a key liaison man for U.S. Government-sponsored anti-Communist activities in Latin America." The newspaper quotes this source as saying that "Guy participated in every important anti-Communist South and Central American revolution which came along."

Ex-FBI agent William Turner reports that

while researching an article on the Minutemen . . . I learned from a defector—a Minuteman aide who had access to their headquarters' files—about an allied group in New Orleans known as the Anti-Communism League of the Caribbean. The League was said by the aide to have been used by the CIA in its engineering of the 1954 overthrow of the leftist Arbenz regime in Guatemala. The Minuteman defector said the names of both Bannister and Ward appeared in the secret Minutemen files as members of the Minutemen and as operatives of the Anti-Communism League of the Caribbean. . . .¹⁴

Bannister was also one of the incorporators in early 1961 of a militant right-wing anti-Castro group called Citizens for a Free Cuba, along with Grady C. Durham, William Dalzell, and William Klein. The latter is the brother of Burton C. Klein, a lawyer for Alvin Beaubœuf, one of the figures in the Garrison case and a former roommate of Ferrie who accompanied him on his mysterious trip to Texas on the day of the assassination. Garrison charges that Burton Klein's fees are being paid directly by the CIA. Dalzell is an international petroleum engineer and adviser to the Ethiopian government. On June 30, 1967, Garrison issued a subpoena for Dalzell to appear for questioning in his probe of the Kennedy assassination, but the subpoena was subsequently withdrawn after Dalzell volunteered to testify in secret.

Bannister and Ward appear to be the last men in the world having anything in common with that self-confessed Marxist and defector to the USSR, Lee Harvey Oswald. And yet Oswald used the Bannister and Ward address—544 Camp Street—for his one-man "Fair Play for Cuba Committee."

When Oswald was arrested in the summer of 1963 after a street-corner altercation with right-wing anti-Castro Cuban exile leader Carlos Bringuier, he was searched by the police and a record made of his possessions. Taken from Oswald at the time, according to the testimony of Se-

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ramparts*, June, 1967.

cret Service agent Anthony E. Gerrets, was a "booklet, *'The Crime Against Cuba'*, . . . with a rubber-stamp impression, 'FPCC, 544 Camp Street, New Orleans'. . . ."

The building at 544 Camp is a weather-beaten gray granite structure on the corner of Lafayette Street. Sam Newman, the building's owner, told Sgt. Horace J. Austin, Jr. and Det. Robert M. Frey of the New Orleans police force on November 27, 1963, that he had never had either Oswald or the Fair Play for Cuba Committee as tenants. He had, however, rented a second-floor office to the Cuban Revolutionary Council. According to Newman, "Guy Bannister was well acquainted with this organization."¹⁵ The Cuban Revolutionary Council was created by the CIA on March 18, 1961, as a prelude to the Bay of Pigs invasion. It constituted a "popular front" of the warring Cuban exile factions, bringing together under one leadership the two major exile organizations, the MRP (*Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo*) led by Manolo Ray and the *Frente Revolucionario Democrático* of Tony Varona. The CIA envisioned the front as a provisional government of Cuba once Castro was toppled, but after the Bay of Pigs fiasco the organization gradually disintegrated.

Also housed at 544 Camp Street were two other militantly right-wing anti-Castro organizations, the Crusade to Free Cuba and the Cuban Democratic Revolutionary Front, founded by Sergio Arcacha Smith. Arcacha Smith had a finger in all the organizations housed at 544 Camp Street; he was the New Orleans delegate of the Cuban Revolutionary Council in 1961 and 1962, he was active in the Crusade to Free Cuba, and he was leader of the Cuban Democratic Revolutionary Front.

Arcacha Smith, forty-four, a diplomat under the Batista regime, fled to the United States after Castro took power. A father of five, Arcacha settled first in Miami and then moved to New Orleans, where he set up the Cuban Democratic Revolutionary Front in December, 1960. (According to the *Washington Post*, New Orleans police intelligence records reveal that the front was "legitimate in nature and presumably had the unofficial sanction of the CIA.") Shortly before the Kennedy assassination Arcacha moved to Houston, and the day after it he took up residence in Dallas, becoming an export consultant for an air-conditioning firm. A New Orleans *States-Item* story said that Arcacha "was training men here to participate in an invasion of Cuba" in 1961. The *Dallas Morning News*¹⁶ further identified him as "chief of Cuban revolutionary activities

¹⁵ Warren Report Hearings, Vol. 22, p. 826.

¹⁶ April 4, 1967.

in the New Orleans area before the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. He collected money and coordinated the training of Cuban refugees preparing to take part in the invasion. New Orleans newspapers have said Ferrie was in the same work."

Arcacha had close links to both Bannister and Ward and to David Ferrie, who worked as an investigator for Bannister's private detective agency. According to Garrison, "Ferrie was a paid investigator for Bannister, and the two men knew each other very well. During 1962 and 1963, Ferrie spent a good deal of time at 544 Camp Street and he made a series of mysterious long-distance phone calls to Central America. We have a record of those calls." ¹⁷

Ferrie was active in Arcacha's Cuban Democratic Revolutionary Front and was considered by some as its co-leader. Ex-FBI agent William Turner reports that "Ferrie was frequently noticed by the New Orleans Cuban colony in the company of Sergio Arcacha Smith. . . . The Lake Pontchartrain waterfront near Arcacha's home seems to have become a locus for mysterious meetings. Various Garrison witnesses claim to have seen Ferrie there, as well as an exchange of money between Oswald and Shaw." The New Orleans *Times Picayune* reported that "Ferrie reportedly attended meetings of the group and at least one witness in the Warren Commission hearings said that Federal Bureau of Investigation agent Warren C. De Brueys attended meetings. . . ."

Garrison subpoenaed De Brueys to appear before the New Orleans grand jury in the spring of 1963, but on the instructions of the Justice Department he pleaded executive privilege and refused to testify. According to Garrison, "De Brueys was involved with anti-Castro exile activities in New Orleans. . . . I'd like to find out the exact nature of De Brueys' relationship with Lee Oswald. As long as Oswald was in New Orleans, so was De Brueys. When Oswald moved to Dallas, De Brueys followed him. After the assassination De Brueys returned to New Orleans. This may all be coincidence, but I find it interesting that De Brueys refuses to cooperate with our office—significant and frustrating, because I feel he could shed considerable light on Oswald's ties to anti-Castro groups." ¹⁸

Arcacha Smith, Ferrie, his roommate Layton Martens, and Gordon Novel, an admitted CIA agent, were all involved in the burglary of an arms bunker in Houma, Louisiana, leased by the Schlumberger Wells Services Company of Houston. The looting of the arms bunker was organized by the CIA to procure weapons for the anti-Castro underground in

¹⁷ *Playboy*, October, 1967.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Cuba. (Some of the war material taken from the Houma bunker on August 1, 1961, showed up almost three years to the day later when the FBI raided the Cuban exile arms cache at the McLaney cottage in Lacombe, Louisiana.) Garrison has tried unsuccessfully to extradite Novel and Arcacha to New Orleans on the burglary charge stemming from their raid on the Houma bunker—and, far more important, to grill them about their role in the assassination of President Kennedy.

The *States-Item* revealed on April 25, 1967, that a friend of the ubiquitous Bannister, "a man whose word is considered reliable," saw fifty to one hundred crates of ammunition in Bannister's storeroom about this time, all labeled "Schlumberger."

"Five or six of the boxes were open," the *States-Item* continued. "Inside, he says, were rifle grenades, land mines and some 'little missiles' of a kind he had never seen before. The friend said he remonstrated with Bannister because 'fooling with this kind of stuff could get you in trouble.' He added: 'Bannister said no, it was all right, that he had approval from somebody. He said the stuff would just be there overnight, that somebody was supposed to pick it up. He said a bunch of fellows connected with the Cuban deal asked to leave it there overnight.'"

The *States-Item* quotes Novel as saying that the munitions were subsequently consolidated and used in an exile raid on the Cuban town of Varacoa.

When the *States-Item* story broke, Sergio Arcacha Smith, who had previously denied any involvement in the Houma burglary and said he had never heard of Gordon Novel, refused to comment on Novel's remarks, telling newsmen he wouldn't have "anything to say about anything."

Jim Garrison wonders how deeply involved in these New Orleans mysteries Novel and Arcacha Smith are. However, he has been unable to bring either man before a court of law to pursue his inquiries. Novel fled New Orleans after learning Garrison sought him and Arcacha Smith remains in Dallas, outside Garrison's legal jurisdiction.

Garrison initially dispatched two of his investigators, Louis Ivon and William Gurvich, to Dallas in an effort to persuade Arcacha to return voluntarily to New Orleans, but the Cuban exile leader said he would talk to them only if Dallas policemen were present, a condition Garrison rejected. (Gurvich, who in June "defected" from Garrison's staff, had earlier asked the district attorney to allow him to make the arrest if Arcacha ever returned to New Orleans, because he wanted to say, "I've gotcha, Arcacha.")

Arcacha's lawyer, William Colvin, subsequently indicated his client might be willing to talk to the New Orleans district attorney "so long as

he doesn't have to go into the lair of Mr. Garrison." Colvin claimed that "Garrison is a man who is power mad" and uses "the law like a damn club." Arcacha, he said, feared for his life if he returned to New Orleans to testify—whether at the hands of the club-wielding Garrison or his fellow Cuban exiles, Colvin did not specify.

On April 1 Garrison telegraphed an arrest warrant to Dallas for Arcacha, accusing him of conspiring with David Ferrie and Gordon Novel to burglarize the Houma munitions bunker. Houma District Attorney Wilmore Broussard simultaneously dispatched arrest warrants for Novel and Arcacha on simple burglary charges. Arcacha was arrested by Dallas authorities on April 3 and released on a \$1,500 bond after arraignment.

For the next several months Garrison fought without success to have Arcacha and Novel extradited to Louisiana. Governor James Rhodes of Ohio and Texas Governor John Connally refused to extradite either man unless Garrison first assured them that the fugitives would be guaranteed immunity from civil and criminal action—an almost unheard-of condition in extradition proceedings. Garrison suspects that CIA pressure is at the root of the governors' refusal to extradite Arcacha and Novel.

The reason we are unable to extradite *anyone* connected with this case is that there are powerful forces in Washington who find it imperative to conceal from the American public the truth about the assassination. And as a result, terrific pressure has been brought to bear on the governors of the states involved to prevent them from signing the extradition papers and returning the defendants to stand trial. I'm sorry to say that in every case, these Jell-O-spined governors have caved in and "played the game" Washington's way.¹⁹

Whatever the motivations of Governors Rhodes and Connally, Gordon Novel and Sergio Arcacha Smith have found sanctuary in their states. On July 5, 1967, Arcacha was officially released from extradition proceedings initiated by Garrison because "Texas Governor John Connally refused to sign the executive warrant of extradition within the specified ninety days." Arcacha was released from \$1,500 in bonds he had posted during the proceedings.

On July 3 all extradition proceedings against Gordon Novel were also dropped.

But Garrison is not discouraged by his inability to bring Novel and Arcacha to trial. He claims to know their role in the conspiracy and is

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

confident of someday proving it in a court of law. He has also developed startling information about other members of the Cuban exile underground linked to Arcacha, Novel, Ferrie—and Lee Harvey Oswald.

One Cuban exile leader, Carlos Quiroga, a close associate of Arcacha in the Cuban Democratic Revolutionary Front, has attracted Garrison's special attention. According to the district attorney, Quiroga "failed a lie-detector test when he denied knowing in-advance that Kennedy was going to be killed, or having seen the weapons to be used in the assassination." Quiroga is a friend and collaborator of Carlos Bringuier, an anti-Castro exile leader and Bay of Pigs veteran—and an associate of Lee Harvey Oswald. Bringuier, a fanatic right-winger, is tied to Oswald by many threads of evidence.

On August 5, 1963, Oswald approached Bringuier, a thirty-three-year-old native of Havana, in his dry-goods store in downtown New Orleans. Holding a Marine training handbook, Oswald offered his services to Bringuier, then leader of the Cuban Student Directorate (DRE), a right-wing exile group. Philip Gerici, who was in Bringuier's store at the time, states that Oswald indicated he was currently involved in anti-Castro underground activity, and "he said the thing he liked best of all was learning about how to blow up the Huey P. Long Bridge." (The bridge, which spans the Mississippi outside New Orleans, may have been used by Cuban exiles as a training run for actual sabotage within Cuba.) Bringuier said later that "he told me that he had been in the Marine Corps and was willing to train Cubans to fight Castro. He also said that he was willing to go himself to fight Castro."²⁰ Oswald also offered money but Bringuier, suspecting he was an *agent provocateur* attempting to infiltrate the exile group, refused.

Four days later Bringuier and two Cuban exile companions encountered Oswald distributing pro-Castro leaflets on Canal Street, in the heart of the downtown business section. Bringuier was angered, and a scuffle ensued. He described the incident in his testimony before the Warren Commission:

Bringuier: . . . I went near Oswald to hit him. . . . When he sensed my intentions, he put his arm down as an X, like this here (demonstrating).

Liebeler: He closed his arms in front of him?

Bringuier: That is right . . . and told me, "O.K., Carlos, if you want to hit me, hit me."²¹

²⁰ Thomas Buchanan, *Who Killed Kennedy?* (New York, Macfadden-Bartell Sons, 1965), p. 127.

²¹ Warren Commission Hearings, Vol. 10, p. 38.

Bringuier didn't, perhaps nonplussed by the turn-the-other-cheek attitude of the man who three months later would be portrayed as a violent criminal psychopath. But although there had been no actual fight, police spontaneously materialized and arrested Oswald, who spent the next twenty-four hours in the tank of the First District Police Station. On August 12 he was fined ten dollars on a charge of disturbing the peace.

Jim Garrison suspects that the incident with Bringuier was prearranged as part of the cover of procommunism that Oswald was establishing to disguise his real ties to the CIA. Garrison's thesis is supported by Marina Oswald, who told the Warren Commission that Oswald set up his New Orleans Fair Play for Cuba Committee "primarily for purposes of self-advertising. He wanted to be arrested. I think he wanted to get into the newspapers, so that he would be known." The Commission itself concluded that "according to Marina Oswald, he thought that would help him when he got to Cuba." Police Lt. Francis Martell reported that Oswald was "a very cool speaker. . . . He displayed little emotion and was completely aloof. *He seemed to have them set up to create an incident.* When the incident occurred, he remained peaceful and gentle . . ." (italics added). In June, 1964, Bringuier went on a lecture tour sponsored by Billy James Hargis' ultraright-wing Christian Crusade. Bringuier told his audiences that after he and Oswald were taken to the First District Police Station they were met by two FBI agents who requested Oswald to name pro-Castro individuals in the New Orleans area. The Cuban recalled that Oswald replied: "I'll tell you, but not in front of Bringuier." The FBI men then asked Bringuier to withdraw, and continued their conversation in private.²² Oswald, the alleged fanatic Marxist, was certainly in a cooperative mood that day.

Oswald was not cowed by his run-in with the police. On August 16 he was passing out Fair Play for Cuba leaflets again, this time in front of the International Trade Mart at 124 Camp Street. Trade Mart Director Clay Shaw denies having seen Oswald in front of his building that day.

Bringuier, whether deliberately or by coincidence, was of prime importance in Oswald's efforts to create a public image of himself as pro-Communist before his trip to Mexico to obtain visas for Cuba and Russia. On August 21, 1963, two weeks after their street-corner altercation, Bringuier debated Oswald on a New Orleans radio show, allowing Oswald to further strengthen his credentials as a pro-Castro left-wing extremist. (Right-wing groups subsequently made an LP record of the debate, "with a dynamic commentary by Dr. [Billy James] Hargis.")

²² Buchanan, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

After Oswald was murdered by Jack Ruby in the basement of Dallas police headquarters, Bringuier drove a few more red nails into his coffin. On November 27, 1963, Bringuier was quoted in *The New York Times* as saying that "Lee H. Oswald had boasted that if the United States attempted an invasion of Cuba, he would defend Fidel Castro. . . ." Bringuier told the newspaper that a week after his initial contact with Oswald he dispatched an unnamed "intelligence agent" to Oswald's apartment. The agent told Oswald he was a Cuban but not anti-Castro, and inquired about the activities of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. Bringuier quoted Oswald as telling his "intelligence agent" that "because of the imperialist propaganda Fidel Castro is being blamed as a criminal. But that is not true, because in Cuba all the people are for Fidel Castro. There is only a minority group that doesn't adjust—agree—to the socialist and Marxist regime. . . . That is the reason why we have here these groups of exiles—because they are criminals."

If nothing else, Bringuier's postmortem absolved Oswald of any connection or sympathy with anti-Castro exile groups—and Jack Ruby had made sure three days earlier that Lee Oswald would never say otherwise.

In the aftermath of the assassination, Bringuier revealed some interesting information about Oswald's ties to Cubans and "Latinos" in New Orleans. He forwarded to the FBI a letter he had written to a friend identified only as "José Antonio." According to the FBI commentary, "Mr. Bringuier related that he made available contents of the above-translated letter with the provisions that sections of the letter referring to individuals . . . would not be divulged to any public sources and . . . be limited for the use of the Warren Commission and the FBI only." Some of Bringuier's information, according to the FBI statement, appears to have come from "Orlando Piedra, who was formerly head of the Federal Police in Cuba under the regime of Fulgencio Batista." According to Bringuier's letter:

The police here were looking for a certain "Clay Bertrand" who is a pervert. They say Ruby also is a pervert. One of these individuals that was distributing handbills with Oswald has a face that appears to me to indicate that he is also a pervert. . . . I advised Secret Service that one of those who was distributing handbills with Oswald was working in Pap's Supermarket located on Mirabeau Avenue and who, last year, had attended Delgado Trade School. He mentioned that his name might possibly be Charles and that he regularly got out of the bus at Paris Avenue and Filmore Street. I am given to understand that this was correct but I have learned nothing more. I have given them other information, for example, that Oswald was on one occasion after his

difficulty with me, in the Habana Bar, which is just two doors from my store. Oswald asked for a lemonade and when they collected for it he said that surely the owner had to be a Cuban capitalist. On that occasion Oswald was accompanied by a Mexican. After that the Mexican returned with another Mexican to the Habana Bar. The FBI was making inquiries for them and left word that if they saw them again, to call there. A few days later the brother of the owner of the Habana Bar appeared and asked me to call the FBI because he had seen two Mexicans in an automobile and he had noted the license number but not the state. I called the FBI on that occasion and gave them the information by telephone. This occurred between August fifteenth and August thirtieth, 1963, approximately.

Why the FBI was looking for these "Mexicans" three months before the assassination was never explained.

From the inception of Jim Garrison's probe of the assassination, Bringuier and his shadowy activities have been under close scrutiny, and Bringuier has been subjected to relentless interrogation. Bringuier has maintained his composure and has refused to cooperate with the district attorney's office. Garrison is particularly interested in the volatile Cuban exile leader's relationship with David Ferrie. On February 20, 1967, two days before his mysterious death, Ferrie had a long meeting with Bringuier. Washington *Post* reporter George Lardner, presumably the last man to see Ferrie alive, reveals that after their conference Bringuier immediately left New Orleans and "went on the speaking circuit."

Bringuier is clearly worried about Garrison's investigation and its implications. At the probe's inception he wrote to the House Un-American Activities Committee urging it to "investigate Mr. Garrison's investigation." Bringuier charged on February 25, 1967, that Garrison "has hurt all the Cuban community": since his probe will cause the public to have "suspicion about Cubans." Bringuier has also sued one of Garrison's supporters, Harold Weisberg, author of the *Whitewash* series on the Warren Report, and the publishers of *Saga* magazine for one million dollars' damages. Bringuier's suit alleges that both in Weisberg's book *Whitewash: The Report on the Warren Report*, and in an article in *Saga*, he defamed Bringuier by charging he had been an official under Castro until his defection in 1960, had disguised his prior ties to Castro when he appeared before the Commission, and was a bitter enemy of the United States, despising this country more than Russia because of Washington's "betrayal" of anti-Castro exiles.

There is some evidence that Bringuier's contacts with ultraright-wing

American individuals and organizations is not limited to Billy James Hargis and his "Christian Crusade." Gen. Edwin Walker, the fiery scourge of "com-symp," who was forced out of the Army by the Kennedy administration for indoctrinating his troops with ultraright-wing propaganda, has been linked to Bringuier's DRE organization. Walker, who worked closely with right-wing Cuban exile groups, was reported to have attended at least one meeting of the DRE in Dallas. And Lee Harvey Oswald may have been in the audience with him. (When Oswald was arrested after the assassination, a slip of paper was found in his possession with the word "Walker" and a telephone number that proved to be the general's private home number.)

When General Walker appeared before the Warren Commission, counsel Wesley Liebeler asked him about the DRE, a meeting of which the officer conceded attending.

Liebeler obviously knew a great deal about the DRE meeting, including the precise amount of Walker's contribution, but he did not pursue a question regarding Oswald's attendance beyond the general's denial, although the Commission had in its possession reports from FBI agent James Hosty on all the people who attended the meeting. One of Hosty's notes is of particular significance:

EDWIN L. STEIG, 713 Winifred Street, Garland, Texas, advised he attended a meeting of the Student Directorate of Cuba held on a Sunday evening at 8:00 P.M. some time during the month of October, 1963. There were about seventy-five persons present at this meeting which was held at the First Federal Savings and Loan Association Conference Room in the North Lake Shopping Village in Dallas, Texas. [Explaining that he] sat in the back of the room and listened to several speakers who talked about the situation in Cuba, STEIG stated that another individual sat in the back of this room who he believes is identical with LEE HARVEY OSWALD. This individual spoke to no one but merely listened and then left.²³

One of General Walker's closest friends and associates in Dallas was Col. L. Robert Castorr, who, after the assassination, moved to Arlington, Virginia. Mrs. C. L. Connell of Dallas, who worked as a volunteer in a Cuban Roman Catholic welfare committee, that assisted Cuban exiles, told the FBI on November 29, 1963, that:

²³ Harold Weisberg, *Oswald in New Orleans* (New York, Canyon Books, 1967), pp. 47-48.

General EDWIN A. WALKER and Colonel (FNU) CASTOR [sic], a close acquaintance of WALKER, have been trying to arouse the feelings of the Cuban refugees in Dallas against the KENNEDY administration. She based this statement upon information furnished her by various Cubans to the effect that WALKER and CASTOR [sic] made speeches before Cuban groups in recent months in the Dallas area in opposition to the KENNEDY administration policies.²⁴

Colonel Castorr confirmed to Eric Norden that "I knew Walker as well as I've ever known anybody," but refused to discuss his relations with Cuban exile organizations.

Colonel Castorr's activities are particularly intriguing in light of the testimony before the Warren Commission of Nancy Perrin Rich. Mrs. Rich, who had once worked as a bartender at Jack Ruby's Carousel Club, attended a secret meeting in 1963 between her husband, Robert Perrin, a gunrunner and former narcotics smuggler, and a group of Cuban exiles. The meeting was presided over by a retired American Army colonel who did not give his name. According to Mrs. Rich, "We were going to bring Cuban refugees out—but we were going to run military supplies and Enfield rifles in." The conspirators had a cache of arms stolen from the military on the premises which they displayed to Mrs. Rich and her husband. Perrin demanded a cash retainer for his services and the colonel made a telephone call. Shortly afterward, Mrs. Rich reports, "I had the shock of my life . . . A knock comes on the door and who walks in but my little friend Jack Ruby. . . . You could have knocked me over with a feather . . . And everybody looks like . . . here comes the Savior."

Jim Garrison maintains that "Ruby was the CIA bagman—or paymaster—for the operation and he left immediately after handing over a large sum in cash to the colonel. . . . Ruby appears to have been the CIA's bagman for a wide variety of anti-Castro adventures. . . . Mrs. Rich and her husband subsequently bowed out of the gun-smuggling deal, because, in her words, 'I smelled an element that I did not want to have any part of.' Afraid of retaliation, she and Perrin fled from Dallas and hid out in several different cities, winding up finally in New Orleans. A year later, he was found dead of arsenic poisoning. Though it would be difficult to pick a slower and more excruciating way to kill yourself, it was officially declared a suicide."²⁵

The mysterious Colonel Castorr may or may not have been the unnamed Army colonel presiding over the meeting, but it is surprising that

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

²⁵ *Playboy*, October, 1967.

the Warren Commission never thoroughly investigated Mrs. Rich's testimony or Colonel Castorr's activities in Dallas.

There are indications that Jack Ruby also knew Colonel Castorr's good friend, General Walker, whom Oswald is alleged to have shot at in April, 1963. William McEwan Duff, an Englishman of shadowy background who served for some time as General Walker's personal secretary, told FBI agents that Ruby had visited the general's Dallas home.²⁶ The Warren Commission did not appear interested in Duff's statement, and never bothered to call him as a witness.

Garrison believes Lee Oswald's contacts with Cuban exiles in New Orleans carried over to Dallas, where General Walker and Colonel Castorr were busily whipping up virulent anti-Kennedy sentiment within the Cuban community. In the "Supplementary Investigation Report" filed by Dallas policeman Buddy Walthers, an aide to Sheriff Bill Decker, Walthers reveals: "I talked to Sorrels, the head of the Dallas Secret Service. I was advised that for the past few months at a house at 3128 Harlandale, some Cubans had been having meetings on the weekends and were probably connected with the Freedom for Cuba Party [sic] of which Oswald was a member." Walthers' report was ignored, and on November 26 he reported: "I don't know what action the Secret Service has taken, but I learned today that some time between seven days before the President was shot and the day after he was shot, these Cubans moved from this house. My informant stated that subject Oswald had been to this house before." No effort was made to investigate Walthers' reports, and the identity and activities of the mysterious Cubans at 3128 Harlandale remain unknown.

Oswald may also have had Cuban traveling companions during his trip to Mexico from September 26 to October 3. Raul Lubeano, inspector in charge of the Mexican immigration station at Nueva Laredo, said that one of the inspectors remembers checking Oswald through on September 26. Lubeano said further: "Our inspector said that his best recollection was that Oswald was traveling with two women and a man in an automobile. Oswald was dressed in a sailor's uniform and said he was a photographer. The inspector said . . . they were all in the office together and none spoke English."²⁷

Eugene Pugh, U.S. agent in charge of the customs office on the American side of the bridge at Laredo, Texas, told reporters that Oswald had been checked by American immigration officials on entering and leaving Mexico. Pugh admitted that this was "not the usual procedure," since

²⁶ Warren Commission Exhibit No. 2981.

²⁷ New York *Herald Tribune*, November 26, 1963.

American citizens were allowed to cross the Mexican border without immigration clearance, "but U.S. Immigration has a folder on Oswald's trip."²⁸ The *New York Post* reported on November 25 that William Kline, chief of U.S. Customs in Laredo, revealed that Oswald had been watched on the orders of a "Federal agency at Washington."²⁹

When Oswald reached Mexico City he checked into an obscure little *pension* well off the tourist track, the Hotel Comercio. According to N. S. Finney, Washington bureau chief of the *Buffalo Evening News*, the Comercio is known to be "substantially used by Cuban exiles."

Jim Garrison contends that throughout his trip to Mexico, Oswald was accompanied by a Cuban exile CIA agent, and even asserts that there is a photograph of this man published in the Warren Commission Report. In the words of the district attorney:

Commission Exhibit number . . . 237 . . . is a photograph of a stocky, balding middle-aged man published without explanation or identification in the 26 volumes of the Warren Report. There's a significant story behind Exhibit number 237. Throughout the late summer and fall of 1963, Lee Oswald was shepherded in Dallas and New Orleans by a CIA "baby-sitter" who watched over Oswald's activities and stayed with him. . . . When Oswald went to Mexico City in an effort to obtain a visa for travel to Cuba, this CIA agent accompanied him. Now, at this particular time, Mexico was the only Latin-American nation maintaining diplomatic ties with Cuba, and leftists and Communists from all over the hemisphere traveled to the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City for visas to Cuba. The CIA, quite properly, had placed a hidden movie camera in a building across the street from the embassy and filmed everyone coming and going. The Warren Commission, knowing this, had an assistant legal counsel ask the FBI for a picture of Oswald and his companion on the steps of the embassy, and the FBI, in turn, filed an affidavit saying they had obtained the photo in question from the CIA. The only trouble is that the CIA supplied the Warren Commission with a phony photograph. The photograph of an unidentified man published in the 26 volumes is *not* the man who was filmed with Oswald on the steps of the Cuban Embassy, as alleged by the CIA. It's perfectly clear that the actual picture of Oswald and his companion was suppressed and a fake photo substituted because the second man in the picture was working for the CIA in 1963, and his identification as a CIA agent would have opened up a

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *New York Post*, November 25, 1963.

whole can of worms about Oswald's ties with the Agency. To prevent this, the CIA presented the Warren Commission with fraudulent evidence—a pattern that repeats itself whenever the CIA submits evidence relating to Oswald's possible connection with any U.S. intelligence agency. The CIA lied to the Commission right down the line.³⁰

Jim Garrison will have to prove his charge that Lee Harvey Oswald, David Ferrie, Clay Shaw, and others conspired with fanatic right-wing *revanchist* Cubans in Miami, Dallas, and New Orleans to assassinate the President. But one thing is clear, once the tangled skein of evidence is even partially unraveled: Lee Oswald's relationship with Cuban exiles, individuals, and organizations in New Orleans and Dallas is worthy of intensive scrutiny. It received barely a glance from the Warren Commission. If the full truth is ever discovered, it will be due in no small measure to the investigation of New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison.

³⁰ *Playboy*, October, 1967.