

7 October 1968

A. George Abbott, M.D.
Assassination Inquiry Committee
4718 Saratoga Avenue
San Diego 92107

Dear Dr. Abbott,

I should like to thank you for your letter of 3 October 1968. I welcome the general tone of your reply and I am certainly ready to enter into a rational, calm dialogue.

As to the substance of your letter, I am less encouraged to expect a narrowing of the differences between us. I think there is a tremendous difference between characterizing a man accused of complicity in the assassination of President Kennedy in a manner utilizing innuendo of a highly prejudicial nature, on the one hand, and characterizing the article or comments in question, on the other hand. I have to maintain my criticism of Professor Nichols' treatment of Bradley, not in dispute of Bradley's political posture but in terms of the clear insinuation that a man of such convictions comes under automatic suspicion by reason of those convictions.

Most of the questions in your letter have, I think, been answered implicitly at least in my earlier letters and in my published work. What you deem my "strong anti-Garrison bias" is merely a corollary of my position of unyielding opposition to the Warren Report, and derives from the identical determination—that is, that both the Commission which produced the Warren Report, and the New Orleans District Attorney, have consistently abused fact and truth and have utilized false and fabricated evidence to accuse wrongfully and cynically a man or men who must be scrupulously regarded as innocent unless and until such time as there is authentic evidence beyond a reasonable doubt of their culpability.

I regard the allegations and testimony of Russo inherently bereft of credibility for the simple reason that I do not believe that three conspirators discussed their plans to assassinate the President in the presence of a witness who might, before or after the fact, betray them to the police. I took that position on April 16, 1967, in discussion with a number of the critics. Everything that has since emerged vindicates my extreme scepticism about Russo's testimony, indicating as it does that his story is delusional or worse. The details are found in Epstein's New Yorker article and need not be repeated here. As a matter of fact, I have heard from a source that I consider reliable (although I do not regard the information as necessarily conclusive) that Professor Popkin took the trouble to check out all of Epstein's allegations personally, and that he came most reluctantly to the conclusion that Russo's story was wholly unfounded.

As for Bundy: it seems to me elementary that an eyewitness identification based on viewing a person or persons four years earlier, from a distance, on one occasion only, has no shred of value (leaving aside Bundy's criminal record, his possible motivation for "cooperating" with the district attorney, and allegations by Bundy's fellow-prisoner that Bundy had verbalized his intention of fabricating the story to which he testified).

As to the so-called code 19106: The issue is not whether it is a central or peripheral feature of Garrison's "case." The so-called code is extremely significant for what it reveals about Garrison's professional competence and his moral integrity. As I said in a recent article, it is bad enough that Garrison impetuously unveiled the "code" without troubling to verify his basic assumptions; but when he maintained and multiplied his cryptographic claims even after it became clear that his assumptions were false and nonsensical, the original folly became fabrication of evidence.

Perhaps you wish to argue that a man who engages in such irresponsible, unprofessional, incompetent, and dishonest techniques will nevertheless lead us into the kingdom of Truth. I do not subscribe to that notion, either in Garrison's case or Warren's. I have never been able to summon any patience with apologists for the Warren Report who are forced to acknowledge its many perversions of fact and logic, but still think that a body of defective and corrupted evidence has led to the pure truth of Oswald's lone-assassinnhood.

My answer to the questions in the penultimate paragraph of your letter is, obviously, no, no, no, and no. And I do not believe in Santa Claus either.

The argument that Garrison must be allowed to have his trial, and the implication that he is meanwhile to be immune from all criticism and challenge of his stream of pronouncements, is one of the most facile, tiresome, and sophistical offered by his supporters. Should Dr. Spock and his colleagues have been tried? and do you accept the verdict? Should the anti-war demonstrators who were savagely beaten by the Chicago police now go on trial in Daley's courtroom? Or should the prosecutors in those cases be placed on trial for abuse of power and public trust? The same federal bench that denied Shaw's petition recently issued a permanent injunction against a near-by Parish which had arrested a civil rights attorney after he had represented non-white clients. The federal judge deemed the arrest nothing but harassment and an attempt to intimidate other civil rights attorneys. I applaud this "interference from federal forces," and I suspect you do too.

As a matter of fact, had Garrison accused pro-Castro Cubans and the Students for a Democratic Society or the anti-Vietnam war coalition of planning and executing the Dallas assassinations, using exactly the same kind and quality of "evidence" he has given against Shaw, Bradley, and others --well, I suspect that all the critics and all the committees would be in perfect accord on Garrison and on his "case." I simply do not allow myself the liberty of believing what appeals to me, although the evidence for the thesis is demented and malodorous, nor do I allow myself to use one set of criteria on the Warren Report and a completely different set of criteria on Garrison. That is why I find myself bitterly at odds with many of the critics and committees, and bitterly disappointed in their position. When you ask, "Is it not possible for a man's thesis to be basically correct, even if part of the basis for his conclusion is faulty," you are only arguing in favor of the Warren Report, although Garrison is your intended beneficiary. I am afraid that the road to the truth about Dallas is not through such jungles of self-defeating rationalizations and promiscuous standards of judgment.

Yours sincerely,


Sylvia Meagher

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