

22 October 1967

Dear Menahem,

Thank you for letting me read some of the letters protesting your editorial on Garrison. I had thought myself past surprise; but I must admit that I was amazed to find that Harold Feldman deemed the editorial "typical of the conceited impatient petulance that seizes Warren Report critics from time to time." This is a strange view indeed of a man whose intellectual discipline and objectivity is evident in every issue of TMO, whose courage in confronting facts is uncompromising however painful the facts may be (as was true of your editorial on Lord Russell), and whose self-scrutiny against bias or ulterior motive is so vigilant and merciless as yours.

It is interesting that Garrison and his admirers resort to ad hominem and perjorative argumentation against those who demonstrate his flagrant violations of fact and logic and draw from those offenses the necessary and inescapable conclusions. Take, for example, the so-called code, "P.O. 19106." Garrison does not address himself to the evidenciary arguments against his claims but merely insinuates that they manifest personal pique and envy of the "elected official who stumbled into" the so-called code (which is not true anyhow). Harold Feldman does address himself to the evidence--but a completely different set of data from the "evidence" adduced by Garrison. He disputes in very authoritative tones the transcription of a notation never cited by Garrison in his exposition of the "code" but retreats into remarkable reticence on the issue of whether what Garrison has cited as "P O" is not in fact "D D."

Harold Feldman mentions but does not go into the corresponding entry in Clay Shaw's notebook. I do wonder whether he finds it conceivable that a cryptogram of Ruby's unpublished phone number (that became useless on November 24, 1963) was retained in Shaw's notebook until March 1967, and that by sheer coincidence he meanwhile encountered in 1965 one Lee Odom, whose authentic address, P.O. Box 19106, happened to correspond with Ruby's encoded phone number. If so, perhaps he finds it conceivable also that Oswald wrote the coded number in his own notebook sometime before he left the Soviet Union in June 1962, some five months or more before Ruby moved to 225 South Ewing and presumably was issued the unlisted number in question.

Harold Feldman does concede a "possible error on Garrison's part in misreading some Russian letters" in Oswald's notebook. I agree that this in itself is not a disaster. What converts this innocent, if careless, error into disaster is that even after it was pointed out to Garrison, who did not refute the contention that his "P O" was really a "D D," he failed to correct or retract his original pronouncement but, on the contrary, reiterated his fantasy about the "code," for example in his July 1967 Playboy interview. If there is any difference between Garrison's hawking such defective wares after the defects have been clearly demonstrated, and, say, Arlen Specter's salesmanship of the single-missile hypothesis after it had been discredited and repudiated by his own expert witnesses, I fail to see it. I do not happen to subscribe to the State Department's notion about the fascist who rules one of its client states --"He may be a bastard, but he's OUR bastard."

Turning now to Maggie Field's letter: It is cause for satisfaction that she does acknowledge that there are troublesome aspects of the Garrison investigation and that he has developed some "seemingly" questionable witnesses. When we found troublesome aspects and questionable witnesses in the Warren Report, there was no equivocation and no hesitation: Maggie Field, and others, and I myself, set about the task and duty of exposing the lies and denouncing the deceit. Some of us proceeded in exactly the same way when Garrison demonstrated his readiness to take liberties with the facts and to employ misrepresentation and fabricated evidence--exactly the way the Warren Commission did--to incriminate Lee Harvey Oswald as a knowing party to the conspiracy to assassinate Kennedy. Others, like those who have taken issue with your editorial, have busied themselves instead with attempts to justify and condone Garrison's performance that are nothing less than mortifying.

I do not accept the specious argument used both by Harold Feldman and Maggie Field that we must withhold judgment until the Shaw trial. Nothing that transpires when the prosecution presents its evidence, if and when the trial takes place, can erase from the record the misrepresentations which have been placed thereon by the New Orleans district attorney, nor dilute by one iota the ample proof of his unscrupulousness and irresponsibility. His charges and claims extend far beyond the narrow issue of Clay Shaw, covering a broad and progressively wide spectrum. He has issued public accusations not only against Shaw, Ferrie, and Oswald but also against Dallas policemen, members of the White Russian community, oil millionaires, Cuban exiles, and other groups, without a shred of supporting evidence and with apparent inability to discriminate between speculation, hypothesis, and proven fact. He may, in the end, succeed in conferring on these parties a virtual immunity from suspicion, while at the same time destroying the credibility of all criticism of the Warren Report, whether it is informed, responsible, and authoritative, or merely improvisations like his own.

When Garrison is challenged in his role as prosecutor, his supporters defend his role of critic; when his role as critic is challenged, they defend his record as prosecutor. Denunciation of the chicanery practiced by the Warren Commission which was applauded becomes, in Garrison's case, "prejudice against the tactics of the district attorney." We are advised to be overwhelmed with awe because three judges remanded Shaw for trial. In light of the example set by the Chief Justice, to say nothing about recent revelations about Judge Malcolm O'Hara, I find this among the silliest arguments invoked on Garrison's behalf.

To Harold Weisberg's fear that I have become "emotional" about this issue, I would reply by suggesting merely that he read page 240 of his own book, Whitewash II.

Well, Menahem, you have received some stern rebukes and some rather unpleasant abuse for your "heresy," but I suspect that you are not chastened in the least. I look forward with joy and respect to your next assault on the hypocrisy of friend and foe alike, and on the pseudo-morality and intellectual default that characterize apologists for the Warren Report and for Garrison alike. If they have no other merit, the letters at least serve to separate, as they say, the men from the boys.

Yours faithfully,


Sylvia Meagher