

638 Royal Street,
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Dear Sylvia,

Thank you for your letter of July 11th. I agree with you that attacks on Garrison are not likely to be effective if they are presented in a pro-Warren context. I also agree that Ed's article was ambiguous in its attitude towards the WR. (In fact there was a fairly flagrant contradiction in the first paragraph, where he says (a) the Commission "offered the authoritative judgement that LHO alone was responsible for the assassination", and (b) refers to "questions that had baffled the investigative resources of the federal government". This inherent ambiguity lingers throughout the whole article, and you feel you never quite know where Epstein stands on the matter.

It also definitely looks like a retreat from his 'Inquest' position, and for this reason I have no doubt you are right that the article will be dismissed by some, (eg. Penn Jones, Salandria,) as a government assignation. However I would like to make clear that I do not intend to write an outright defense of the WR. My position is roughly the same as that taken in 'Inquest', and the Life article 'A Matter of Reasonable Doubt'. I believe Oswald was an assassin, but not necessarily the only one. I admit there are some problems which seem inexplicable, eg. the testimony of Frazier and Randle regarding the paper bag. I do not accept that Oswald had an alibi, nor do I believe that Ruby was involved in a plot to kill either Kennedy or Oswald. Most important, however, I don't believe there was any deliberate attempt by the Warren Commission to conceal the truth, except, possibly, with respect to the possibility that Oswald was some kind of an agent of the FBI or the CIA. I can easily accept that they would find this too embarrassing to even consider disclosing it, but from this one should not infer that anyone knew LHO was going to assassinate JFK. Actually, I don't even accept that the Warren Commission concealed that, although the FBI may well have kept it from them. I do not accept that at any stage the FBI concealed evidence of a second assassin, although possibly one escaped without leaving any trace. I admit that there is a certain amount of doubt about Oswald's having done it, and this mainly stems from the fact that Kennedy was killed in front of about 500 people, and no-one saw the man firing the shots. This is a ready made situation for controversy. Two other points are: Oswald did not admit to the crime, and he barely had the marksmanship capability. I do not agree with you on the interpretation of Marina's testimony, and here I feel that you choose to disbelieve because it suits your inclination. If she was systematically lying, who ordered her to? And if so, why did Sen. Russell come back and question her with obvious doubt as to the veracity of some of what she was saying? This hardly seems to indicate a conspiracy at the Commission level, and I do not accept that this was just one more subtle ploy by the Commission - a kind of "heads I'm right, tails you're wrong" argument which answers nothing. The autopsy is of considerable interest, and for my thoughts on that see my letter to Tink Thompson (of which you should have a copy by now.)

I of course agree with your position as stated to Clay Shaw that Garrison/Warren is not an "either/or" situation, but I don't think you should expect Shaw to equate himself with Oswald. They differ in many respects. At the very least, if both were framed, then Shaw was framed by a D.A. and Oswald was framed by the actual people who planned the assassination.

But, in addition to that, I regard the evidence against Oswald as indicating that he was more than merely framed. I have gone over this ground in a ten page memo I sent Garrison last year, (and which I don't think he ever read,) and I believe I sent you a copy; in essence, one is confronted by 4 possibilities: 1. Oswald was framed and was entirely innocent, 2. Oswald was a conspirator but fired no shots, 3. Oswald fired all the shots, 4. Oswald fired some of the shots. My position is that either 3 or 4 is correct. I feel that if you were convinced that 2. was correct you wouldn't much mind someone adhering to 3 or 4. (ie., the difference boils down to little more than marksmanship, and a willingness to be a scapegoat.) It is your adherence to position 1 that causes your resentment of either 2, 3 or 4. (Parenthetically, I will say this about Oswald: he had just the kind of outlook, and I think a rare one, of someone who would be prepared to undertake the unenviable role of scapegoat. In fact one feels that he would have relished it.) This, of course, is an argument for a conspiracy, but not for Oswald's innocence. If you believe that Oswald was framed, (ie is innocent,) then you must realise that the indications that he may have been an agent (eg. the points you raise about the Oswalds' relations with the State Dept.) are irrelevant to the assassination. That is, someone framed a CIA agent (if that is what he was). Who would want to do this? Not the CIA, presumably. It seems to me that this is a point which you overlooked in your book. Let me re-state this: If Oswald was framed, his whole life story becomes somewhat irrelevant until (a) it is known that Kennedy is going to be in a motorcade passing in front of the Book Depository, and (b) it is known that Oswald works there.

You point out the oddities of the Oswalds' treatment by the State Dept., but surely if Oswald was innocent, they have no bearing on the matter. The thrust of what you are saying is that there is more to Oswald than meets the eye - which may well be true, but only pertinent if Oswald is either an assassin or a conspirator.

Let us assume that Oswald was in fact framed. In that case, conspirators 1. found out that Oswald was working at the TSBD. 2. Obtained his rifle from the Paine garage and brought it to the TSBD. (You dispute this, and claim that possibly Oswald never ordered the rifle at all. In that case the conspirators had a far more difficult task, requiring almost occult powers; they ordered the rifle from Klein's in Oswald's handwriting before they could have known either that JFK was going to pass in front of the TSBD, or that Oswald would work there.) The conspirators, 3. then fired the Carcano at the President, possibly in conjunction with other assassins. You may dispute this too, in view of the fact that no tests were conducted to see if the Carcano had been fired. If so, one must assume that the conspiracy assumed governmental proportions, to account for the bullet fragments matching the Carcano, and CE 399. The barely credible condition of CE 399 lends credence to this view. We must remember here that government agencies are not likely to have framed one of their own agents, so you can take whichever horn of that dilemma you like. Also, if in your view Oswald never possessed the rifle, you must account for the palm print on the gun (again, conspiracy at the Federal level,) although the palm print is not inconsistent with the Oswald-innocent thesis if you admit that he owned the gun. The palm print then becomes irrelevant both to his guilt and innocence.

Continuing with this chain of events, you must then explain the following: why did Oswald depart from his normal routine on the day before

the assassination, and return to Irving with the clearly fabricated story about curtain rods? Why did he return to work the next day carrying something unusual in a paper bag? Why did he then leave the scene by taxi - the only time, I believe, that he ever rode in a taxi in ~~Dallas~~ Dallas (or anywhere?)? Why did he have a pistol on him when he was arrested? Why did he tell lies, eg. about where he had lived, when he was interrogated? (I totally reject that any of these lies are in fact fabrications of his interrogators. If they were going to go to such lengths, they might as well have fabricated the story that he admitted shooting the President.)

I should add that if Oswald was framed, the conspirators were remarkably lucky that Oswald did not have a cast iron alibi. How could they know that he wouldn't have been watching the parade in the street, or in the company of several employees? They could not have known this, and must have assumed that their carefully laid plan would very likely come unstuck.

It is considerations like these which force me to conclude that Oswald was at least a part of a conspiracy if there was one, and most likely did the shooting too. If Oswald let someone else shoot his gun, a good reason for this would have been that the other person was a better shot. However I reject this for the following reason: Oswald would then have known that the finger of suspicion would point straight at him, and he would have surely established a good alibi for himself. There is no indication that he did this. Thus, weighing the 3 possibilities, that Oswald was innocent, a conspirator, or an assassin, I conclude that the most probable is that Oswald was an assassin.

In deciding between Oswald's being the only assassin or only one of two or more, one has to weigh two sets of evidence. 1. The so-called "hard" evidence of ballistics, films etc., which militate towards there being at least two assassins, and 2. the evidence of Oswald's life and background, in which there appears to be hardly a trace of conspiratorial contact. (Not a single trace, if you start looking after he got the job at the TSBD.) It seems to be impossible to make a decision between these two sets of evidence, and I can only conclude that there may have been more than one assassin. (I appreciate that this line of reasoning breaks down if you assume or argue that Oswald was innocent. Obviously no trace of conspiratorial background would show up in an innocent man. Some critics have taken the Warren Report to task for being little more than a biography of Oswald, but I ~~very~~ regard this line of reasoning to be wrong as it assumes Oswald's innocence. Obviously, the Commission had to look very carefully at Oswald's past. If they had not done so they could justly be accused of either assuming that Oswald was innocent, or was the sole assassin.)

I agree with your fear that an outright defense of the Report in conjunction with an attack on Garrison would tend to weaken the latter, and I do not intend to make that mistake. I shall make it clear that I am not defending the Report, although my strictures are fairly mild, and do not amount to a charge of ~~fraudulence~~.

I include an article from the Times-Picayune, which answers your question about Boxley, and contains Garrison response to the Epstein piece. Mrs Holland's real name is Ferrell. As far as I am concerned, there have been no repercussions from Ed's article; I have not spoken to Garrison about it either. (A reporter from Time was here in response to the article.) My main impression is that Garrison is in a real jam about the Sciambra memo, I don't see how he can wriggle out of it. I have no idea who Sandy Hochsberg is.

Best wishes,

Wm