

2599 LeConte Ave.  
Berkeley, CA 94709  
May 16, 1976

Mr. Tom Bethell  
The Washington Monthly  
1028 Connecticut Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Tom,

I am writing in response to your comments on our book "The Assassinations: Dallas and Beyond" in the March issue.

Your remarks contain a totally false allegation about our motives. You said that "one cannot but suspect that the motive of the editors is deliberately to present slanted material - the 'slant' being, again, to hint that Garrison was mixed up with the Mafia and may have been, all along, their lackey." (Page 40) There was no need for you to speculate about our motives, or about our overall position on Garrison, which is set forth quite clearly in our introduction:

"Finally, we report the greatest controversy suffered thus far by the critics. From the peak of public interest in early 1967 until the case against Clay Shaw faded into nothing some two years later, public attention was focused on New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison. Critics disagree sharply and intensely on the significance of Garrison's investigation, and the definitive study of this phenomenon has yet to be done. It would have to take into account both the strength of the case made by various critics for a conspiracy touching on Oswald's activities in New Orleans and the weight of the forces stacked against Garrison, in the media as well as in the government. But it would also have to examine the factual weaknesses in his case and particularly the seemingly indefensible prosecution of Clay Shaw. Bill Turner's 1968 pro-Garrison article establishes the factual context in which the Garrison investigation operated (as does Harold Weisberg's book Oswald in New Orleans). The selections by Peter Noyes and Sylvia Meagher illustrate the kind of criticism that has been directed at Garrison from within the critical community. The Garrison investigation is a sobering reminder of how difficult it is to get the whole truth about the assassination with anything less than the full powers and resources of the federal government on the side of an open and honest inquiry." (Pages 8-9)

Your misrepresentation was compounded by the assertion that "the two pieces about the Garrison investigation, for example, could hardly have been worse chosen." There are, in fact, three pieces. Sylvia Meagher's 1967 remarks, which you ignored, were included to show that the most perceptive of the critics rejected Garrison on the soundest of factual and moral grounds:

"But as the Garrison investigation continued to unfold, it gave cause for increasingly serious misgivings about the validity of his evidence, the credibility of his witnesses, and the scrupulousness of his methods. The fact that many critics of the Warren Report have remained passionate advocates of the Garrison investigation, even condoning tactics which they might not condone on the part of others, is a matter for regret and disappointment. Nothing less than strict factual accuracy and absolute moral integrity must be deemed permissible, if justice is, indeed, to be served." (Page 302)

To her credit, Meagher saw through Garrison within a few months of his appearance on the scene. My only contact with Garrison's office was in correspondence with you, and I was not completely convinced that Garrison had nothing solid until the Shaw trial early in 1969. For reasons not known to me, you did not break with Garrison until the time of that trial. You may now choose to

believe that the central conclusions of the Warren Report form "a rock upon which opportunists have foundered," but the history of the controversy, and the analysis presented in our book, hardly justifies your dismissal of the critics as ranging from "disingenuous" to "partly deranged."

Those who wonder about your peculiar comments on our selections can easily refer to the book itself. Since you make light of the questions raised about Garrison's alleged lack of concern about the Mafia, and since you specify that James Kirkwood's book on Garrison ("American Grotesque") is a good one, your readers might be interested in his comments on this angle:

"The coziness between the Occhipinti family, the Marcello family and Jim Garrison gives off a heady odor indeed. The FBI knows all about Marcello and the Mafia in New Orleans.... In fact, Jim Garrison would seem to be the only person in town who denies the Mafia's existence. He once described Carlos Marcello as 'a respectable businessman'."

"Such indifference would be ludicrous if it weren't so damnably blatantly frightening. If the man who denies the existence of organized crime is the very man elected to fight same, you have a situation rather like an exterminator refusing to acknowledge the existence of termites. One would think he should get into another business. And this is precisely what Aaron Kohn (of the Metropolitan Crime Commission) believes Garrison did - the other business being the investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy." (Kirkwood, pages 528-9)

This is backed up by an extensive discussion of Kohn's view that Garrison, at the least, seized upon the assassination issue as a opportunity "for diverting massive attention away from his vulnerability in the organized crime area." (Page 530)

In the interest of fairness, I trust that you will be able to publish this letter, to correct the false impression of our book given by your review.

Sincerely,

*Paul*

Paul L. Hoch