

(the Russo/Dandy testimony, the "code," and the Baton Rouge rendezvous) is, at best, vulnerable, I find no basis for assuming that the still-submerged evidence will be convincing or conclusive. On the contrary, there is more reason to fear that it will be as contrived and insubstantial as the so-called code of Ruby's phone number. . . .

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Richard H. Popkin replies:

Mrs. Meagher finds Russo's story "inherently bereft of credibility." Those who heard it examined in court and before the Grand Jury obviously did not find it so. That the conspirators discussed their plans in Russo's presence—the point that bothers Mrs. Meagher—is I think possible. In Russo's account in court, he stated that Oswald objected to Russo's presence, and was reassured by Ferrie, who vouched for Russo. Some of Russo's other accounts claim that Ferrie, in the summer of 1963, was openly discussing assassination plans with Russo. Their friendship was presumably such that Ferrie felt he could confide in Russo without fear of betrayal (and Russo told the authorities about Ferrie's interest in assassinating Kennedy only after Ferrie was dead.) Some have suggested that Russo might himself have been involved, but this he strongly denies. I find it conceivable that once Ferrie vouched for him, the others present would have gone on with their planning, especially if they knew that Ferrie was talking about the matter with others, and if they trusted Ferrie.

Since I wrote my article, I have been able to read the Sciambra memorandum purporting to give an account of the first interview with Russo by Garrison's office on Feb. 25, 1967. (Mr. James Phelan sent me a copy of the document.) This, as Phelan has said, raises serious questions, since no mention appears of

the famous conspiratorial meeting. Russo told me he definitely discussed the meeting when he talked to Sciambra. If so, I think some more complete explanation is required to reconcile Sciambra's report with Russo's testimony. It is to be hoped that this will be clarified when Russo testifies at the trial (now postponed at the defense's request until February 1968), so that we will be in a better position to judge the credibility of Russo's story. It seems to me that Russo, at the time of the Sciambra memo (if it accurately reports their conversation), was almost exclusively concerned with Ferrie, who had just died, and was only anxious to describe Ferrie's views, his plans to kill Kennedy, etc. Russo may have been so overwhelmed by Ferrie, that at first he could only recall the events of the summer of 1963 according to what Ferrie was saying and doing. This memo may be of significance in assessing Ferrie's activities at the time.

The code matter bothers me in several ways. It seemed extremely suggestive that the same number, 19106, appeared on the "o" page of Oswald's address book, and in Shaw's address book as the P. O. Box of a Lee Odom of Dallas, Texas. The fact that there was no P. O. 19106 in Dallas in November 1963 obviously made Garrison suspicious, as probably did the entry above it in Oswald's book, which looks like "18206." So he worked out his code, which he has claimed fits other entries as well. As far as I can see, since Mr. Odom exists, and only rented the P. O. Box long after Oswald's death, there can't be any connection between the two numbers, and it must be accounted just an amazing coincidence. If Garrison has found a code that interprets various entries in Oswald's book in a meaningful pattern, this may be important. But, at the moment, like Mrs. Meagher, I'm unconvinced by this item. Clues that look very important, and then peter out, occur in most investigations, and there are no doubt many in Garrison's effort. The code theory is not central to his case as

it has been presented so far. What will be important is whether the final showing of evidence does or does not make a convincing legal case and a satisfactory explanation of the events that culminated in Dealey Plaza on November 22, 1963.

As for Andrews: in going over the evidence, I am forced to conclude that Andrews's original story was true: that Oswald was his client, that Oswald was involved with homosexuals and Latins, that Oswald had a powerful patron, Clay Bertrand, who wanted to help him after the assassination, and that Andrews knows something about who the mysterious Bertrand is. This, in addition to items mentioned in the new book, *Plot or Politics* by Rosemary James and Jack Wardlaw, seems to indicate that Oswald's New Orleans period was much different from the Warren Commission's version, and that this alone should lead to a new public investigation. If Oswald was linked to Ferrie and to Bertrand, up to the time of Oswald's death, then Oswald was certainly not the Warren Commission's loner, and was involved with at least one person who was conspiring and plotting to kill the President—Ferrie.

I, for one, am waiting anxiously for the public presentation of Garrison's case. From what I have heard, he seems to have gotten much further than the Warren Commission in unraveling the events that led to Kennedy's assassination. Whether he has a convincing case that Mr. Shaw was actually involved, we will have to wait and see. Only then will we know if Mrs. Meagher's fears are confirmed, or whether Garrison has found important and reliable new data.

Finally, Mr. Phelan has asked me to say that he has not refused to repeat his allegations before the New Orleans Grand Jury. He states he has not received any official invitation, and hence has not refused. He was in New Orleans after his article appeared, and he says he notified two of Garrison's close friends that he was there. He talked to Russo then, who he says told him that he had informed

Garrison's office of his presence and his whereabouts. Phelan also tells me that later on he saw Garrison in Monticello, New York, and talked to him for two hours, and nothing about his testifying before the grand jury was mentioned. So, according to Mr. Phelan, he has not been avoiding appearing before the grand jury. I apologize if I gave such an impression. He was challenged by Mr. Sciambra to appear, but according to Mr. Phelan's letter he has never officially been asked by the grand jury to appear.

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Pages 46-47