

10/2/68

Dear Dick,

Hours of 9/26 and 27 arrived today.

Unless Garrison has tried, and if he has, I have no knowledge, I doubt if anyone has obtained any Soviet data. Their attitude toward the subject does not encourage belief they will become involved. Good luck if you try. I was in touch with the cultural counsellor and consider his behavior quite disreputable, by the standards of any society.

What you say about the pistol is not unknown to me. I go into it in WHITWASH. I have a similar rifle, a little longer. Steve Burton has physical possession of it. You are welcome to borrow it from him. I have the exact same sight and not having had the rifle since February, I have not been able to mount it.

Frankly, I doubt that Seymour would so involve himself after his one close call.

Joosten is so utterly irresponsible, I fear passing anything to him as I fear the consequences of his thievery, to which he adds only the sickness of an unbridled imagination. It is bad enough for that stuff to be retailed abroad. However, he has now obtained an American agent, and if it gets any attention here it can well be ruinous to us. Aside from the fact that I have nothing worth mentioning of checked out, he has already stolen what I have published. Even indirectly, I will have nothing to do with him, Dick. I hope you can understand this. He has even stolen books from me, he is that crooked.

If Sprague has sent you only one picture of Seymour, that is not enough. He looks entirely different when he needs barbering. I have no duplicates, or I'd let you have them for your own use.

As of this February-March, he was in Arizona. I turned his address over to Garrison, carried it to Parthur, and have never heard from him whether he did.

I also consider it unlikely that were the same parties involved in this conspiracy, they'd use the same faces, no matter how disguised. In short, while I can claim no knowledge, on this I disagree with Sprague.

I'll be leaving for the west coast in about three weeks. Before then I must, among other things, add to one of the manuscripts.

Sincerely,



P.S. I enclose a Beckham clipping from my Omaha friend and a paragraph from his letter. The rest of the letter is personal, part of his private life, as I hope you can understand. It bears no relationship to this work. He has, as best he could, kept me posted on Beckham and other people out there. Fine guy. Poet.



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY
KINGSTON, ONTARIO

26 September 1968

Herold:

I had a thought, and it prompted a question. You need not answer it immediately, but reply when the occasion arises for you to write to me again.

Has anyone tried to get documents that the Soviets have on Oswald? I suspect that they did not turn over any more than a fraction of their records for the Warren Commission to consider, and I wonder whether anyone has tried to induce them to turn them over to private investigators.

I have no idea how a person might go about getting such documents but if it has not been tried, it might be worth giving it a go.

If you have thoughts on that, I would like to know them.

Enclosed is a copy of a letter I just sent to Nichols.

Dick

Bernabei

R. BERNABEI

COPY OF LETTER TO JOHN NICHOLS

Harold -

The second page contains
something I had not mentioned
to you before.

Dick



Dept. of Classics
QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY
KINGSTON, ONTARIO

26 September 1968

Dear Dr. Nichols:

Thanks for your letter of 27 September regarding the Carcano and chronographing.

Enclosed are a few recent ads for Carcano and ammunition. Also included is a list of dealers who probably have the gun, or who can tell you where to get it.

The rifle described as Terzi Carbine is the Carcano. After the assassination most distributors took the rifle off their lists, but later put it back under the name Terzi Carbine and, I think, Italia Special, or something like that. You can be fairly certain that if an advertised rifle is 6.5mm and Italian, it is the Carcano.

There are a couple of models on the market, so if you order, be sure to specify what you want.

I suspect that some distributors have the authentic scope, too, especially the west coast distributors.

I am making plans to run the required test myself, and presently I am not concerned with reconstructing the situation with such exactitude that the results are absolutely valid. Gathering the proper rifle, scope, and ammunition would be expensive, troublesome, and--under the circumstances--unnecessary. I can get valid results with any bullet of the proper weight and velocity, for those are chiefly the factors that determine trajectory.

There is a further factor that may exert an influence, and you can help me by measuring one of your models for me. I want to know the height of the scope above the bore, so please tell me the distance between the mid-point of the scope and the mid-point of the bore.

If this test proves fruitful, and subsequently the opportunity arises whereby I can easily conduct a test under most exacting conditions, then I shall do so. What I get from this preliminary test will be more than satisfactory, for I think that the more exacting test would alter the results no more than a fraction of an inch.

I have been offered the use of a 6.5 mm rifle which I believe is 6.5 mm Mannlicher-Schoenauer. If that is the case, it will be perfectly suitable. Canadian Industries Limited presently manufactures a 6.5 mm Mann.-Schoenauer ~~rifle~~ loaded with a bullet of 160 grains, with an advertised velocity of 2160 feet per second. That is very close to what the Carcano does, especially in a carbine.

If I need more exact results, then perhaps I will make plans to borrow an "Oswald rifle", scope, and ammo from you. I may be getting those soon, however: I have a friend who wants a souvenir, and I ordered one for him.

Another firearms issue bothers me, but I think that the question cannot be settled with tests employing a weapon other than the evidence weapon itself, so I have not undertaken to do anything about it. It concerns Oswald's revolver.

The gun was originally manufactured for the .38S&W cartridge, but subsequently was rechambered to receive the .38 Spl; the barrel was not changed, only the cylinder, for although the bullets of the two cartridges are of the same diameter, the 38 Spl is longer and thinner than the 38 S&W. The Report contends that the FBI could not secure adequate identifying characteristics from test bullets because the .38 S&W bore was slightly larger than the .38 Spl bullet that the gun fires, and the difference in size caused the bullets to rattle down the bore.

I don't believe that, but there is no way of proving the contrary without the evidence weapon. Provided the rifling is intact, I see no reason why the .38 S&W bore should fail to imprint .38 Spl bullets that are fired through it. The difference between the .38 S&W bore and the .38 Spl bore is a mere .005 inch.

By chance I have a gun that resembles the evidence weapon in respect to the difference between bore and bullet. One of my guns is a Cold Detective Special, 2" barrel, which originally was chambered for the .38 Colt New Police cartridge (.38 S&W and .38 Colt New Police are identical; the different designations refer to the shape of the bullet point). I rechambered the gun so that it now receives .38 Spl, and it shoots quite well.

Out of curiosity I fired bullets from it into soft material, and I had no difficulty in discerning the imprint of the lands and grooves.

I think it unlikely that Oswald's revolver has had its lands and grooves worn thin by use. That model was originally made with a 4" barrel specifically for shipment to England during World War II; manufacturing began in 1940. The revolvers were used very little in the service and saw no civilian use. After the War they were shipped back to the States as surplus. Distributors shortened the barrels of many of them, and put them on the market. It is therefore unlikely that Oswald's gun was used very much, if at all. Even so, the .38 S&W is such a slow bullet that I doubt whether a lifetime of shooting would cause it to lose its lands and grooves.

If you want test bullets from my gun, tell me and I shall send you some.

Still,

Dick Bernabei

Dick Bernabei

P.S. By the way, my title is Mister, not Doctor; I am still working on my Ph.D.

c.c. to Harold Weisberg

27 Sept. 1950

Harold:

Along with Beckham photo, Sprague sent me photo of William Seymour. I have dropped the pseudonym for Beckham, since Danney-Jocelyn will be aware that the H.C. papers. Seymour was the passenger sailor.

Seymour is sure a very hot lead, I think, and a splendid success on Sprague's part. Mrs. Thomas in London pointed to a 1950 photo of JB Ray - the one that most strongly resembled London Ray, and that 1950 photo bears a very close resemblance to Seymour, very close.

If you know anything about Seymour that I should pass on to Dan J., please let me know - I want descriptive features.

As Sprague thinks that Franky
is ERNESTO PUJET, but he
is not sure,

Still,
Jack
Bernabei