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MONDAY

DA'S OFFICE IMPLICATED

Two Bribe Attempts Claimed in JFK Probe

Two new charges of bribing witnesses cropped up today in Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison's assassination plot probe.

In a copyrighted story, Gene Roberts of the New York Times stated that he interviewed two Parish Prison inmates who told him they had been offered "concessions" by Garrison's office "if they would help him prove his charge that the assassination of President John F. Kennedy was the result of a conspiracy."

The two prisoners, both convicted of burglary charges, are Miguel Torres and John Cancler.

REPORTERS OF the States-Item contacted both men weeks ago, but came up with no conclusive evidence of intimidation in either case.

Roberts said Torres, a one-time heroin addict, told him he had been offered his freedom, one ounce of heroin and a three-month vacation in Florida if he would be "cooperative" in the investigation.

Cancler told Roberts that representatives of Garrison's office offered to drop the charges against him if he would break into Clay Shaw's apartment and "put something" there.

The bribery charges were revealed today, the day that Shaw is due to appear in court to argue motions in his case. He is so far the only man charged with conspiracy to assassinate the president in the district attorney's investigation.

Several months ago, in the early days of the investigation, States-Item reporters talked with Torres after it was learned Garrison's investigators had been to see him.

AT THAT TIME Torres, a 29-year-old Cuban, appeared extremely nervous and refused to discuss any phase of the investigation, including why he had been questioned.

Torres is a slightly built man, well groomed and with a fair command of the English language.

Shortly after the visit by the

States-Item, made in the presence of Criminal Sheriff Louis Heyd Jr., Torres was placed in a maximum security cell and reporters were not permitted to interview him. Roberts interviewed him later, at Angola, when the stiff regulations were apparently no long in effect.

CANCLER CONTACTED the States-Item himself, through an attorney, and said he had information about the investigation.

Reporters interviewed Cancler in the criminal sheriff's offices.

Cancler said he had been contacted in mid-January by one of Garrison's aides, who drove him to the French Quarter home of Shaw at 1313 Dauphine.

"Do you think you could get into that house?" Cancler said he was asked.

ACCORDING TO CANCLER, he looked the place over and commented that it was too easy a job for a man of his ability, then asked why the offer had been made.

He said the investigator told him Garrison was investigating the assassination of Kennedy and believed Shaw had something to do with it. When he discovered the enormity of the thing he'd been asked to do, Cancler said, he decided he'd rather not get involved.

At the time, Cancler told States-Item reporters he was not certain whether he was to put something into the apartment or to take something out or merely to "case the joint."

However, he later told Roberts he had been asked to "put something" into the apartment.

Cancler is a long-time police character known as "John the Baptist." He is a talkative Negro, whom one of Garrison's

assistants has called "one of the best—if not the best—active burgler in New Orleans."

He was convicted Feb. 19 of the Dec. 6 burglary of a Newcomb blvd. home, but last month came up with another Parish Prison inmate, Donnell Carroll, who says he actually committed the burglary.

ON THE BASIS of new evidence, Cancler asked for a new trial. Criminal Court Judge Oliver P. Schulinkamp has the motion under consideration and is due to rule on it soon.

Torres has apparently opened up since the time he was questioned by States-Item reporters, for he went into a lengthy story for Roberts of his association with the DA's investigators.

He said he was told that "the boss" (Garrison) was very powerful and could either grant Torres his freedom or assure the completion of his nine-year prison term, as well as bringing federal charges to bear against the Cuban.

"Although they had me over a barrel," Roberts quoted Torres as saying, "I didn't want to frame anyone."

Garrison told Roberts he was surprised anyone would accept the statements of such types and said, "I wouldn't dignify those people with an answer."