

9/1/70

Dear Paul,

Glad to get your 7/28 and interesting enclosures. I'd begun to worry.

I've been going over the enclosures from the bottom up because the smaller ones were on the bottom and I'm expecting someone, already late. A copy of my letter to Ken -inyard, who I know, is enclosed.

Sprague letter delightful. I've not bothered others with copies of mine. I've been in touch with Berkeley, too. He has failed to indicate that anyone else questioned his publishing. A few comment on that letter:

"Credibility of ,aterial" is also what disturbs me about Bud's computer project, because they are feeding all kinds of shit into it on the ground that whoever seed the feedout can discriminate.

Paragraph on dentist a real pleasure!

Speisel: I had know of and stayed away from him for several years. but only because he is paranoid, as is my intelligent source. However, do not forget that the real fault, aside from using him at all, was in not doing the most rudimentary checking of his story. Too late it was learned that the building to which he took the entourage actually had been Shaw's property at the time of the alleged meeting/party or whatever it was alleged to have been. This is a rather remarkable feat to be dismissed as no more than a coincidence.

You are too kind to Mark, JG and others. They actually said that LBW personally ordered this non-existent 75-year thing.

I will want to go over your memo on head motion with care. If there is a deadline, please let me know. I'll do it as soon as possible. Without having looked at it, I again encourage you to do a little shooting into melons, etc. and to speak to riflemen other than Nichols, as Alvarez did, I understand.

The copy of the grand-jury report I have is book size. I'm getting a copy from the Congressional Record. When I do I'll send it. Perhaps others would also like copies then. I'll have to return that, but the difference in cost will be great.

The amount of work you seem to be doing on Quiroga indicates that you attribute a special importance to him. I presume you found all of JG's material on him in Bud's files. If so, I might suggest that I go over it, for some is dubious. Otherwise, check. Check on Smathers. When there is time I'm going to try and get a copy. Can your library be interested in this?...The Post carried almost nothing on Brown, nothing that would indicate more than a free-press protest by him. I'm getting the testimony. I've written Brown without answer. I do have the T-P story, thanks.

TJ is getting a little up tight about me. I think this is the idea time to keep after them, in the sense LHO explained their methods. Good luck. Please mark as confidential anything you might get and send so I'll not make any mistake. When I read that I may have more comment.

Sincerely,

New address:
1735 Highland Place, Apt. 25
Berkeley, Ca. 94709
July 28, 1970

Mr. Richard Sprague
193 Pinewood Road
Hartsdale, N.Y.

Dear Dick,

When we first met in person in May, I was quite relieved to find that you are fully aware of the limitations of "computerizing" a study of the Kennedy assassination. As you know, the Washington Post report on your Computers and Automation article gave me a very inaccurate impression of what you have in mind. I'm glad I need not remind you what GIGO means. However, I do feel compelled to record my disagreement with many of the interpretations you set forth in your article.

The "confession" by Jim Hicks is typical of the kind of interpretation that leaves me with most serious misgivings about the value of your proposed projects. In my opinion, there are several explanations for Hicks' statement that are more likely than your acceptance of it; in roughly the order of decreasing likelihood, they include:

1) Hicks is mentally disturbed, had no connection with the assassination, and appeared in Garrison's office on his own initiative. (Let me remind you that even the Warren Commission got its share of such characters - and, unlike Garrison, the Commission could be expected to be hostile to such stories; some of the ones they got were demonstrably false but quite a bit more plausible than Hicks' confession. There are a lot of nuts around.)

2) Hicks was sent to Garrison by someone who knew of Garrison's gullibility and wanted to lead him astray; Hicks may or may not have been aware of his role, but he had nothing to do with the assassination.

3) Hicks was a witness to the assassination (but just that), and was quite suggestible, and was led on by Garrison's people.

If Hicks really was the radio communicator among the firing teams, do you really think that he would not have been on Penn Jones' list of "mysterious deaths" long ago?

I hope that your projected coding of information for the computer reserves a few bits for an evaluation of the credibility of the material. If you accept Hicks' statements as uncritically as your article suggests, I am afraid that all the computers in the country aren't going to find the truth for us - or even help at all.

Of course, this is as much a disagreement of opinion as of fact. Let me comments on a few other parts of your article where I strongly disagree with you:

(Page 31) You list "Farewell America" as one of four important reference books. You've got to be kidding! Typical of the reliability of this work is the "fact" that Kennedy had a Secret Service agent code-named "Dentist" whose function was to provide feminine companionship. I don't know where the French intelligence service picked up this bit of collegiate humor, but I first saw it in Paul Krassner's satirical "suppressed excerpts" from William Manchester's book. (Realist, May 1967) Do you classify this kind of information as "possible but hard to believe" or merely "plausible"? (I suspect that JFK didn't need Secret Service help in finding cavities to fill.)

(Page 31) It is generous to say that the record of the Shaw trial "contains many indications" that Shaw knew Oswald, Ferrie, and Ruby, with the implication that the witnesses are credible. I don't think you are justified in saying, as you do on page 30, that Garrison "proved" that Shaw knew and met Oswald. It is a gross

distortion to say that "what Garrison failed to prove to the satisfaction of the New Orleans jury was that Clay Shaw was involved in the conspiracy in Dallas. It was made very clear that no link between the alleged Shaw-Russo-"Oswald" meeting and the assassination was required for a conviction. What Garrison failed to prove was that Shaw conspired at all. As to the quality of Garrison's investigation, I feel that any prosecutor who would use Charles Speisel as a witness is either incompetent or dishonest or both.

(Pages 31-32) I am glad to see that the July issue corrects your statement that the Milteer story was not "in the Warren Commission Archives which have been made public." Since the pages you reproduce have been known to me and several other critics for some time, it is unfortunate that we did not have the opportunity to comment on your article before it was published. (There is more to efficient storage and retrieval of information than putting it in a data bank.) In the July issue, Mr. Berkeley asks a couple of questions that can easily be answered by anyone who is familiar with the Archives. For example, one can speculate that page 121 of the FBI report is withheld because it contains the names of persons said to be associated with the bombing of the Baptist Church in Birmingham in September 1963. (The index to this document was not withheld, and some of the names may be there.) It is not encouraging that the bombing remains unsolved, but the reason for withholding that page is hardly as sinister as Mr. Berkeley suggests. Also, all of the FBI's requests for withholding are made by the letter dated August 13, 1965. One should not infer that the FBI decided at that time to suppress previously available information; that is when the documents which had been given to the Commission were screened for release. These are not major points, but Mr. Berkeley should have tried to get them answered before publishing the article.

(Page 32) Have you seen any evidence of "Oswald's message to the FBI"? The evidence I am aware of is incredibly flimsy. It seems to be a distorted version of the fact that the FBI and Secret Service had taken note of a KKK/NSRP plot against Kennedy. (Vol. 17, p. 566) It bothers me that too often the people who come up with such major allegations (in this case, Mark Lane) do not seem to want to make the effort to search for a more reasonable alternative explanation. The Warren Commission failed in its duty to consider the evidence in Oswald's defense; the critics have to do better than the Commission in their regard for the truth.

(Pages 32-33) There was no executive order by Lyndon Johnson locking up anything in the Archives for 75 years. The 75-year withholding period for investigative reports is routine, and was so before 1963. This rumor, which Mark Lane and others have spread widely, gives the impression that LBJ personally had a direct hand in the withholding of Commission material (presumably to protect himself?), and that the Government thinks the Commission had enough important material to justify this extraordinary suppression. I believe that both these inferences are wrong; I can prove that in several cases, important information about Oswald just never got to the Commission at all. The important suppression was at a lower level.

(Page 35) I am now convinced that the backward motion of Kennedy's head after Zapruder frame 313 is completely consistent with a single shot from the rear. (I will send you the documentation when I have finished writing it up.) Thompson certainly did not prove his theory "beyond the shadow of a doubt." Don't believe everything you read!

(Pages 29-31, July) I think your article got rather wide coverage, largely because of the magic word "computer" (which also resulted in the widespread distortion and blurring of the distinction between your own conclusions and those of the machine). Mr. Berkeley went off half-cocked again: the Times/Post News Service has nothing to do with the N.Y. Times (it is the L.A. Times/Washington Post), so the N.Y. Times, whatever else it did, did not suppress its own story. As for

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Mr. Berkeley's hypothesis that the CIA was preventing publication of news about political assassinations, I certainly agree that it is "quite possibly a foolish and alarmist hypothesis." I would be more impressed by arguments for this theory if the simple facts were checked out a bit better.

I'm afraid it would take me many more pages to detail all of the points where I disagree with your article. If you want to answer my objections, and feel that some of the exchange should be published, please check with me before submitting part or all of this letter for publication. I don't believe that most of the readers of Computers and Automation would be interested in such a debate, but I do think that they should be aware that other critics of the Warren report do not concur in your conclusions.

Needless to say, I don't have the time to comment on those parts of your article which I basically agree with. And, as you know, I think you have done exceptionally solid work in gathering and analysing the photographs. Finally, I would like to be kept informed on the progress of your computer projects, for whatever suggestions of mine you might find useful.

Sincerely,

Paul

Paul L. Hoch

cc: Bud Fensterwald
E. C. Berkeley