

Variations On a Theme About Russo

My doubts about Perry Russo are in Oswald in New Orleans, explicit enough for Sal Panzera to have understood, which led him to tell me he had much on Russo they didn't use, deeming it not necessary. Nobody ever paid attention to it and when I called it to Garrison's attention, it is now apparent he also did nothing. The clue was in his having an "Oswald" handbill at his Baton Rouge home when a sportswriter was there from N.O. I questioned him about this a number of times, never getting anything satisfactory back. He admitted he must have been at one of the distributions but claimed he had no recollection of it. If he had been and saved, he'd recall, so he could be lying. It is also possible that someone gave it to him, something he'd also remember, Oswald having soon enough become a celebrity and not long thereafter the corpse of an infamy. As soon as I had a chance to do a little superficial looking around I was full of the most serious doubts about him and one of the possibilities that occurred is that he was some kind of plant. Now I digress. To get to the point.

Recently I've pointed out a number of parallels between Farewell America and a coming book attributed to and ghosted for on Jose Luis Romero. Both have this in common: a built-in self-destruct. Neither can stand the most superficial analysis.

Exactly the same was true of Russo. My doubts preceded my first trip to N.O.

If Russo was a plant, it was by someone who knew and understood Garrison very well. It is also possible that Russo was off on his own kick and was of the kind that Garrison would just go for. At every point, there is a special touch with the Russo story that I think is a bit too sophisticated for him. Also in O in NO is the impossibility that the man he claims to have seen at Ferris's was Oswald. He claims not to have known him at the time of the assassination but that he was introduced as "Leon", exactly what Odio said, a bit too much. One could go through all of his story this way and in each segment there is something like it, a rich sense of humor indulging itself. Even picking Sandra Moffitt to have been his companion that night. When she bore him a bastard, their relationship could not be doubted, and with that and her criminal record for prostitution it could be assumed she'd make no real waves.

This is the case with Farewell America, perhaps the most glaring example being the one-page description of the assassination, pure Garrison, from those who claim they were in contact with one of the assassins in Mexico. So long a book, a first-person source and so little on the crime? And that little, as with Russo's story, exactly what Garrison wanted to hear? Another is the gently-exaggerated flattery about Mark Lane's work in a footnote. Another is the incredible size of the alleged conspiracy, with an elaborate structure for no purpose, all for no purpose and aimless than amateurish.

These things find their duplications in my earlier memos on Romero, from interviews.

Or, the pattern is the same. Each had a special-purpose timing, and that of Romero remains unclear. Watergate is one possibility.

There is a possible unity purpose if one asks, "cui bono"? All can be said to serve intelligence interests.

Russo has long been out of my thinking. This returned to mind on reading Dymond's cross-examination of Russo in Kirtwood.

Earlier, I found myself wondering what there is not yet exposed about the operation of which Watergate was part. There is close to \$10,000,000 in unexplained funds. They seem not to have been spent in normal campaign costs and I don't assume they were used for bribery. So, for what purpose are they used or have they been used? With the Wash Post the only paper with substantial interest, and with it seeming to be supplied often enough with more than sufficient in leaks that have to come from official sources, the prospectives for real digging on this story are not good, and there is much yet to be done on it.

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▶ **AUTHORS LEAGUE ASKS WASHINGTON TO ACT ON PUBLISHING TAKEOVERS**
 The Authors League of America has written to the Senate Subcommittee on Antitrust and Monopoly Legislation protesting what it calls "a massive wave of acquisition" in the publishing industry and calling upon the legislators to restore some of the houses recently taken over by giant corporations to independent ownership. Citing recently announced plans by ITT to acquire Putnam, the ALA said that the centralization of control represented by this and other takeovers of previously independent houses "is bound to affect adversely the ability of the remaining independent publishers to compete and to survive." It deplored the decreasing number of outlets available to authors, particularly in the case of "controversial" works, and suggested that big corporations were more responsive to outside pressures, political and economic, on their publishing policies than were independents. "It is argued that these dangers are avoided because the large corporate owners allow their publishing subsidiaries to operate independently," the ALA letter declared, but added: "This is a temporary and often illusory safeguard. The reins of control gradually will be tightened." The letter was signed by Jerome Weidman, as ALA president. A spokesman for the subcommittee said in Washington that the body did not intend to look into publishing takeovers "as such," but that at hearings in March into economic concentration in various fields, it would look into the communications area, in which ITT figures.

▶ **MAILER LAUNCHES HIS "FIFTH ESTATE"**
 Norman Mailer, fresh from his \$50-a-head 50th birthday party Monday night ("only about a quarter the size of Truman Capote's, but at least everyone paid to come to mine") took time out the following day to try to enlighten a puzzled press about his proposal for a citizen body to check on America's "secret police"--the FBI and the CIA. What he has in mind, he said, is a body something like Nader's Raiders or the American Civil Liberties Union, which could keep an eye on Governmental surveillance activities. He has some people in mind for a steering committee to study the idea, and the "take" from his party will get the funding started. Subjects he feels worthy of study by such a group would include the Kennedy assassination, "still a major unsolved mystery in American life," and such recent political events as the Watergate affair and perhaps even the Eagleton case. Stressing that he wanted only to see if anyone was seriously interested in the proposal, and would then back out, Mailer said "I want only to be a literary man the rest of my life. I don't trust myself to be anything else." Good news for Robert Markel, editor at Grosset & Dunlap for Mailer's forthcoming book on Marilyn Monroe; he says Mailer's copy is still coming in on time, and the book is to be a full-length one, not just a brief essay to accompany pictures of the actress.

▶ **LIPPINCOTT GETS THE "PLANE CRASH CANNIBALS" STORY**
 The 16 survivors of last October's Andes plane crash, who survived 70 days only by cannibalism of their companions' bodies, have given the J. B. Lippincott company exclusive world-wide rights to their story. Edward L. Burlingame, the firm's editor-in-chief, went to Montevideo, Uruguay, along with several other U.S. publishers, to bid for the story. The bidding involved guarantees of up to \$500,000, and Lippincott won the unanimous approval of the survivors, who have guaranteed full cooperation. Author Piers Paul Read will write the book after talking to everyone involved in the incident. He is already in Montevideo, and

expects to deliver a manuscript by September

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