

19 March 69

Dear Hal.....

I assume you mean one Tom Bethell, whom Garrison has formally charged, we read, with giving the defense a copy of the prosecution's trial plan. Excuse me, but doesn't Garrison have an uncanny way of attracting defectors? If the letters are in fact now in the "public domain".....

You see, as an editor I have been thoroughly opposed to the idea that private correspondence of any kind be regarded as less than private correspondence. I do not regret the exception I made in your case, but I do feel compromised by the thought that the letters might now be "public." Most unfortunate, Hal. Keep the letters (the originals) as long as you like, as I've said, but let's try and control their use--eh?

News of the Ray "deal" staggers the imagination! They can't get away with it.....or can they? And who are "they"?

Well, I'm elbow deep in page proofs of Steppen. 3 and not, mebbe, in the best of moods. But the Republic's eagle looks tarnished.

In haste, but all good wishes,

A handwritten signature, possibly "O. J. 1", written in dark ink. The signature is stylized, with a large, loopy "O" and a vertical line to the right.

3/23/69

Dear Phil,

I am by no means certain that Bethell got the copies of the letters. Before then I had substantial doubts about him and had made an arrangement with Louis Ivon, a solid person, that whatever I gave them would remain locked securely in his possession. I suppose, however, that if and when Garrison read them he might, by accident, have returned them to Bethell, who was custodian of most of the files.

It is not only defectors Garrison has attracted. He has an infinite capacity for trusting the wrong people and not trusting those he should. If and ~~how~~ when I tell that story.....(I do not plan it). The man is an incredible mixture of close-to-genius and close-to-stupidity. With a more-than-human love of sycophants...withell, serious and dedicated. Would such a melding be found "real" in a novel?

Your question on the Ray case may be the gut question. They again overplayed their hand, exactly as I forecast in COUP D'ETAT, which dates to June 1968 and was published in a limited edition a month or so ago, as of what I had then written. As the story is developing, there is but a single surprise for me: the Stoner-National States Rights Party angle. There is an abundance of entirely new material on these most virulent fascists in the book, together with the fact that Stoner almost became Ray's lawyer in October. I didn't dream the fox would be invited back to the henhouse. In COUP I have the suppressed evidence of four separate NSRP plots against JFK, at least one vs King, and their probable responsibility for the Birmingham church bombing, a mixture that on any other subject, with any other author, would make a sought-after book, especially when it is considered that all this was in the possession of and suppressed by the gov't.

We may, however, have an unexpected benefit from the excesses of the NSRP and the irrationality that can be expected of Stoner. If Hanes emerges as Ray's lawyer again, I think we can depend upon him trying to make a "red" plot of the affair. These things just may outrage decent people, motivate the inexplicably unmotivated blacks. With Eastland placing both front feet in the trough, there may be independent but coordinated pushing this way. The NSRP is more anti-Semitic than anti-Negro. I have been trying, without success, to interest both minorities in my work. Representatives of both groups have found COUP the most shocking book they have read, and each leaves it there.

Do I give you a commentary on our times, people and blighted country, its present and future?

Sincerely,