

12/22/68

Dear-people-who-don't-answer-letters-and-hold-imaginary-grudges,

First, I hope you've had a very good Christmas by the time you get this. We plan for a quiet one, for we're both beat, and Lil is having the first attack on her hiatal hernia is some time. Don't even expect company for dinner.

Second, I'm glad I've had a note from Gary Schoener, who is home in Philadelphia for part of the holidays. He reports you have been in touch with Vince, about Boxley (and I can understand your feelings here, but there is absolutely no question about the fact and there can not possibly be any defense, if you do not - and I do not - begin with the assumption he was a CIA agent) and other things. Let me take a little time to see if I can straighten some things out. I realize Gary may be interpreting what Vince paraphrased.

"Penn sounded hurt because he is never in on anything". So far as Garrison is concerned, neither am I. So far as this last business is concerned, there was no opportunity. Garrison, as you know, phoned me to go back there when I was with you. I did. I had had a few apprehensions, but what I learned when I went back absolutely terrified me. Thereafter, when I was home, I figured other things out. Vince and I went down together, and we learned what I suspected was the case. Jim is so estranged from me I had to involve Vince. The explanations will have to await person-to-person communication. Vince did what I could not have, though it might possibly have been done in other ways. The important thing is that Jim likes Vince and refuses to communicate with me, then tells his staff it isn't possible to. If I say black, he sees white. I know why and there is nothing can be done about it until, if he ever does, he makes contact with reality.

Boxley and Turner may have already ruined everything. They have certainly bled the investigation white, kept it on one fruitless and expensive adventure after another, and were about to have Jim do what none of us would have survived. Their "evidence" was fabrication regardless of what you think of both personally. If there is a single viable fact either has turned up that has any relevance to Jim's work, I have yet to hear of it. And what they were into is worse and much wilder than I had tumbled to, as we learned in times nick. Joel Palmer was very much part of it. I believe you had suspicions of him when I did not. I saw his piece, incidentally, and what he didn't lift from you came from me, save for his irresponsible conjectures. Anyway, I have no idea whether Boxley was CIA, as Jim charged. On the basis of what I know I see no warrant for this. Vince thinks everybody is an agent. However, if you judge merely what he was responsible for, and Turner on the same basis, whether or not they are agents is entirely immaterial, for they could not have done better for the Feebees if they were. The rest will have to wait. It cannot now be talked about.

had gone

Next: "He mentioned that you were going to see Hunt and wouldn't tell him what you were going to ask Hunt, etc." I didn't see Hunt. When the invitation was extended, I was able, politely, to get him to give John Pilger that time. If and when anything is forthcoming from Hunt, it will have to be on a voluntary basis. I asked nothing of him and told Rothermel what I thought he wanted to know, in his interest in Hunt, that would indicate to him that I am not his enemy. Something I had picked up that I did not credit (nor did Louis Ivon, with whom I checked first). Meanwhile, all I hope to accomplish, since I am satisfied Hunt had nothing to do with the assassination, is that those of us who disagree with the official account are not ipso facto his enemies and, in our interest in getting the truth, will not unnecessarily be unfriendly. Were he to decide to help us, he could be quite valuable. I hope, eventually, it works out that way. Time alone will tell. I did get a few goodies of unestablished authenticity when you and I went there together, as I was about to leave for the plane. I have not yet studied them, have examined them casually, and they are interesting. When it is not as public as US mail, I'll tell you what. When you are here, I'll show it all to you.

I note with some interest that Boxley says he would be glad to be interrogated by Vince and at your place. This pretty well eliminates me, and Vince was not working on that, had not, ever, and has done no work on the case for two years. At this point, I see nothing to be gained by any interrogation. Did Boxley tell you I wrote him, that he never answered, and all of this well in advance? Perhaps he is interested in something like this. If he is, I think he must be really sick. Penn, please believe me, what he almost pulled is beyond conception. You cannot begin to imagine how bad it was, nor can you imagine how invalid and possibly worse, were it not for all of these things, he had fabricated the case. In even his own terms and statements, it was nonexistent. The one thing he turned up of any potential interest he carefully kept from the office, gave Joel Palmer a copy, and I saw it at Joel's. It is entirely inconsistent with what he was putting up, tended to ~~xxx~~ support what he wanted disbelieved, so it does not exist. If he does not turn it in to the office, I'll tell you about it, for it relates to something we have both written about, you much more than I, and I think you'll be interested in trying to get the same thing.

An interrogation would do no good. He picks Vince because he knows Vince does not have the detail in his mind. What could it accomplish? There is no chance Jim would take him back, and if he tried, his entire staff would walk out. Boxley and Turner cost Jim his best legal mind, as Jim acknowledges, in his own never-acknowledging way.

If you are over for the trial, I think you'll learn enough.

Not having heard from you, I have nonetheless arranged for those days I have to go to Washington next week to include Thursday, in case you come. I do not yet know when I'll be leaving. I expect it will be about the fifteenth, but I do not know. I also have to be there the 9th, also a Thursday.

Before dropping this, let me tell you that he left New Orleans knowing we were going there, did not return after he knew we had arrived, refused to when Jim, in the presence of all of us at lunch on the 4th asked him to, was back in New Orleans and, I understand, at Palmer's, during all of this, looked none of us up, was not reachable by Western Union, and left town - all rather than have a confrontation. Now he wasn't fired until, I think, Sunday. We were there Wednesday, and he knew we were coming. Wednesday Jim asked him to come back and he wouldn't. Jim finally said, "Well, you're on that scene and I have to listen to you" - and this after he had made an enormous and poisonous beef to Jim... For everyone's sake, particularly his, I think it had best be dropped. He'll never stop regretting it if he doesn't, because, among other things, his work, for the first time, has been both analyzed and checked out. All the other crap was verbal. He never wrote memos. All that money went for what he told Jim, verbally - none of it of any account. When he had to put it on paper, he could not survive it.

Beginning with the misrepresented origin of the Bradley thing, I am convinced it is wrong. It was an enormous diversion, as everything has been keeping Jim and what money he had away from the case he had to take to court. He was persuaded a) he'd be killed and b) that case would never be permitted to come up. I do not know of a single legitimate thing to come out of California. Turner has a sickening record. Because I know there is a personal relationship, I will say no more until I can give you, to your face, chapter and verse. Either one was an enormous disaster. But they both worked together, each backstopping the other. Turner even endorsed those of whom he knew nothing, people clearly bent on harm. What money Boxley didn't waste he was responsible for. Meanwhile, in order to get any New Orleans work done at all, I had to give up my own work, pay my own expenses when I didn't have the money, not even having money to eat with and cadging a pad where I could, and they have done nothing with it. Now that there is no time, they are suddenly interested. Believe me until you say see it. Our best to you all,