

8/12/71

Dear Jim,

Because I do not know when I'll be in Washington, I'm sending the exchange of letters I discussed briefly with Bud yesterday, not for your private file but for the Ray file. As you will see, I took some time because daily I become more apprehensive about some aspects. Among the possibly less significant is the indication of constant pressure from Stoner for racist propaganda that he seems to be resisting. He and I have discussed this at length in person and by mail.

Bud said he'd send me the 20 pages from Thompson. I think they may have some important negative evidence and on withholding the exculpatory.

There are some areas where, if he will say anything, as you know, I think it better and safer for the lawyers not to be involved. I may or may not be right, but I think that in some areas he will speak to me as not to lawyers. As a general thing, he has a low opinion of lawyers per se. He has not indicated this about the three of you, but he has made cracks he had asked me not to pass on, about lawyers in general. So, I think that, since you will always know if there is anything I get from him that you should and may be better with the buffer, it would not be bad if he felt he could keep a few secrets as long as they should be kept. I have made some pretty broad hints to him. I will be writing him further for Bud to hand him, having discussed this with Bud and having his approval, but I think we should discuss this in advance of my writing it if at all possible. My purpose is not to keep secrets from you both. I want you to understand that I will be attempting and why as well as why I think it best to keep it between him and me for the time being, if he says anything. One of the things I can't make up my mind on is whether I should address the potential conflict of interest between him and Stoner, and this in terms of Stoner's non-performance. However, it would seem to be impossible for him to make any immediate response except verbally, and this is one of the things from which no taint should be able to rub off on Bud with Stoner, who will scream anyway if he sees what Cook wrote.

I have been raising things with him over a period of time. He says he'll discuss these with Bud. I have suggested and Bud has agreed to tape the whole thing for me. I can now dub direct, which means better quality, from my old cassette machine to one like yours of the new one given to me, so we can both have copies of this tape, should Bud want to keep it.

I have marked in red toward the end a passage where he addresses our need to know more and his agreement "up to a point". Any step past where we now are on this would be very good, but we have to worry about other things when this begins to happen, one is his recall and the other his faithfulness to reality or his reluctance to really tell the truth about others. I think it would be the best approach, assuming you and Bud agree, to encourage him to give me every possible investigative lead involving others, numbers, addresses, etc, regardless of their immediate need in any possible court action on the ground that while you do not need it or want it for legal reasons now sometimes investigating things takes long time and if we wait until later it may be too late, plus the fact that it is his best insurance for survival, that as long as he has secrets killing him serves a purpose. Here is where he may tighten, but with all that has happened (and I'd not raise the attempted escape unless he does), there are too many indications he may be near his end. Even Jerry felt he was set up for that May escapade and that its purpose was to get him killed. All of this is pretty ticklish, one of the reasons I write, so you can think about it, and one why I think we should talk about it before Bud goes, the three of us or maybe Bill, too. Hurriedly,