

Dear Jim,

Confidential

11/18/74

I begin this immediately after your call from Bogates. The reason is the Rena story that Stener made a trip to Atlanta and seemed interested in knowing if Jimmy were going to "open up."

Assuming she is in contact with reality, the possible variations deny a third-hand account dependable interpretation. Examples: Stener could have been to Atlanta for other purposes; she could be interpreting his questions in a special way consistent with the story she has been trying to sell; he could have been prompted by some news stories I've seen.

My belief is that he'd have a source in whom he'd have more confidence in Jerry. However, there are several stories, not all prompted by Livingston, that could lead him to believe something like this.

I believe it not impossible that if he had such a worry he'd have had one of his own people there. Of course, he telling how his people understand and twist.

This misplay on Jimmy's letter to Eastland could have disturbed Stener.

One could go on and on.

However, I have never hidden from Jimmy or Jerry my belief that Stener always had a conflict of interest from the high probability that one of his people, meaning most likely one of his money sources, could have had an involvement or Stener could have suspected this.

Other suspicions of Stener are warranted. He put John away when John could have walked. He wasted so many of Jimmy's rights on a lead-pipe cinch. He should never have involved two others he did involve. He should, in fact, have stayed out himself. Allowing for sickness of the mind and ego and a desire to exploit the sensational, I think there remains legitimate questions about Stener.

The other things seem to me to relate to this. One is that I've never seen any indication of any Ray connection with the NSRP prior to after the King assassination. I mean any Ray. I've been looking. Except for Jimmy they are all racists. I've seen no racism in Jimmy and the trust he has imparted in me is opposed to the Stener belief. But racists or not, no sign of any connection I can find. The first overt connection is long after Jimmy was back in the US. It also came at a time when he was desperate for help and quite possibly could think of only the Fields affair. The limited correspondence we have is consistent with this. It also is a dribble that Stanton/Casale decided to let us have.

The one strong reaction from Jimmy also is subject to misinterpretation. I believe it is because he feared the prejudicial consequences.

He was upset about the harping on Stener with John and Jerry. He mentioned it to me with some feeling at least once, I think here; to you once in my presence; and in a letter. If he regards it as intended to be prejudicial and having that effect, he is right. However, it can be taken as a fear on his part that the State was getting close to something. I don't believe it is what he had in mind, but can we know? He did react, he was and he remained concerned.

But there is nothing of what we know to connect Stener personally with the crime or with the kind of crime that seems to be connected with it.

My hunch is that if Stener really had this worry he'd have been on the phone to Jerry and Jerry with you or me. Yet it could be argued that Jerry's silence is suspicious unless Jimmy wrote him.

That Rena figures in this complicates it more. She is not rational but she is in contact with some kind of source. And this could raise questions about the interests, especially new interests, of those with whom she is in contact.

The whole thing is too complicated to draw any real conclusion. However, I'm glad to have the report and I'll be thinking of it. And I wonder why it took Rena more than two weeks after the hearing closed to react. A worried Stener would not have taken that long. If in fact nobody both involved and worried would have waited this long, perhaps there is in the tale a clue to Rena's connections.

Other things we might have discussed I didn't because you were at dinner with your folks. We'll talk about them later. Best,