

12/26/68

Dear Steve,

Your welcome letter of the 22nd has just arrived. On the books, my wife will check that out. It seems right, for now that you remind me, I do seem to recall your reporting not having received a shipment. That was probably the one we didn't insure! She is in a condition such as you describe, so that may be a few days.

In order to speed up your getting on a Rose memo, I have written Louis, with a copy for him to initial and send to you. If he is out of the office, or if you speak to him before you hear from him, by all means ask him, for it is ~~urgent~~ that this be done as soon as possible.

I understand, appreciate and approve your reluctance to violate what you regard as a confidence. However, it does indicate a few things I do not find encouraging, an abdication, an uncriticalness and a failure to do your own thinking. These I will address, not for the purpose of criticism, but so that you can do your own thinking and see if you can reach your own conclusions.

For a year now, it has been clear that, right or wrong, Jim has claimed ownership, so to speak, of all assassination inquiry, including the unquestioned right to use the property of others as though it were his own. The question you should ask, as by now you should have asked, suppose he is wrong? What then? What happens to the rest of us, sincere people with sincere interests and principles not in any way inferior to his? What happens to what he seeks? How, under such circumstances, can we help him best, if not ourselves? What is or would be the proper course?

Aside from the possibility of Bradley, what is inherent in your letter as it is in my belief is the acknowledgement that all the California work has at best been a waste of time. At worst it is the ruin of the case, for while he was exhausting himself where he has no jurisdiction, where he was using his official capacity to pursue investigations he could not take to court, no matter how commendable this might be, he was doing absolutely nothing where he had jurisdiction, nothing on the Shaw case, nothing on the other possible cases. As a consequence, all is now in jeopardy. More, much really good material is now worthless. And the credibility-level of everyone has been very much lowered. Now on Bradley, where I also believe he was wrong and think I know why and how, ask yourself this: is it proper to make charges in advance of investigation? Or should the investigation first be completed?

The why and how will have to wait until we meet again. I do ask you to try and recall the opinions I gave you when I was there. Perhaps you paid so little attention you do not recall, but I did offer you an opinion of Jim. Ask Maggie if you are not certain or do not recall. I think she will. Once you have this in mind, then ask yourself if your course is and has been the well-thought out one. If not, what may be the consequence(s)?

May I suggest to you that my opinion has now been ~~well~~ established as fact to several competent if not scientific observers, including some of his people? Then I further suggest that this was accomplished by others, who began with this intention. In the course of earlier correspondence, I have named these people to you. Whether or not they were independent, whether or not they had high motive, is really not material. What they did is what counts, and what they may yet do. These things alone are my concern in what I have asked of you. There was enough for me to keep busy with without undertaking this additional chore. I did it not for pleasure of reward. ~~either~~ is possible.

Last February I had suspicions of Rose. I asked a simple thing of you people, getting me a picture so I could check him out. You not only failed to do it, you not only ~~fail~~ let him know, you never once told me you had no intention of doing it. This is and was your right, for neither one of us owns any others. However, when those who have cooperated with each other ask such things, he presumes a reasonable request will be honored or he'll be told, and this, I think, is a reasonable presumption. Need I remind you of all the things I sent you, not even awaiting your request? Now what possible reason could I have had for wanting this simple thing that mitigated against its being done? Again, there could not have been a personal thing here. I could have been wrong, but on what basis could this be assumed? Or assumed in silence? I was left to sit and stew, to waste much time in writing and phoning. No one ever said it would not be done. This, I submit, is no way to do things.

So, we have Rose, and all of you trust him, and your own judgements you neither question nor permit to be questioned.

Now tell me what you have from Rose and those associated with him that in any way help Garrison or in any way advance what we all seek? I tell you to look back over what he came up with and ask yourself what would have happened if Jim had used any of it in public? Who would have survived it?

Now go further and ask yourself the total cost, in time and money, of the combination of Rose and Bexley and Turner, on the basis of what you already know, not what is known but may not be to you. Of course, Hepburn is part of this. Does the sum total add a single word, even a gasp, that can be used in the pivotal thing, Jim's great and primary responsibility, the Shaw case?

Not even a comma.

Perhaps a Period. Perhaps even an exclamation point.

At this point it behooves you to ask yourself what might have been done with that time and money, especially in New Orleans. At some point you will know what was real and ignored down there, of the countless viable and ~~ask~~ authenticated leads and well-begun, in some cases, about completed investigations ignored by Jim yet known to him. These are things he could have done something about. He not only didn't; he wouldn't help when he could have. They were less spectacular, not the kind of stuff that would make the national press to begin with. But they are real. He might have done things that would have rendered it impossible for the federal government to continue to pretend the Warren report is viable. He refused. That was his right. His judgement should be his own (the great tragedy is that it hasn't been). But, as you have heard me say before, the Warren Commission had no monopoly on error.

Do I have to begin to suggest to you the consequences of your (plural) dedication to Hepburn when the slightest independent analysis would have told you it could not be for real? Need I recall to you anything more than the fortune Jaffe pissed away on it? Need I remind you that when I go to New Orleans to work, Jim does not pay my fare, lodging, etc. There are a few minor expenses, like when I give him microfilm for processing so he can have it that I ask Louis to pay for. He is always very decent this way. So, Jaffe can get a grand vacation and perhaps make a few films he might use for his own purposes at the expense of the investigation, doing nothing that can in any way be used in court in New Orleans even if he gets what is true, while those who go down there to work on what is directly relevant have to do it at their own expense and as unwelcome poor relatives.

I cannot pretend dispassion about this, for I have mortgaged everything I own to do what I try, including what future I may have and my wife's with it. About such things I cannot be impersonal. Now I face the necessity for going there again, without income, probably without my expenses being paid, to help them during the trial, to give, free (as I will), what it has cost me so much to gather, while what could have financed this gathering was squandered by those who should never have been entrusted with the decision on spending a cent to begin with or with the judgement to conduct any investigation under any circumstances.

Everyone will say nice things, but the fact will be that others who might have done this have not, that those who could afford it and didn't do it have not helped with it and will not help with keeping me there. I have already agreed to go there before the trial. I have to abandon other work that I regard as important to do this, as I have had to in the past, but I have little choice. I have agreed to stay there through the trial, to help prepare for it, etc. During this same period I must in some way improvise a means of raising about \$1,600 due on my indebtedness. How I do not know, certainly not when I shall be there busy enough and cannot possibly do all I must preparatory to going. I will continue to have no income. And I am now engaged in trying to arrange myself a job, for even that will not be done for me. It is not the most congenial way to work, especially against the real odds. Believe me, they are very real, whether or not you are aware of them.

In you finish what you are doing on Hepburn before you hear from Louis or before you get in touch with him, please at least begin what you can record about Rose. You will at worst have lost a little time if he says no. As one who plans to write, you should have on your own made detailed notes on these people, if not for the present or for history, for your own future as a writer.

I do not believe Boxley was a CIA agent. I think it more likely he is sick. I do not believe Jim has any real reason to believe he was CIA. I think he had other purposes in including this in the press release. However, it does not make any difference who or what Boxley is or was. What he did and was about to do are the significant things. They are all disastrous, without any exception, even a minor one. He, too, has bled the investigation, without any contribution to it. He, too, kept Jim terrified and off the subject. Nor do I accuse Rose or Turner of being agents. Turner worked hand in glove with Boxley, at best uncritically when the most critical approach was called for. If he has come up with a single thing Jim can now use, I am unaware of it, and so is everyone in Jim's office who is in a position to know. He, too, was part of the terror and part of the distraction. He was also part of the authentication of what could not possibly be authenticated.

To me, the question of agency has the meaning of that of the fairies and the needles. All that counts is the record. If you do not know it, you should take steps to learn it, and that very quickly. It may already be too late. The record is this: Boxley, Turner, Rose, Jaffe and Palmer may have already wrecked everything we have all worked so hard for. With Jim's assent, they have utterly wasted every cent that has been contributed to Jim's investigation. They have kept him from his knitting. What more do you require? I feel that with this record, we should be learning what we can of those responsible for it. I have already established a Hepburn connection I will not put on paper and in the mails.

There is now no time for comment on other parts of your letter. I am glad you "resigned". If you failed to return your credentials, you may regret it. For souvenir value, a Xerox is sufficient. Remember the credits on "Farewell America", which may already be enough for a mistrial. Remember that you were

part of it, without the credit line. You'd best assume the possibility that Hepburn is the other side anyway. Without doubt, he is not curs.

There is so much that cannot be undone. Do not leave any within your control.

There is supposed to be a new arrangement in the office. Like so many agreements and understandings, it may not exist in any real sense. Jim has agreed to it. He is leaving the actual handling of the case to Alcock, assisted by Sciambra and Von. They are to restrict themselves 100% to the New Orleans stuff or what relates to it. Their immediate need is to prepare for the trial. The most basic things have not been done. Some of them I have been asked to do and will. Jim will devote himself to such things as getting re-elected, for his campaign is close now. The informality of the past is to be past, with no extraneous investigations outside their jurisdiction. Certain things were assumed of me and I have, afterward, agreed. I do not expect Jim to get on the phone and spell this out to you. This, however, is the essence. I suggest that when you speak to Louis you can learn for yourself what he will be willing to say on the phone. Of course, if the case loses, Jim will have the out, at least in his own mind, that others did it.

That may very well be true, but in a different sense.

I also suggest that it is not too soon to start considering your own position and that of all of us if the court decision is adverse. For a long time, as perhaps you may recall, I have considered that it may be decided on legal technicalities rather than fact. I have been quite explicit about one part of this, and here I refer to Mark and Mort.

If I do not give you a pretty picture I do, I think, give you an accurate one. Take a good look at it. It may already be too late to learn what should have been so long ago, when no one would listen.

Please remember, in these memoranda, what may be of crucial importance is what may seem to be of the slightest, the simple, casual thing that is usually unnoticed. The real connection for Hepburn comes from where he saw when. No one paid any attention to it. I checked it out. It is a connection with what has been established, even to Jim's satisfaction, as the other side. I did not tell him. I did tell Louis. So, when you make notes, include everyone anyone knows, no matter how slightly, everyone they to your knowledge saw. Although it can mean less to me, please include who you saw where in Europe, with descriptions.

For whatever it is or may be worth to you, we all make mistakes, we all have fallible judgements, we all at some time do what it later turns out is or may have been the wrong thing. There was, certainly, no Commission monopoly. Why, motive, is the controlling thing, at least inwardly, which is where it really counts, when later each of us has to assess himself. If it turns out that you may have done what was not for the best, you will not be alone any more than I. I think your motive will not plague you.

Have a good year, all of you. My best to you all.

Sincerely,