

10/12/70

Dear Jim,

It is wonderful that Hal could go abroad, more than he can be so happy. Let us hope it lasts, that it is the real thing, with genuine meaning and what I think would be so good for him if these things are the reality, that it lasts.

He, too, may have unusual needs. I think it likely he does.

You do, correctly, understand the warmth of my feeling for him, so I take time to add a bit to what we are sharing.

It is more than domestication that he will require for a meaningful relationship to be possible and durable. He is at an age where change does not come easily.

I, too, thought I detected a kind of loneliness in him, yet I was not certain it was loneliness (nor am I yet). On one of my trips to S.F., when it was apparent he had no women who played any significant role in his life, I asked him about it. His reply was that he had met none who really interested him. (I was also aware of the fact that he then could not afford the customary boy-girl type of dating.) The next time he told me of a woman of about his age with whom he was going and I think I met her, briefly, one night when he was driving me around. On either my last trip there or on his here he told me of Cheryl. He also told me of her employment and volunteered his faith in the integrity of their friendship. As a matter of fact, he volunteered her effort. I immediately suggested a chore that any intelligent person could perform (since done for me admirably by an unusually-intelligent high-school boy). I have heard nothing of her or it from him since. I did not repeat the request, feeling that even innocent research might not be the best kind of involvement for her.

Hal came here with a brother and a friend of the brother, when the brother was seeking employment in Washington. The three of them remained for several days. Hal remained longer, for another friend was coming and could provide him with transportation most of the way to his family home.

The brother and his friend were each strange ones, in different ways. The brother was unusually quiet, the friend inclined toward showiness. Theirs seemed like a strange friendship. The brother has a thing on germs. He brought his own soap, his own paper towels, etc. He was odd in other ways I do not remember, but the impressions of oddness is strong and lingers. At that time, I felt this was a reflection of the parents or a parent (I know Yiddische mamas), the way in which the children were raised.

The timing is especially troublesome to me, for it comes at a stage when the government anticipates trouble and, in fact, is in some distress. I have, for example, forced them privately to take the official position that there was a conspiracy to kill King (please say nothing of this). I have gotten the most significant suppressed evidence. I am suing for more, and if my lawyer were not ego-tripping, I'd be with limitless confidence about the outcome, corrupt as our society is. I have gotten some evidence by the threat of suit. I am reasonable certain I present no secrets to them, that they know exactly what I'm about - and its potential. If I had any financial backing and a really diligent lawyer, there is no telling what I could now accomplish. And I mean now, for the prerequisites are met. As of now, I have won one suit (and am currently pressing for a perjury indictment of a DJ lawyer), have accomplished the purposes of several others as an alternative to suit, have filed two, the incredibly inept response to the first of these just having been made and the time for the second to be made will expire in two weeks, have two more drafted and requiring revising, and I've asked the Tennessee judge to recognize me as amicus curiae. With any attention, my King/Ray book will be a very serious embarrassment. I've totally destroyed the official mythology on that one, with the essence of the destruction the suppressed and misrepresented official evidence itself, though I got it after completing the book. And there is a live defendant, something to get into court. Here there are serious problems, one being the defendant, the other being counsel, but neither is insurmountable. So, when Alvarez raises his sycophantic head at this time, cannot one wonder?

...We see society, our society, as though through a single pair of eyes. Where we disagree is on the meaningfulness of what is a fact, that is the dissidents are "outgunned by the police." I expect guerrilla warfare on a large scale and rather soon. I think we are in the early stages now - have been. To take the case I mentioned, New Orleans: what are the alternatives to those arrested and their friends and peers? Submission to what they cannot submit. The Establishment is fortunate that they young have no Mao and haven't learned to adept his or Che's writings. And when they have learned that they can get all they need known about techniques from the existing writings of the extreme right, they will be adequately armored. Then it will really get bad, for all they'll need the can get at the garden shop or the feed store - fertilizer.

...I hope this affair doesn't blow up on us, but if it does, I'm glad the two of you are there. I'd like to think he'll stop off here on the way back, which he can at no extra cost.

Best regards,

7 October 1970

Dear Harold:

Your letter of the first arrived on Oct. 5, and in the same mail was a postcard from Hal, mailed Oct. 1 in Geneva. He and the girl had made connections at Munich on Sept. 30, he had rented a car, and they had driven to Geneva via Lucerne and Berne. He had phoned us to tell us he was leaving, but apparently we were not in. (He and we have a long history of missing contact with each other due to our unorthodox working hours). He sounds completely swept up, and mentions on his own the dreamlike quality of what goes on.

From the beginning, we have had the same feeling you describe about not wanting him to get hurt. This actually pre-dated this particular girl, whom we perhaps were unusually impressed with because she is so much more attractive than the others he had brought out at one time or another. We were concerned because he seemed to us from the beginning to be unusually attractive as a person and yet extremely lonely and, we thought, looking for someone. The more we got to know him the more we came to feel that he always had been lonely in some way, and this of course contributed to our concern that he not make a hasty or unfortunate choice. It goes without saying that as far as we know we have given him no reason to realize our concern. Fundamentally it is none of our business; he talks little of himself or his history, and, as I mentioned once before, we never press him on anything. The relationship is such that we can and do go months now and then without contact with each other; then suddenly something will happen, a phone call will be made, and he'll come over with his portfolio and an evening ~~will~~ will be spent comparing notes and exchanging them in some cases.

When he brought Cheryl out (after first making it clear this was pretty special) we were of course much pleased. Our chief concern was the difference in ages. We are of course conscious that Hal remains to be domesticated in some ways, but this poses no insuperable problem for an intelligent and loving woman. She would just have more work to do domesticating him than with some others. He himself is intelligent and, we believe, loving by nature, so we felt that if the spark were there things should work themselves out. While it was obvious, and has become increasingly so, that he is serious about her, we met her only the one time and had no intimation whether she was equally serious or was just responding to Hal as any normal person does.

And since we had no intimation about the older man, the idea that she might be seeking a father figure never occurred to us. She's very quiet, so we can't say that we saw any hint of such a quest. We weren't looking for it, of course. From what you say, it can hardly be ruled out.

During the one evening she was here, it came out entirely naturally whom she worked for. And Hal, while not defensive about it, showed by making a joke about it that he was conscious of it. Certainly he said nothing to indicate you ever had heard of the girl (that's why we wrote to you as we did), much less that you had suggested she might be doing a job. And such an idea never even occurred to us since as far as we knew you might not know she even existed.

I am going into this at some length because it has to be made plain how conscious we are of Hal's unbounded respect and affection for you, and how we sense that your own feelings toward him, with every apparent justification, are on much the same plane. As a matter of fact we have approached this business of discussing Hal with you with great reluctance, not only because it's risky from the standpoint of being fair to Hal, but also because we wish to avoid, above all, doing the slightest thing in deed or word to damage the rather unique and quite irreplaceable relationship you have toward one another. We have written ~~only~~ as we have only out of a feeling that you seemed a bit puzzled with Hal and that if we could be of only a little help it might be worth taking the risk that we did.

Yes, we still get one of the New Orleans papers, and are all too conscious of the decision to crack down. Not only on the black militants -- and all over the place, not just in New Orleans -- but on all rebellious youth and eventually on dissent. We lived in China during the early 30s, at a time when I was handling five or six news agency reports of what went on in Germany, so the pattern is entirely too familiar. We certainly agree that the whole thing could blow up. Perhaps one of the few hopeful elements is the probability that what we usually refer to as Madison Avenue -- that great tropism in the American character toward phoniness -- has not only adopted the best of the late Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels but gone beyond him in many respects. One perhaps unexpected result has been that there has been, as usual, a certain amount of Madison Ave.-type overkill, and this has generated a concomitant contempt on a growing number of levels. Not enough, of course, to satisfy many of us, but nevertheless it is there and growing and spreading. If the government suffers from a credibility gap of its own making, it suffers far more from lack of respect. About a year ago it occurred to us that if there is a successful revolution in this country, it will not be brought about by blacks, or other minorities, or youthful dissidents -- all of whom are outgunned merely by the police. If it is carried off, it will have to be done by mutinous troops. I can't yet see that happening, but such a possibility seems to me to be growing, on the whole, less rather than more remote. On the other hand we Americans seem to have an overwhelming genius for wallowing in confusion, which may be a more realistic approach toward the future.

All the best from both of us,


jdw