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Dear Howard,

Thanks for your letter. We were cheered.

For a variety of reasons we have decided that Susan will be, ahem, confined, in Michigan near her family's summer place. The delivery is scheduled for about the time we had planned to take vacation in the states anyway, so we will just combine our various requirements. One of the strongest arguments against having a baby here is that for reasons unknown fathers are not allowed to be in the infant's presence for a week and sometimes more after it is born. I could not stand that.

We are in good shape, on the whole. Half of Moscow has been felled by the flu, it seems, including Leonid Iliyich, as you may have read. Apparently, the weather is to blame. We had below freezing one day and the next it was 35, which is positively tropical. Generally, life is hectic most of the time because we try to keep in touch with diplomatic and journalistic contacts as well as official (such as there are) and unofficial Russians. The Kaisers left us with a number of their friends; we have made a few of our own. The result is a busy program. On balance, I think the diplomats offer the least return for time expended because most of them know a good deal less than we do. At dinner one night the Ambassadors of Luxemburg turned to me and asked, "Tell me, do they still have those dissidents here?" (We are going to Sir James' Tuesday evening and I will give him your best). Soviet friends are unpredictable. In Lithuania last summer --- where there is this environment program someone ought to do two or three columns about --- we met a young musician with whom we spent a fascinating evening that provided a lot of material for a subsequent Outlooker. He promised to call us when he came to Moscow for a concert and did. We were very excited and looked forward to the chance to talk again. After the concert, however, he disappeared. His family was backstage but he was not. Probably we'll never know for sure whether there was just a misunderstanding or if someone had warned him.

Your kind words about my stories were, needless to say, appreciated. As always I wish there were more, of greater insight and stylistic excellence. I just keep on trucking. The paper looks good from here, although I wish I could see more of it. (I saw my first copy in months of the Metro section the other --- in an office at Pravda). Does the economic squeeze mean any real cutback in editorial product? I see that reporters are being hired on a temporary basis. Is that part of a cost-saving plan? I think the Star's four day option is very noble. God I hope it never happens to us.

Best to Todd. Why not make an Editor's grand tour?

