

Dec. 27, 1976

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Dear Phil and Rony,

With last week's excitement falling into perspective, there are a few thoughts I want to share with you about the Foreign Ministry business:

1- I think it is highly unlikely that I will be expelled. It is not in the Soviets' interest to risk expulsion of the Pravda or Izvestia man in Washington. In terms of next summer's Belgrade meeting to assess the results of Helsinki, a clear-cut expulsion of a correspondent would be a disaster for the Russians. More likely is that they will try somehow to make us leave ahead of schedule -- possibly by increasing petty harrassment, surveillance, telephone threats and so on. It is also possible that an effort will be made to discredit me by accusing me in the press of some misbehavior. The Friendly CIA ~~was~~ was a good example of that tactic. Needless to say it is important not to be swayed. charge

2- The odds are that the decision to threaten me formally was based on our contacts with Russians as much as on any articles they may have found objectionable. We know more Russians than any other correspondent in Moscow and spend more time with them. This is something the Russians fear a thousand times more than countless interviews with Sakharov. As the Marquis de Custine wrote in 1839 "we may see things as they are which would be the greatest of inconveniences." We do not intend to stop seeing Russians. I think though that for the sake of our friends some new element of discretion ~~is~~ is advisable.

3- I expect to go on working exactly as I have been, writing the same kinds of articles. I think that if we in any way are influenced by the possibility of further trouble we succumb completely to ~~the~~ Soviet intimidation. Even if I am expelled -- which I repeat is very unlikely -- a new correspondent would doubtless be accredited. This has been the pattern in the past (except for the case of the Post and one or two others in the mid-1960s). Lets forget the incident, ~~as~~ as nearly as we can pretend it never happened.

Once Susan and Evan are comfortably settled here (chez Friendly pere) I will start to chip away at a long list of chores that I need to complete in London. I will also be doing the reporting for a story on the fabulous family of Maxim Litvinov, Stalin's foreign policy commissar. His 89-year-old widow Ivy is still alert and I have been promised good access to a variety of papers. Should make a good reader.

I'll be in touch with you phonly next week to discuss this letter -- if that be necessary -- and the one I sent you a few weeks ago concerning "The Future."

Best regards and thanks muchly for your warm words and support.

