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9/18/65

Dear Sol,

For many things I am grateful: that you are back, apparently well, wrote me promptly, the letter took only the customary 100% too much time to get here, and I had a hunch and went for the mail as soon as there was any chance it had arrived, for I can still get a brief letter off in today's only outgoing mail. There is little else at the moment for which I can be grateful.

I have heard nothing from England and only very bad from France - so bad that the commercial counsellor at the Embassy is upset by the correspondence I showed him and recommended I get in touch with the cultural attache in New York which I have done. In the United States the book continues to elicit high praise and negative policy decisions, specified as policy. Entirely aside from everything else, it is quite right, which, I know you dont believe, unassailably so, which may be the root of the problem. It has been read by three and a half lawyers (the fourth is only a little more than half through it) and all praise it highly, including a member of the House Judiciary Committee who, unconvinced to begin with, is now convinced, "shocked and shaken" and, as a reader and lawyer both, "fascinated" by what I have done.

As of now the book is in the hands of publishers in New York who know it is not a singular submission. Bob Wohlforth (Ferrar Strauss) has it and like the others, promised a two-week reading. I was in New York until the afternoon of the tenth. Bob's copy didn't reach him until Monday. So, he still has a week to go. I'm coming up this week, I hope Monday morning, the 20th. I expect to stay at Sidney's. I am very anxious to talk to you at some length and hope it can be at night when, if you have no social committment, we can go over everything, because I shall also need advice on decisions I must make and I dont think you'll be in the best position to offer advice without knowing everything.

With Ivan, I think that at least for the moment I should do what you believe, but again, let that wait until we can talk. By this time my damages have soared, and I have ample evidence of a) the quality of the manuscript b) the damage to me failure of the book to appear on the agreed March 15 date has caused. Sidney has for some time thought it may be to Ivan's interest to print the book. I am apprehensive about this believing an enforceable agreement from him is not possible. But he will certainly be open to a very large claim if he doesn't perform at all. Also, I believe that despite his general allegation and because of the consistent contrary information from everybody - editors, publishers, English professors and lawyers, his implication his reason was literary is nonsense. I still believe someone in Washington gave John Ledes the word, the day he was in Washington, the day their attitude changed, the day before Ivan gave me his decision. Co-incidence, perhaps, but I know without doubt I have a very good book that may still be and certainly then was a valuable property.

I tried persistently in the late Spring to get through to Harriet Pilpel, which she invited me to do. I failed. Finally I got a message that I had already been everywhere she would or could have suggested. I believe she had a different reason, for one, I believe Bessie at Atheneum (policy negative a week after promised and despite an advance promise of no subsequent policy decision) is a relative.

Sylvan Fox has a book coming out, publishing by Award Books, of which I have never heard. Six daily summaries by World-Telegram, by which he is employed, the end of this month, pre-strike news in 9/13 Publishers' Weekly. First, 200,000 copy printing, largest in history of company. Alas, as I see it, he draws on material outside record and unless blurb is wrong, only asks questions. I think acceptability depends upon officiel inofmmation. I use no other. Whether this will hurt or help, only time will tell, but it confronts me with one of my decisions. An Oscar Collier, Fleet Publishing Corp., 230 Park, had an interest in the subject. He did a very nice thing in response to my letter. He phoned me. He says he is interested but is now overcontracted, and that if I still have not had a contract from one of his timid confreres, to see him. I am also to see him this coming week. It would be good to know more about him as soon as possible, because I think there may yet be possibilities. Let me also, confidentially, tell you where else the book now is in case you have any ideas: Bobbs-Merril, which has an editorial affirmative interest but I have no way of knowing what the publishers themselves will do when confronted by policy. But the editor, Bob Ockene, was quite excited. I'll see him. Sally Belfrage (New American Library, which is frank in saying it will not touch the subject, sent me to him. She is the daughter of Cedric Belfrage, "editor in exile" of the National Guardian.) said the owner refused to read the Lane ms. because he was afraid he'd like it. They rejected mine. Scribners (Mr. Hutter); Dell (Richard Roberts, senior editor, accepted it for a two week reading, by whom I dont know. I had a very nice chat with a pleasant young woman name Ive Caplan, whose function I do not know.

Mark Lane's book is to be published by Bodley-Head in England, massive reptinting by Penguin. It was, as I under stand, so inaccurate (as have been his writings in the Guardian) that they have an entire committee headed by Historian Trevor-Roper (himself the most conspicuous misteker in this field) checking and revising it. My book is at Gollancz, and I have heard nothing, Maybe Sidney has. My book was given to Michel Mohrt, an official of Gallimard in Paris, very reputable, June 4, persuant to a June 2 agreement (repeated June 4. They would do the book if Mohrt liked it. He would let me know by June 15 if he didn't. If he did, Gallimard's additional approval would be necessary, forthcoming by July 1. Negative decision, is made, as soon as made and if made before July 1, then conveyed immediately. Publication February, target Xmas, but only dim possibility. Three letters unanswered until Mohrt left Paris, when his secretary wrote a letter revealling no conformity to agreement at all and that Gallimard as of July 30 had "just" bought a "similar" manuscript. More than anything else this led to extra work and expense of copyright registration. My second letter was again answered by her, although it, the fifth, was addsessed to Gallimard personally. She here said (Sept 3.) that the book had come in which Mohrt was in the U.S. The conflict is clear. And the very first question I had asked of Mohrt was of conflict. He assured me there was non end of Gallimard's interest in subject. He sat on my book to guarantee no competition to whatever he is publishing, which I now believe is Lane's, through influence of Oswald Committees, Gallimard publishes Sartre (to whom I wrote without response) and Sartre is on French Committee. This book is scheduld for publication well in advance of any date Mohrt said was possible.

If at all possible, I want to do something about this vicious piece of chicanery. I would hope it is actionable. Now, dont say anything to me about not having a written contract. This took place in the lobby of the Washington Hilton 6 o'chock at night, and look what happened to the one contract I ever signed! This is a very reputable house. But I have learned that in such a completely dishonest business as publishing seems to be, a reputation for honest is only comparative.

What miserable, cowardly, crooked people! What a foundation for a free press!

So far as my other work is concerned, I'm working, getting things on paper, and I have done much, considering. But at the moment I am not capable of good work, and the emotional involvement on the book the agent wants (what happened to us) is such that I had ti suspend. I have completed a rough draft of a book called "Oskar The Human Goose". I shall read it in a couple of weeks and revise it. I haven't read a page but my impression is that it needs much work, revision, fleshing out, rephrasing, etc. It was hard enough, almost impossible, to work creatively before. It is now worse, and when I look at Lil and see how she feels, how she has aged, and how often ill, work becomes impossible. I work, but it is nothing.

On our suit, things are very slow. We answered the government's first interrogatory and I roughed out in lay language a series of questions to which we want the answers but which I also hope will educate the government lawyer. I am hopeful it will succeed. But to give you an idea of how slowly they work, money due us from our previous lawyers, a slight sum but quite meaningful to us now, has not yet been gotten, and it is fifteen months since we agreed. Likewise necessary papers from the first suit. I write and I ask my present lawyer, but he does nothing.

I'll have to suspend and mail without reading or this will miss the mail and I'd like you to have it Monday. I'll call you when I get to New York, and if you think it is a good diead, we'll postpone getting together until after I get the feel of the current situation. But also perhaps you can then tell me any nights that are impossible for you. If Freda is back in school, perhaps I can stay with you that night. Regards to everyone. Hope I haven't misspoken myself but if I dont quit now it doesn't go out. That is what happened to the August letter mailed from D.C.

Harold