

4/17/72

Dear Js,

One of the disadvantages of people saying, "I'll call you at..." is that when they do not and one plans to be free at that time, it wastes time unless one is engaged in what does not require concentration and continuity of thought. So, I'm waiting for a call.

I did not have time to read the paper today. I sent you the entire W Post play of the bombing after skimming part of the p.1 part. It seemed to me that with so many signed pieces the potential (unless I missed it) could have had more prominent attention than in the underplayed version in the editorial.

The confronts the Russians with the unacceptable, never a wise diplomatic move, and among the considerations they have to face is what happens if they do not make an issue of this at this juncture and in either the traditional way or the way in which they would estimate we would, were the situations reversed.

As best one can without being in their position, knowing what they know and what they plan, and without knowing the full extent of this newest and most bestial terrorism of the frustrated uncontrollables, I think that were the decision mine, I'd be escorting every merchantman going to VN with naval vessels and I'd be stationing aircraft carriers in maneuver positions nearby and radar/communications ships adjacent to all American floating or detectable points of aircraft origin. This would give Nixon the decision to confront up to the point where he again sends or permits the sending of any US aircraft to anywhere near a Russian ship. At that point the decision would revert to the USSR, and without having heard the radio news today, my hunch is that were they to now engage US aircraft in combat in defense of their ships, they'd face screaming from Ashbrook, J.J. Kilpatrick, Joe Alsop (not typo) and a few others, but no real outcry from the American people. It might, in fact, be a very serious political reverse for Nixon.

That, of course, could in turn face all the people with the incalculable potential of that man under these conditions, given the might in the hands of the even less responsible military.

Regardless of what form it takes, I think if the Russians do not do something about this the people of the U.S., if not they, those of S.E. Asia and others, will all suffer more and needlessly. If a dangerous man gets away with what is and can be evil only, it is but incitement for the repetition.

I find the timing interesting and non-accidental: too late for Sunday a.m.'s under any conditions, except outside the east and then, at best only in the form of official handouts. No p.m. play possible, no net TV news worth mentioning, etc.

If, as I doubt, there ever was the chance of hope of conning the rest of the world, the use of B52s should eliminate that except to the unthinking and apologists.

Since Hitler there has been nothing like the justification.