

12 October 1981

Dear Harold and Lil:

Glad to have yours of Sept. 19, and sorry but not surprised that your press conference turned out as it did. The whole subject is just too much for much of our handout-sated press and other media to get involved in. There is an often subconscious urge to avoid it if possible. They'd never admit it, but most editors are simply unwilling to alienate officials by printing news that could embarrass them, mainly because these same or similar officials are the source of about 90 percent of what the media palm off on the public as news.

I'm extremely interested in what you learn from Marina. That she seems deeply religious is no surprise. The Russians I've met impressed me as the most profoundly religious of any people I've ever encountered -- they have an historic, probably environmental NEED for the comfort of a system of thought and belief. (The Chinese, on the other hand, are profoundly UN-religious, being realists and addicted to doing their own thinking).

The minute her husband was charged with a crime Marina became in essence in the same position as the thousands of White Russians who fled the Soviet Union before and after the revolution. In other words her Russian citizenship did her no good (since she couldn't return except to probable imprisonment) and any prospect of acquiring American citizenship or otherwise improving her basically stateless situation vanished at the same time. I think that everything she has done and said since then has been largely dictated by this circumstance, accounting in part for her willingness to go along with the official story to the extent she did. Mostly she has been silent.

She's still not out of the woods, because, (assuming she has been naturalized at some time since then, the ~~Max~~ McCarran Act of 1951 (I think that's the date) created a new class of second class citizen by making it a law that a naturalized citizen can be stripped of citizenship and deported if convicted of a crime, especially one that can be interpreted as endangering national security. Prior to that act, a naturalized citizen could not be denaturalized even if convicted of a crime. So she still has to be careful.

Your point that she wanted to make sure there was a body in the grave explains a good deal about why she went along with Addowes in demanding the exhumation. Be interested to know if she commented on the results of the autopsy.

Your remark about her intelligence also rings true. When you've gone through what she has you either get smarter or go nuts. Presumably she either has been admitted as a permanent resident (in which case she's still essentially stateless) or has been naturalized. If you get any hint of how and when either of these steps were taken I'd be much interested in knowing.

Having known scores of stateless Russians (as well as several Soviet citizens in good standing) I've always been acutely conscious of Marina's problems -- at least the roots of some of them -- and have found her behavior quite typical as far as I could discern its apparent pattern. At first she was totally helpless before the INS, FBI and all the rest, and I doubt if this condition has improved as much as it should have. The fact that she had been making her own efforts to get Oswald's tax records would suggest that some of the fear she must have felt has been reduced.

My part-time job ended as of Sept. 30, the bank having decided it no longer needed our services. Just as well; I'm grateful for the time in which to get caught up on a lot of things. The count of trivets and bulletin boards completed now is 83, with six more started. I agreed to make eight dozen for the Christmas fair, so there's light at the end of the tunnel.

You asked how the house is constructed. On the uphill side it sits on a massive concrete foundation, 50 feet long sitting on a concrete pan some 4 feet wide. From the top of this foundation are attached five big laminated beams about 25 feet long, the downhill ends of which are supported by wooden pillars standing on concrete piers sunk five feet or so into the ground. The joists are laid across the beams, and the rest of the house is built above the joists.

The long summer drought seems to have been broken, with several days of drizzle and an occasional shower. The weather people think that with such an early start the winter will descend sooner and be wetter than usual. Cats and other animals are growing heavy coats, and plants are going to seed sooner than normally, so maybe it's true. Several years ago when we had the big drought it didn't rain until after Christmas.

Still too early, of course, but Sadat's assassination could mean the end of Begin, as their moves toward peace have probably accounted for Begin's holding power as long as he has. Just as Kennedy's assassination meant the end of Krushchev, who was being tolerated domestically largely because he and JFK had signed the non-proliferation treaty. I'm concerned that removal of Sadat will stimulate the diehards in the Middle East to talk themselves into an uncontrollable confrontation, and I can't see that any of this will help what I suspect is Reagan's grand strategy -- if he has one -- to talk tough and threaten a big arms buildup to scare the Russians into agreeing ~~in~~ in the end to some sort of real arms limitation. Ike ended the Cold War long enough to reach the Camp David agreement with Brezhnev or whoever it was, and Nixon prevented the Democrats from doing anything about recognizing China until he got ready to do it himself. In any case, it seems clear that no Democratic administration can get away with making peace -- only the Republicans can get away with it if they want to.

Best to you both,


jdw