

Peking story (American prisoners in China) - correspondence, letters and ca...

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Dag Hammarskjöld's saml.

Peking story - 1955

20-25 Jan.

Waldock, Humphrey (Prof., All Souls College,
Oxford, England)

- 1 letter to D.H., 20 Jan.
- 1 letter from D.H., 25 Jan.

DW Peking - Waldock

C o p y

ALL SOULS COLLEGE
OXFORD

Jan:20th

My dear Hammarskjöld,

The last lap of my Odyssez was in some ways the most-gruelling. Bereft of the good fortune which seems to attend your travels, I ran into head winds across the Atlantic and a black pall over London with the result that my B.O.A.C. Monarch, after stopping at both Boston and Shannon, took about 18 hours to reach London Airport. When we touched down, there was a Peking wind and half a blizzard which was too much for my enfeebled constitution. At any rate the Peking bug began to be rampant again and I had to resort to an injection of penicillin to bring it under control. I think that the injection has done the trick, but I sincerely hope that you have no plans for an immediate journey back to Peking. The foul weather and delays had one good result in that they killed any enthusiasm on the part of the press for welcoming me.

Sir Anthony Eden was out of London and so I saw Mr. Nutting and Lord Reading on Tuesday afternoon. I gave them the best account I could of our talks in the freezing room - no central heating - which Lord Reading chooses to occupy. We had about an hour and a half's discussion and I came out with my teeth chattering and the Peking bug rapidly mastering me. Apart from the general question of the Washington reaction, I think that the most substantial point raised by the Foreign Office was how our expectation of a fairly speedy release of the 4 and later of the 11 is compatible with the Chinese offer of facilities for visits. The answer to this question can only be found in events. I imagine that for propaganda reasons Chou may wish to secure one "round" of visits before relenting too far. To that extent the release of the 11, at least, may be linked for the moment to the question of visits. A great deal depends on the U.S. reaction to the offer of visits about which you are better informed than I. It may even be the case that early visits to the 11 would accelerate their release. As to the 4, I should have thought that, whatever happens in regard to visits, you are in a strong position to press Chou for an early decision after what he said about them in Peking. One pilot has been in detention for over two years and the other three nearly as long. It can fairly be pointed out to Chou that their further detention for investigation, when no evidence has yet been found against them, may be liable to create misunderstanding and on that ground he could be pressed to conclude his investigations.

I have followed the Washington reactions as best I could and it seems that "so far so good" is a reasonable interpretation of them. But I notice that there is nothing yet out about the offer of facilities for visits. I am trying my hand at a legal appreciation of the case for the 11 men, in the light of the Peking talks, to see if I can cast it in a form in which it might be of possible use to you in subsequent negotiations for speeding up the releases, if these prove necessary.

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Yours sincerely,

Humphrey Waldock (sign.)

25 January 1955

My dear Waldock,

I just received your most welcome, interesting and valuable letter which makes me dictate at once a few lines in between my various battles with the peaceful atom (which is not too peaceful and tests my patience very highly).

Sorry to hear about your various misfortunes and the insistency of the Peking bug. If it does in any way give consolation, I may tell you that we are still, all of us, negotiating with that most vital animal. Let me tell you in writing what I hoped I was able to convey to you in less tangible ways: how extremely happy I was for your assistance, for your friendship and for the way in which you in all respects helped to make this operation legally and diplomatically solid and a most memorable personal experience.

I have a long story to tell you from here, mainly concerned with the fantastic way in which I have had to manoeuvre in order to save the visit-of-families question from complete wreckage. I did finally succeed, but with a few open wounds left on all sides. On the whole Washington reactions have been helpful, but in that specific case I feel that their eagerness to win a propaganda point have led them badly astray when they regard the offer as a new major sin from Chou En-lai putting on the families: "a harrowing dilemma". I am afraid that their emotions have run away with their political wisdom. This morning I read the prayer in the Senate at yesterday's meeting before the presentation of the Eisenhower's proposals where the chaplain talks about fanatical foes whose pledged word is worthless because expediency is their only god; who, for their own ends, callously traffic in normal human affections and family ties, leading up to the brilliant conclusion that God should bless America as she throws her might across so godless a pestilence. No comments.

Professor Humphrey Waldock, C.M.G., O.B.E., Q.C., D.C.L., M.A.
All Souls College
Oxford, England

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The most recent development which the last few days took a most unexpected turn, seems to submerge our problems so completely that I doubt whether there will be any possibility for the follow-up which both you and I had in mind and for which I think the time under normal circumstances would be right, let us say, next week. I note with great interest what you say on that score and you will from the enclosed (confidential - not even known to the British Cabinet) message from me to Mr. Pearson of Canada see that there is a considerable meeting of minds. Whatever elaboration on the arguments in the case of the four you will care to send me, will be most welcome. I am very interested in your hint at a possible development of the legal arguments in the case of the eleven.

It is with great satisfaction that I note that in spite of various rather provocative statements here in America, Chou so far has not with a word referred to our talks. I regard that as a very good sign indeed, and I tend at the same time, like you, to regard the family visits as a very significant element in the picture. If Chou's main concern is not to give anybody the impression that he has given in to the American pressure - and I think that is his main worry - of course he would find the perfect screen in a concession to the families which could in no way reduce his own prestige in Asia.

I am a bad letter-writer and I have to snatch the moments when I can dictate. But do not let that discourage you. I am most anxious also for rather personal reasons to remain in touch with you and I value very highly whatever advice you find you can give me from your room in All Souls where you are in the privileged position of being able to think without daily and even hourly to debate and correct and control all sorts of emotional and sometimes rather petty political reactions.

With warmest regards and renewed thanks
for a most splendid cooperation,

D. H.

Encl.