

12/10/34

Dear Mr. Messersmith:

I'm not cabling you as I have had read to me the official telegram the Secretary is sending and also the personal message Allen Klots is getting off; and also because there is nothing I could send in a cable that would add anything to what the others have said.

First of all the Department's action was the most ridiculous I have ever known, - and why Mr. Carr was a party to it is beyond me, except that he had advice only from persons who take themselves with utter seriousness and who could not see the absurdity of the whole performance. When the Secretary heard about it, he could not believe that instructions had actually been sent you to question Prof. Einstein. When he knew about it the fat was in the fire. At breakfast at Woodley this morning he decided to have the newspapermen in for a conference and give them the background, naturally he could only admit, as lightly as possible, out stupidity, and completely exonerate you and the staff of the CG from anything other than a most meritorious performance of an extremely difficult task. It was Mr. Carr's idea that the official telegram being sent to the CG should contain a statement of the Department's appreciation of the splendid handling of the whole matter in Berlin, - he felt that a record of that kind would add an official statement on your record and Mr. Geist's that would not only cancel any adverse outside comment but would definitely put the Department in the position of commending in high terms your handling of the whole affair. All that I

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contributed to the affair was a grand show of temper, and some harsh words on the general subject of "crucifixions" - every so often the Department with incredible stupidity stages one, and then waits for time to cure the broken heads, hearts and careers. This time the Secretary came across handsomely. When Allen Klots called me and told me the substance of the conference, I called Harry McBride and asked him to give the Secretary the official commendation of the Chief of the Passport Division for the splendid manner in which he had handled the Messersmith-Einstein matter. Later Mr. McBride called to say that the Secretary had received the message with pleasure and wanted it entered on his efficiency record. He has been carrying a frightful burden, under most difficult conditions, and the fact that he talked as he did to the press and telephoned to Lippmann shows what a grand sportsman he is. In exonerating the CG he had of course to dash lightly over the fact that the Department had been idiotic, but as to that he threw himself on the mercy of the correspondents.

Mr. Frank Polk was just in looking fine and disavowing any possibility that he would be the next Secretary of State. However he thinks we will get an exceedingly able man and that things will be better - that they are already better in national respects.

I am typing this in a great hurry as I have an engagement to see an ill person in Georgetown and I can not be late - but I thought I would send along this note to let you know that all of us deeply regretted the very unjust criticism you have had to stand and that everything possible has been done to counteract

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it. It is my understanding both from Mr. Klots and Capt. Regnier that the Secretary intended asking Lippmann to disavow what he had said about you personally and about the Berlin handling of the affair, - he could not ask him to exonerate the Department of stupidity. You wont believe it but there was a letter in course of preparation in answer to some one in which the Department was trying to show that it had done Prof. Einstein a great favor, etc., - which would have put the incident in a class all its own, - and earned for us lasting renown.

My affectionate greetings to both you and Mr. Geist. I wish we could talk this thing over - I cant begin to tell you about it; but neither of you should feel that the net result of all this will be anything other than gain for you.

As ever,

Ruth Shipley

December 10