

P.P.F.

6870

September 18, 1940

PRIVATE

Dear Ben:

Many thanks for your interesting letter of September fourth. The difficulties with which you have to deal as a newspaper correspondent are many and exacting, I am sure; but, after all, they add zest to the day's work. I am sure that in the long run you will find a solution of all of the problems which at present are so perplexing.

x 36
x 144

I want you to know that I heartily appreciate your congratulations and good wishes.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) Franklin D. Roosevelt

Mr. Ben Robertson, #
Waldorf Hotel,
Aldwych, W.C. 2,
England.

wdh-mw

via State Dept. pouch

Sent to State for delivery 9/19/40
hm

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

September 18, 1940

STEVE:

To prepare reply for my
signature to go in the pouch.

F.D.R.



TELEGRAMS: "WALDORFIUS" LONDON.
TELEPHONE: TEMPLE BAR 2400.

ack 9/18/40
mw

Waldorf Hotel,
Aldwych, W.C. 2.

London, Sept. 4 19 40.

x 48-A

Dear Mr. President:

x 773

I don't know how the people at home feel about the censorship of our news from over here but I have an idea they think it is pretty stiff. Well, it is stiff in some ways but in others it isn't as bad as perhaps they have been led to believe, and I thought perhaps you'd like to hear something about it. Most of our difficulties come about from the fact that we have to deal, not with one censor, but with a whole series of censors and sometimes by the time they all have got through with our copy they have changed a story about a war into a mild essay about something almost abstract. We want to get across a war that is being fought magnificently by the British people and we want to let the folks at home feel this war as we feel it on the spot and it almost breaks our hearts to have our copy combed by people who are not interested in that aspect of news at all but who go over it to pick out details in the name of security. We have been hammering away on this point with individual censors and with censors in mass for weeks and we think we are making some progress. We know so very well what there is to be said to the people at home--it's one of the greatest stories of courage and work that has ever happened and we want the people at home to believe it; therefore, we are insisting that we be allowed to put in the bad along with the good. The good is so much greater than the bad since Mr. Churchill came in as Prime Minister. We want to tell what we know and we think we're gradually winning. For instance, we are now allowed to say that we have seen British planes shot down as well as German planes, and I am very glad to tell you that during one air battle at least, I saw seven German planes come down to two British. We had an awful wrangle over that story, but Vincent Sheean finally got them to allow us to use those figures, he insisting that people in the United States would have their faith in us shattered if they were led to believe that all the planes which fell about us were German.

We get along pretty well with the Ministry of Information censors but we have more difficulty with those at the War Office and at the Admiralty and we have some difficulty at the Air Ministry and some with the Home Office--the armed forces are always talking to us about security. We don't want to give anything away--we



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Waldorf Hotel, Aldwych, W.C. 2.

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want to tell their story for them and tell it in America before the Germans get in their account. Gradually, we think we are getting our attitude across.

All of the censors are very liberal with political news--we can say almost anything we like about such persons as Mr. Chamberlain and we can write about the debates in the House of Commons and all such news as that--we have nothing to complain in that direction. And the censor always calls us up and tells us what he has cut from our copy and we can always appeal from his decision to the deputy chief censor. All of that is very fair--what we are after is that our copy be judged from its general implications.

I have been at Dover for the last ten days, sitting on the Shakespeare Cliff, watching and listening to battles in the air. The planes come and fight over us in the sky and then they pass on, leaving us for the time being in the midst of stillness and peace. It is one of the strangest phenomena of this war in the air--the suddenness with which battle formations appear and disappear. I know too that you will be interested to know that almost every inspection tour I have made to bombed areas has shown that the damage was not as great as rumor had led me to believe.

I want to congratulate ^{you} on the nomination and to wish you another success in the election. And please remember me to Early and to the men in the press room.

Very truly yours,
Ben Robertson
Ben Robertson,
Correspondent **PM**.

x

INGERSOLL, Ralph
PM,
Brooklyn, N.Y.
3-15-42

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Wrote to Gen. Watson saying he spoke to the President about asking him (Gen. Watson) to intercede in behalf of a priority for Ben Robertson, correspondent for PM, and the President said to go ahead. The matter comes up because they have been trying to clear Mr. Robertson to the Mediterranean area for several months, and although he has been accredited, he has not been able to leave. - Attached is a memo for Gen. Watson, 3-18-42, saying that Mr. Robertson telephoned re getting priority on a plane going to Egypt. Penciled notation - "Tell Ben Robertson 'Have phoned Pan American to do their damnest'. EMM". - Attached is a memo of 4-2-42 to Gen. Watson saying that Mr. Robertson called again from New York about his priority on Pan American Clipper to Cairo. - Also attached is a memo of 4-3-42 to Gen. Watson stating that Major Miller, Commerce Dept., handling priorities on Clipper planes reported that Ben Robertson is taking off on the plan leaving New York that a.m. The Ferrying Command advised that there must be carried on the thru load certain pounds of voltage regulators desperately needed in Cairo; in order that these could go through, 3 passengers are required to remain in Natal for 3 days; the passengers are Dr. Phillips Green, Mr. A.A. Cassons of the Ukrainian Mission and Ben Robertson.

See P.P.F. 6646

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