

Hotel Astoria, Leningrad.
March 17th, 1934

Dearest Florence:

I have your letter with no date telling me how you have been expecting me. I'm sorry. I finally left Moscow, because I could not finish my book there. The book is not finished and will not be before the end of this month. Then back to take it to the publishers and ~~to~~ proof another for one week; then I leave.

Now as for meeting people--nothing doing, dear heart. I'm not coming to New York to meet all kinds of people at all. I have absolutely no desire. I know who I want to meet. You are one of the few. Remember many things--that I have very much to do there in the way of urgent, urgent business. Then I must take care of a few things of which I shall not speak. Then I leave directly for China.

I am eaten up by people, don't forget that. It has been a sickening mess in this country, and they left me no time to do the really important things, to meet the people I wanted to meet. There are a lot of people with a lot of time and they want someone to entertain them. I simply can't. I am no longer 20, but 40; my years are few before me, and there is too much to do. I have certain definite things I want to do before I die, and none too much time in which to do them.

Already I've had a dozen requests to speak in big mass meetings there, and all I have refused. I'm coming, and I would ask you by all means not to let people know when I arrive. Let me first have all my business matters taken care of, then if I have any time left over, I'll see people. What I need isn't hundreds of people, but isolation. I was broken seriously in health in China--heart and nerves; too much work, too many people; 400,000,000 pressing in upon me.

I'd really like to remain in America a few months. But my life is not my own and it is not always for me to decide.

*no. (had
address again
in case I lose
yours)*

Leave your telephone for me in a letter addressed to the Vanguard Press, 100 Fifth Avenue. I'll telephone you when I come. It may be that I would wire you from Paris, the name of the boat on which I am arriving and the date of arrival. But if I do, it would have to be with the absolute security that you would keep it strictly secret. I can't be eaten up by a thousand little things that prevent me from doing important ones. I'm not coming secretly at all, but still I want to avoid all kinds of people until ~~my~~ my time is free.

Love always,

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