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Erika
XXXXXX

September 9, 1950

Mr. Victor Jacobs
Galef and Jacobs, Law Offices
22 East 40th Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Jacobs:

Here goes:

1.) As I don't know whether I was so hard to understand as you were the other day over the phone, let me repeat that there was no trouble whatsoever. Sharing a plane with 24 French-Canadian youngsters who went on a joy ride to see New York for the first time, (it was their first plane-ride, too, and they kept screaming like merry hell), I was more or less taken for granted, - with no questions asked, no luggage opened, no nothing whatsoever. Of course, we shall never know what might have happened had I arrived straight from Europe at the International Airport instead of sneaking in through the backdoor and landing at trusting LaGuardia.

2.) I now do wish to withdraw my pending application for U.S. citizenship for the following reasons:

a) practical considerations, not to be listed in my official letter of withdrawal. Within the next few months, I shall either obtain my citizenship, or I shall not. In the latter case I far prefer to refuse to being rejected. In the former case I do not think our darlings would at the present moment, in the midst of our bloody war with gigantic Korea, and while people are getting themselves locked up all over the place, make me a citizen to make me happy. On the contrary, I believe that citizenship might be bestowed upon me for the sole ~~XXXXXX~~ purpose of rendering the authorities able to keep me under control far more thoroughly than they can a British subject. Not that I mind to be kept under control. But I heartily dislike not getting a passport or having it taken away from me, - I dislike to go to jail because somebody is in hysterics and without a chance to defend myself; I dislike to be deprived of any citizenship I just acquired; I dislike everything about being a naturalized American citizen who has had to be investigated for three years and nine months, and who could not consequently ~~be~~ *have been* wholeheartedly accepted. An American passport - even ~~that~~ *one* owned by a native, is good for two years. As a naturalized American you are entitled (nor are you, really) to stay abroad for 6 months after which period you have to apply for another 6, and so on, until 2 years are over. After 2 years, - home you rush, or else ~~XXXXXX~~ cease to be an American. As a British subject - whether native or naturalized - you may go and stay wherever you please for precisely as long as you desire. Never do you have to rush back to England. Your passport is good for 5 years. Any British consul general, -

any British consul, for that matter, will either extend its validity for another 5 years, when necessary, or (perhaps it is full of visas) furnish you with a brand-new and exceedingly handsome passport. As a naturalized British subject you are not in any way distinguishable from a native Briton. There is no right any Englishman has which is denied to you. Even when you are engaged in activities which your government does not care a hoot for, they will protect you to the best of their still considerable abilities. When I was in Loyalist Spain writing articles against my government, and stayed in Valencia till the Fascists were knocking at the door, a British cruiser was compelled to save my life and to evacuate me - not to England, mind you, but to Barcelona, where I went right on composing "subversive" stuff. See what I mean? There is in particular one thing that I do not want to lose under any circumstances: the freedom to leave this country whenever I see fit. As a British subject I won't lose that right. As a naturalized American citizen there are precious few rights I have anyway, most of what I would get being "privileges" which any fool may decide I am not worthy of. That's about all concerning my practical reasoning.

b) Reasons to be stressed in my official letter of withdrawal: I first came to this country as a visitor in 1936, immigrated in July 1937, and took out my First Papers the very day of my return. By 1942 I would have been eligible for citizenship, but the war had long since broken out and I was too busy *trying to* helping first the British and then the American war effort to take up residence anywhere in the U.S. for the required period of 6 months. Innumerable are the times that I endangered my life while working for the BBC during the battle of Britain and the one of London, and covering the war as a correspondent accredited to the U.S. forces. Needless to say I wasn't permitted to do so before having undergone the most thorough investigations. From 1939 to 1946 I spent about two thirds of my time in the wars or with the occupation forces and one third lecturing at home. There were far - but far more offers than I could possibly have accepted. According to my agent, I used to be the most "asked for" woman lecturer in this country, and incidentally the best one he ever worked with. Hundreds of letters from organizations, - universities, schools, churches, clubs, townhall forums - quite conservative, most of them - testify to the constructive and educational character of my offerings. I made a good living, but actually and truly ruined my health, - not because I needed the money that badly, but because I wanted people to understand what we were fighting for and what sort of peace we were after. It was also during those years that I received 2 citations from the Treasury Department for special achievements in the department's field, as well as one from the War Department, commending me for outstanding services in various theaters of operation. Had I been an American citizen, I could not for the life of me have done more to be of whatever assistance ~~to~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ to the U.S. In fact, I felt like an American, lived like an American, and for all practical purposes was an American. Thus, as soon as an opportunity offered itself, I actually asked to be made an American. What ~~made~~ *caused* me do this?

*any one
private
individual
might
be*

caused to

Was there anything "in it" for myself? Didn't I have a nice passport? Had I been looking for a job that required U.S. citizenship? Nothing of the bloody kind. I merely felt that, since I lived and worked here and ~~since~~ I wanted to continue to do so, it would be a decent thing for me to add myself even legally to the good people of this country. This was three years and ~~8~~ 9 months ago. Ever since then an investigation has been going on that could not help gradually ruining my career, casting doubts upon my character, robbing me of my livelihood, causing me to spend hundreds of dollars for the right to leave and reenter the country, and, in short, changing me from a happy, busy and fairly useful member of society into a humiliated suspect, who is by now far too sick and tired of it all as to be willing to go on with it. Friends of mine have been questioned for three and four hours in a stretch until they all but collapsed. When it had become obvious to the third degrees that I was neither a communist nor a fellow-traveller nor a member of any subversive organization nor anything ~~that~~ they did not like politically, they took to digging into my private life in a way most shocking to those questioned. Bartenders, maids, desk clerks, agents, editors, people who know me well, and people who hardly know me at all have been questioned alike. Small wonder prospective employers or heads of organizations who had heard just one of my lectures some time ago felt ardently disinclined to engage my services. During the past three years my lecture dates have decreased from some 90 during a four months' season to none at all this year (winter 50-51). My agent has seen fit to dismiss me and I could hardly dare show my face in any of the offices I used to ~~do~~ work for as a journalist. No harm has been left undone and hence no additional harm may easily be imagined.

The letter I propose to write (should it be addressed to you? or to whom in particular?) ought to point out in the most dignified and the most deeply hurt way that there is a limit to the humiliations I am ready to expose myself to in order to lose my British citizenship.

Would you, dear Mr. Jacobs, show cause why such a letter should not be written? Are not even my practical reasons overwhelmingly convincing? And what about the moral issue at stake? I quite mean what I say. I am fully fed up, and far more rightly suspicious of the authorities than they are of me. There is nothing whatsoever to justify their horrid behavior, while everything on earth would seem to entitle me to ~~xxxxxx~~ making a proud withdrawal.

Be sweet and good and answer this communication just as swiftly as you possibly can. By no means do I wish to be given a hearing at this more than late hour. Now, that some kind of action is pending, I wish to be the acting party. But then, I need your advice and am anxious to get it soon.

With my warmest regards,

Yours as ever cordially