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TWIN CITIES

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Combs-Starr

August 24, 1982

Frederick Starr, Ph.D.
3211 Prytania Street
New Orleans, LA. 70115

Dear Professor Starr:

I am late in reporting to you the results of my trip to Moscow and meeting with Alexei Batashev. It was a comedy of errors which nevertheless worked out eventually. He never received the letter sent to the address you provided me. In that marvelous Soviet system, letters are neither forwarded nor returned to sender. When, ten days or so before I was to go to Moscow and had heard nothing from him, I made contacts with other Russian colleagues and asked them to try to look him up and see what he might arrange. They in turn failed to get my explicit message about the musicians needed. So it was not until the morning of the anticipated performance that I finally reached Alexei person-to-person. Through the dint of vigorous efforts, he was able to assemble a six piece group with which I played for an hour at a very pleasant social occasion in the Russian restaurant of the new Sovintel Center.

So thanks to your suggestion, at least that part of the visit came off. Alexei was very personable in his introduction of the tunes and musicians and is a very polished and gregarious figure.

I broached, in what I thought was a natural way, your request to him through me. I'm sure you understand the sentiments far better than I, of a person who wants to be active in the field and who is living in such a repressive environment. For your information, though we didn't dwell on the issue at any length, I got the distinct impression that he had a concern that sufficient efforts hadn't been made to forward his publication in the West, and that he was now making other plans and in turn was disinclined to share his materials or photographs. Though I wasn't cued in by you on any particular persuasion or diplomacy which I should have exerted, I felt that there were probably understandable problems of communication between you across such a distance. I dropped the

August 24, 1982

Page 2

issue. I am sorry not to have come back bearing messages or photographs.

I'm sorry we didn't get to meet during the last New Orleans jazz and heritage festival, but I think that the positive aspects of the Archives events, from what I saw and heard, certainly outweighed any negative aspects of the society's attempts (largely due to rain!).

Lastly, I must congratulate you on your overwhelming success in the Bohemian Grove. All my colleagues there were entranced by your formal and informal presentations. I hope you enjoyed it.

Finally, I stupidly left Moscow without getting Batashev's new address which is of not much help to either of us. He got off very quickly to the Riga Jazz Festival and I was unable to visit with him again and thank him for his activities. If you should have correspondence with him, I would be grateful for your relaying my warm thanks.

I'm still very much looking forward to meeting you and following your activities more closely.

Cordially,

Henry Blackburn, M.D.
Professor and Director

/jml