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Thompson Document 08: A Letter from Jack Belden to Henrietta Thompson

Jack Belden

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American Express
Paris,
Dec... 20th, 1973

Hello:

Thankyou very much for your kind letter. I'm sorry I cannot recall Carl Zellner at all. I was quite interested in Halley's Comet. I knew Mark Twain had died in 1910, as did Tolstoy, too, I believe. I did not know he was born at its appearance; so now I see my thoughts are just repeating his.

Thankyou for the review clipping. It's rather snide, puts up a straw man and knocks it down. I'm really quite sick of the book (China Shakes The World) Monthly Review Press is taking 50 percent of the 6 percent I get from Penguin, which leaves me three percent. Furthermore they have claimed I had no right to see what went into an introduction to my own book. Such an attitude is anethama to me; and I would rather see the book taken out of print altogether than submit to such a kind of literary dictatorship. The Beacon Hill Press stole a whole chapter (Old Flower) out of my book and printed it as a pamphlet and I got not one cent out of it. I've just come across another book called China Readings Volume ~~ix~~ 2 with about 25 pages taken from my book for which I've received nothing. If I protest, it's said I'm cantankerous. In other words, I'm supposed to starve gracefully and ~~thank~~ not only not protest against those who partly batten on me, but thank them for it.

So as far as my going to the "ESSENCE" of things; the only essence for me now is simply trying to keep alive. As far your work goes, with talks of over fifty interviews you should get a good perspective on things. However what people felt then and feel ~~they~~ now they felt then are quite different things. Read Tolstoy's kind of suffix to War and Peace where he states the freshness of things after a battle and the legend that springs up after it. You seem unwilling to accept Dorn's statement that the march out had almost no political or military significance. It certainly did not have. The Americans were nothing in Buram at that time. Absolutely nothing. As far as bringing understanding between races, it brought none. I could quote chapter and verse, but no time. Anyway Vietnam is proof enough. In 49 at end of China Shakes world I warned against Indo china embroglio. The only way such a small affair could have signigicance is a froma human standpoint where it could be fictionalized into a symbol. At that time as a symbol it was NOT. All bullshit to the contrary.

You seem to think with Barbara Steadman(?) I was an idealist when young. No. Never. I've always believed in supremacy of Being over thinking. She also says a friend calls me a "worn, ragged incredible charadter." I've no objection to being described in such colorful terms, but wonder where friendship ends and horsenit and government begins. I've every respect for Davies (the friend) as diplomat, grateful to his kindness to me etc. But in a hearing before one of those state depta. subversive committes Teddy White was asked about me and said I was an "anarchist." If he'd been a writer, not a scribe, he'd have said I'm here to talk about Davies not Belden. If he'd been a poet he'd have said go fuck yourself; you people are asshole tyrants. Well, I cant afford two sheets of paper, so I close.

*and if you had...
Saying talkback in the words of Ben "get the glass eyes and like a ~~body~~ politician
see the things there did not." If you wonder what brought on this diatribe, it's
a rainy day and I'm in the neighborhood ~~of~~*

→ see quite different