

27 February 1972

Dear Harold:

Again, this will have to be a sort of an interim letter, mostly to express our great appreciation for your trouble in analyzing the TV news coverage and in sending the many useful clippings from your local press. This acknowledges your mailings of Feb. 18, 22 and 24, by the way, and when I get time I'll study the Esquire article you sent and provide some sort of a reaction. Let me warn now that I'm too foggy on this whole case to be able to be of much help, but I'll certainly try.

Regarding the bookshelves behind Mao and Nixon: the Chinese bind their books often without hard covers. Hence they must lie flat unless they are boxed in sets, in which case they can stand vertically in the box without damage, as those in the left half of the picture are standing. On the right the volumes apparently are singles, lying flat with their bottom edge out. A good many appear to have slips of paper sticking out and folded down, apparently references or flags for references. Hope this explains what puzzled you. I can't see anything else in the picture that seems unlike any cluttered bookshelf.

We almost agree with you on your preliminary opinion, written, I believe, after the second day of the visit in Peking, that there has been an irreversible change in this country with respect to handling information about China. We'd agree fully if we hadn't been so bitterly disappointed with the post-war swing away from what had been, for all its shortcomings, basically a friendly policy. This was ruthlessly destroyed. We can hardly persuade ourselves that it can't happen again.

There seems to be no doubt that there is a rather clear understanding that it's okay to go ahead and treat China objectively again. I've seen nothing to pinpoint any particular official sanction, but have no doubt it exists and at least has been inferred by the reporters if not actually implied to them in briefings. One CBS reporter, Allen Jackson, said something to the effect that it appears that prior to the Peking visit the treatment accorded China by the media may have been wired more closely to official policy than some of us had thought. This is of course a pallid understatement of the quarter of a century that preceded the Peking visit, but it is interesting that it's said out loud. The truth is that the lid was off, with full rein given to hate and prejudice and distortion while any attempt at objectivity was heavily penalized in one way or another.

This is a very corrupt and confused society, but we think there is still a tropism toward the simple truth left in many people, including some reporters, and that much of the alacrity of the media in responding to the Chinese as human beings was just plain relief at no longer having to pretend to be reporting the news in terms of the accepted fairy tales. Aside from a built-in Cronkite sneers, Severeid innuendoes and the manifest inability of many reporters to understand what they were reporting, we thought most of them seemed genuinely relieved to be able to do a relatively straight job without fear of reprisals.

For all practical purposes, the effect on public opinion in both countries is well-nigh irreversible in the sense that it is now okay to act and speak with the knowledge that the other country now officially exists regardless of the absence of diplomatic recognition, and this is indeed a great leap forward on both sides, taken deliberately and for self-serving reasons. "Regardless of the differences between the reasons on both sides, this is a major accomplishment which it will be extremely difficult to undo completely within the foreseeable future.

We have not yet seen the text of the communique which was issued in Shanghai this morning (U.S. time) but heard a fairly complete account of it on KPFA. If the station quoted correctly, Nixon has joined in upholding Chou's five principles of coexistence first enunciated at the Bandung anti-colonialism conference in 1955. This apparently impresses no one in this country, but you may be sure is a blockbuster elsewhere, an enormous victory for the Chinese. If by some wild chance this country could be maneuvered into practicing this even part of the time, the way is open for the general rearrangement of regional matters I suggested in our last letter. No more could be expected at this stage. We have too far to go. It's still a major accomplishment if it means anything at all.

The lack of agreement on Taiwan was not unexpected, but this country appears to have recognized openly that this is a Chinese question, to be settled by the Chinese regardless of our sacred obligations to Chiang Kai-shek. Here again, a door has been opened just a tiny bit, for after all, who are we to go around interfering with other people's affairs? As I mentioned last time, Chiang already ^{has} signalled that ^{he} may be prepared to do business if the terms are right. If he means it, only the terms have to be settled. If he doesn't, he won't live forever.

Late last night the HongKong Standard reported that Nixon had conferred with high North Vietnamese officials in Peking, apparently during that hiatus last Friday when he ~~was~~ and Chou got together an hour and a half later than scheduled. That night, Nixon was sober and unsmiling at the dinner he threw for the Chinese, so it appears that while the Chinese may have helped arrange the meeting, the Vietnamese properly stood their ground and told Nixon they were not for sale, even in an election year.

In one sense, Nixon will appear to have been definitely worsted in all but Western eyes. He not only went to Peking; his emissaries in future will have to return, with no hint of reciprocal interest on the part of the Chinese. It cannot be overlooked that there is no hint that Chou has been invited to Washington, although he almost had to have been invited. Even people who notice this sort of thing, however, will be the first to applaud the opening of long-closed doors, the banishment of some of the myths and the ~~kakixtzzzz~~ tentative and uncertain groping toward reality on the part of this country.

We want to thank you very much indeed for your thought in ~~gim~~ providing such detailed accounts of the various commentators and shows you saw on television, and for the very valuable clippings from your papers. Jenifer missed all the TV, and I ~~smw~~ saw only a few scraps, nothing that could be called representative. It is most useful to know how they handled it, and you provide a most satisfying impression. The clippings are invaluable, and we much appreciate your willingness to go to all the trouble. Our local papers are either too crowded with advertising or disinterested, when they are not being perversely provincial or pseudo-hip, to lay out a selection of accounts that can be trusted to be representative. We do get the NY Times, of course, but it's always useful to have a Washington paper to balance against the fount of all wisdom.

Going back through your letters to the first of the monthz, I FIND A COUPLE OF ITEMS THAT I can dispose of. (sorry about the caps).

We note the memo re one Bill Shea et al.. All this is new to us, never heard of any of these people. The Marin County telephone book lists a Wm. Shea, 29 Rock Ridge Road, Woodacre. Woodacre is a hamlet about halfway between San Rafael and the coast, near Point Reyes Station, in country that has groves of redwoods interspersed with sheep pastures on the hills. Lots of retired people live there, some barely making it, others quite well heeled. We've no time these days to try to find out anything, but will keep our ears open for any of the names you mention. Dont' bother with copying and sending all his stuff unless you figure out some specific angle where you think we might help.

In your letter dated 2/9/72 you mention Bob Kuttner's preoccupation with securing the last FM channel in Washington for Pacifica and suggest that this could have had something to do with the liquidation of Elsa Knight Thompson, pointing out that they have let one other person go in the past in a similar situation. We think it could, but that the picture is bigger than that. I'll try to be brief.

Last summer KPFA began to change, from its traditional format of classical, avante garde and jazz music to a good deal of rock ~~in~~ roll, more empha~~ss~~s on local news instead of national and international, and less solid panel discussions and interviews with expertds in favor of more rap sessions, full of ers, ahs, wo~~s~~ and like you know mans. This trend has increased steadily and now has got to the point where they are broadcasting pro hockey games and so much rock 'n' roll that you can't be sure you've got the station tuned in because it sou~~nds~~ like any other rock 'n' roll, ~~zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz~~ commercial station.

We date the change from the time of arrival of Larry Lee, the young man who started the station in Houston in spite of two Ku Klux Klan bombings.

Soon after he arrived, as we understand it, Elsa (who was a BBC veteran and a real whiz at public affairs in addition to being a superb interviewer) was sent to LA to reorganize KPFK, which was having customary difficulties with financing and so on. She spent the summer there, did her job, and returned to be told ~~KPFA~~ ~~the station~~ no longer had room for her because of lack of funds, was given some sort of pension and dismissed. Her friends put up a frightful howl, but accomplished nothing except to make the new powers at the station appear more determined than ever to go on beaming the station at far out types with incomprehensible montages of music over news, two tapes being played at once, and other puerile stuff.

The station customarily gets only about half the money it needs from subscriptions and for years had had a fund-raising marathon in May to make up the difference. It's an ordeal for everyone, but they usually raise the needed money in two or three weeks.

This year, they apparently ran out of money sooner than usual and scheduled the marathon for the entire month of February, three months earlier than usual. They set out to raise \$115,000, which would have meant getting about \$4,000 daily. They've been getting an average of a little more than half that, and are talking about extending the marathon 10 days into March. It appears obvious their programming and arrogant tactics (they've let a number of veteran volunteer commentators go) has alienated the older liberals who are just not giving this time, and that the new audience to whom they are appealing simply doesn't have the money, if indeed it can comprehend that some things have to be paid for. They appear to be beaming their main appeal to the real bums who infest the shaggier ranks of our young people, *phonies and* bums who always have been there regardless of the length of their hair, and who always will be.

~~Well now,~~ There have been much more obscure upheavals in the loose superstructure of *Pacifica* which is supposed to oversee all four stations. Several old-timers have resigned from the local board, also. The national board is almost all new, people no one every heard ~~of~~ *of*.

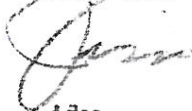
If the whole thing has not been infiltrated, it certainly acts as though it had. Lee would be the prime candidate. He's a former AP man in Houston. The regular AP man there I happen to know casually and happened to be here recently for an oil producers convention. I asked him about Lee. He said he was a brilliant young guy, thought a few seconds, and then added, "maybe a little too smart for his own good." If he was doing a job with *Pacifica*, he certainly earned a credibility cover with his job getting the Houston station started. Late last summer the Houston staff struck in protest against some management ~~change~~ change. Lee was sent back to make peace. He ended up on the side of the strikers, got it settled and came back to Berkeley, where he's obviously a prime mover in the new changes and appears likely to become station manager in April when the ~~x~~ present manager says he'll resign, and has intended to all along.

Weak, penniless, disorganized as it always has been, Pacifica has grown like a plague, as evidenced by their audacity in starting such a station in a place like Houston. We can't have any firm conclusion about all this, but in the pinches Pacifica's supporters at times have accomplished some remarkable things. It may well be that the Pacifica claim to the Washington channel is viewed with very great misgivings. Pacifica has publicized things like the Washington demonstrations with remarkable success, for all its limited resources. It may be that someone has decided to go to work on it and destroy it from within, or at least weaken it enough to get it under control. The best way would be, of course, to find a way to make it seem to destroy itself. We're not saying this is what is going on, but the KPFA course seems firmly charted by new hands who refuse to listen to anyone else and now and then show utter contempt for those who built the station as an institution. We understand WBAI is flourishing on an even more conventional basis, with all-night talk shows and so on. All the stations exchange fewer tapes than they once did. More money is spent now on long-distance live hookups, which of course cost much more money. With KPFA still ailing, Houston virtually unheard from these days, and only an occasional tape from WBAI, KPFA itself appears headed for the rocks. If all this is accidental or the natural course of events, okay. It just seems awfully fortunate for those who have hated the whole concept from the beginning.

You might keep all this in mind if you ever see Kuttner again. Sorry to run on so long, but you might as well know what may happen.

That's about it for now. We're looking forward very much to your later assessments of the Peking visit and its probable effects, both here and there. On the whole, in spite of Pretty Pat's talent for putting her foot in her mouth every time she opened it in China, it appears that our GL got on the whole the TV exposure he wanted, but will pay for it in many other ways, mostly outside this country. In any case, things can never be quite the same, which is mostly good.

All the best,



jdw