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November 6, 1951

Mr. Edward W. Barrett
Assistant Secretary of State
Washington, D.C.

~~DIVISION OF LIBRARIES~~ ~~INSTITUTES~~

Dear Ed:

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

It is now a month since I have returned from an extensive trip through Europe and the Middle East. I should have written earlier than this to thank you for the unfailing courtesy of your overseas staff, everywhere I went; but the perspective of a month's reflection gives me the opportunity to be much more substantial in my appreciation.

In a few places where short-term impact propoganda seemed to dominate the slower and more pervasive educational effort of the United States, I had to escape politely from your zealous officials and strike my own affinities with local scholars, booksellers, etc.; in Beirut, for example, - but I wouldn't want this to be construed as a criticism.

As you have probably noted, our representatives have been working closely with your staff in Washington who are concerned with books, and inexpensive books in particular, overseas - and in this connection I worked very hard in London on my way home to secure distribution rights for certain of our basic titles in India where such distribution is controlled contractually through British book publishers. This required a great deal of diplomacy, since it was a confidential matter that the Department of State was interested, and I had to reveal our purpose as largely a commercial one. Actually, however, we do not regard the overseas circulation of our books as entirely a commercial matter. Indeed, we are now working on a number of forthcoming books at the suggestion of Messrs. Hodge and Fanget of your staff in which the primary motivation is to be of service to the international aims of the country.

Actually, I leaned over backward everywhere I went not to involve any of your foreign representatives in distribution matters. Off the record, in certain places such as Egypt where exchange has to be contrived by the distributor that I established there, it would be embarrassing for the Government to be involved. Nevertheless, careful study of the literature on display in Egypt indicates that the availability of books of American origin there will be of great advantage among the educated classes.

My most interesting observation in the Middle East was the extent to which English is becoming the active second language. It is superseding French everywhere except in Syria where I travelled, and dramatically so in Turkey, where our distributor is selling - at a \$2.00 price - 20,000 copies of the Sears Roebuck Catalog annually - not that customers can order from it, but that it may be read as a fascinating book, of great help in familiarizing the reader with what might be called "the American

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... GOOD READING FOR THE MILLIONS

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language."

Since my return, and at our request, your people in Washington are making available to the American Book Publishers Council, a list of the key scholars and intellectuals abroad who might well receive review copies of certain American books and more publicity generally on American literature.

I won't burden you with any details - except to repeat that it was a privilege as well as a pleasure to keep in step with the State Department people and all of their projects in my own explorations of literary and cultural matters abroad, especially in Greece and the Middle East.

Thanks again for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,


Victor Weybright
Chairman & Editor

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