

Next day we flew back to London and, now accompanied by John's Aunt Mimi, boarded a BOAC Boeing 707 bound for Hong Kong. The flight began in harmony and extreme fatigue. I still had Brian's autobiography, *A Cellarful Of Noise*, to complete – serialization had already begun in an Australian paper. My God! And I'd heard that there were receptions planned at every airport along the route to Hong Kong. Paul summoned me to his seat: 'Do you know anything about these so-called "welcomes"?' A little, I admitted. 'Well, we're not doing anything, we're knackered. You'd better make sure everyone knows. Everyone, Degrass.' ('Degrass', yet. That at least was warm.) So now what? I was sure that all that was required was a wave and maybe the acceptance of a bunch of flowers; it didn't sound too onerous to me. 'You're going to have to get a telex sent ahead to every stop, saying we won't be doing a bloody thing,' said Neil. But in Zürich there was going to be a band playing on the airport roof... 'Did you arrange it?' No; but it's a free society and if they want to do it... 'Bollocks to what they want. They should have been told The Beatles wouldn't be doing anything. That's your fault. They don't owe a Swiss bunch of arseholes anything.' Neil and I composed the telex between us; despite his hard manner, he had great humanity.

(...)

There was a band playing on the roof at Zürich. I saw it as we descended and then, when the plane stopped, I heard it. We all did. The telex had arrived either too late or not at all. I looked at Paul, who slowly shook his head. John grinned derisively at me. Mimi gave him an encouraging dig in the ribs with her elbow, but he said cheerfully, 'Mind your own business, Mimi,' and sat tight. The problem was mine and I faced it with enormous cowardice pumping icy water into my veins. I emerged into the fresh air to tell the spokesman for the band that The Boys were too tired to come out. There was a loud wail, followed by a roar of anger as I slunk back to the plane; once again, my psyche craved the olden, golden days of obscurity...

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In Calcutta we got off the plane and went to the refreshment terminal, where we drank warm orange cordial under an ancient ceiling-fan resembling a propeller. It was hot as hell and very humid. The steward who served us was impassive, indifferent; we could have been anybody. Bangkok was another story: America in the Orient, with hundreds of people smiling up at the plane. This time, rested by now and showing signs of excitement (and just maybe inclined to reward me for having protected them at Zürich), the Fab Three and Jimmie got out of their seats to sign autographs and receive gifts and garlands, kisses, smiles and waves. A thousand memories were born that night in Bangkok. I was very happy. I hadn't joined this adventure to restrain or stifle it; I wanted to help it along, to contribute. I was, after all, a Beatlemaniac myself.

Derek Taylor  
Fifty Years Adrift