

8 September 1945

Dear Ones,

I don't know what kind of a letter this will turn out to be - the past two days have been overcast and rainy; it has made the weather consistent with the predominant spirits of most of us here. Then yesterday we saw Art off to the States - I was happy for him and sorry for myself; I liked Art a lot, he is quiet, steady, friendly, and cheerful - it was good to share the tent with him. His leaving creates one more link in the chain of emptiness that is life on Santo. On top of that came the discharge plan for officers which leaves as far in the rear as I could possibly be. And yet this is the start of a new year - I should be cheerful in looking forward to a year that may see me returned to my home and those whom I love. But the services I have been to today and last night have been very unsatisfying; the Jewish community is small this year and there could be no repetition of the grand observance we enjoyed last year. This morning I read one of the JMB books of Jewish Thoughts in an effort to get myself into a mood more consistent with the Holiday. I have not had much luck; I got hold of the portable and decided to try to write to you - I did not work at all today.

It may not be entirely fair for me to make a decision under the current conditions, but the conviction is growing in me that my Judaism in the form of the practice of Orthodox ceremony cannot become a positive factor in my life. I find that I want to go to the services, that I have no question but that I will fast next Monday, that I will probably continue to observe such minimum rituals all my life, through habit, through a sense of responsibility, obligation, and respect, and through pride and identity with these original manifestations of the vitality of the Jewish faith. I do not feel that Zionism can become a positive phase of Judaism for me, either; I see Zionism as a weapon against persecution and anti-Semitism, but that is a negative approach. I will share the accomplishment of the Palestinian community, the rebirth of a civilization and culture based on the Jewish contribution to humanity. I will always identify myself with that unique group of ten million who may be confused as to the definition of their common bond but who have one (or many) nonetheless. That is part of heritage of birth. The fact remains that those factors which should make religion a positive factor in my life are not there; there is no major element of my faith, my moral code, my hopes, my dreams which I tie directly to a vital religious faith. I believe in God but I believe first in humanity and mankind and that the true aim of religion will be accomplished through the evolution of the good world; I can identify the ultimate which I hold out for our civilization with that culmination which every religion teaches will someday bless mankind. The definition of my Jewishness remains my personal problem; I cannot escape, I don't want to escape the elements of that definition which society places upon me. But my Jewishness is not the Jewishness of extreme faith, of intimate knowledge and practice of the ancient codes and laws; my Jewishness cannot be separated from my Americanism, from the pattern of my life - it is woven into that pattern, into every strand, too deeply to be removed and analyzed. I am seeking a positive inspiration from its elements and I cannot find it; when others offer positive elements to me - study, escape into orthodoxy, espousal of its current features - they do not fit into my chosen pattern, to emphasize them would be to through my scheme out of kilter and in fact destroy more values than I would gain. As a sensitive, thoughtful individual and as a conscientious member of the world community, I recognize the factor of my Jewishness without finding in it any vital personal or social key.

Now to get to some of your letters: the mail today brought Time and the Portland Bulletin in which I noted that Art Pinansky hasn't changed and that Charlie Chason got himself a Purple Heart and Bronze Star - very fine; he must be well severed from the old apron-strings by now. It was a long process though. Everyone seems to hail the Braden appointment as a sharp blow at Peron; the last speech of Rockefeller probably defined the start of our new policy, despite his reported tendency to overlook Argentine facism in favor of hemisphere unity, a policy which is no longer justifiable. I just wish that someone would come up with a solution for the Argentine liberals; the united Nations policy of supervised and fair national elections might be applied if the pressures grew strong enough.

It was good to read the nation-wide response to the Russo-Chinese pact; those of us who have long held that Russia was being honest have been vindicated. The Max Eastman's who sought to paint the viciously grasping Russian colossus as conflicting with us over Chinese policies will have to look for new bogeymen. The Russian pact ended the difficulty that threatened the long stretches of Sino-Russian boundaries. And it opened the way for the settlement of the internal questions. We will now have to see how the Mao-Chiang conversations come along - there is every reason to trust that the Communist will gain recognition as a political party with all guaranteed rights in exchange for his giving up his army and his separate community; the broad base of democracy may well emerge in the near future. The Truman letter on the draft was excellent. He put the case forward clearly and simply. If Santo is any indication, the Army won't get enough volunteers to fill a battalion and we will have to meet our postwar commitments with a draft (let alone facing the problem of us poor servicemen who are stuck in now though we have better than two years in the Army.) As for the age limit, I don't think that 18 is too young and the education argument is weak, since at 18 education is much less likely to be interrupted than at 20; and I still feel that a limited Army service will enhance educational values for the young man. I am with the Truman proposals 100% percent - he has a grasp of the many aspects of the problem and he understands the nature of the solution which we need. I was interested to see that his estimate of 1,200,000 men to meet our commitments came close to the figure I was working on in one of my recent letters.

I hope that Uncle Lou had a pleasant visit - how did he take the announcement that 100 points was the score required for field grade officer discharge?? You have shaken my faith in home by writing to me that you ate a coconut - if I never see another coconut I will be very happy, after dodging them for better than 16 months!! Good for Maury Comeras - I hope he realizes how lucky he is to get home in such good time. As for the plans for the cottage - I am all for a permanent establishment out there and not at all hostile to the idea of eventually moving out there on a permanent basis; however that can wait until we get together and Uncle Lou and Juj and I are out of the service. Good for Bobby Morris - looks as though all of my cousins are going to be married off by the time I get home. Your mentioning the problems of life on Kwajelein and the fact that it is worse than Santo doesn't make life here any more pleasant, I hasten to assure you; misery loves company but that is hardly any compensation. The problem of adoption of the illegitimate child which "looks definitely Jewish" at the ripe old age of ten months is quite a poser; makes a pretty good argument against illegitimate children too!!

I will return the letter you returned to me, so that you can save it, if you are still collecting my letters; I don't have the patience to go through it and rewrite it for publication of any sort. The Novack Column on the returning GI was very good - it is fortunate that there is an articulate soldier group that can reach a national audience and debunk a few of the blabbermouths who claim to speak for the soldiers and their idea of the American way of life. Thanks for the small clipping on Curley - what a farce if he were to win the election and then be convicted! Could be, though, I guess. Good old Boston politics and politicians.. The groundwork being done at London now is promise of the effectiveness of the coming meeting of the Foreign Ministers; once the peace treaty formulae are worked out, the world should be ready to turn to the problems of peace.

OK for tonight - I will come back to this in the morning; Milt has moved into the tent now. There should be more articles about the counselling services available to Veterans; a great many of the men just don't listen when orientation lecturers explain things to them and they are going to be lost when they seek aid upon discharge - they make an obvious target for the unscrupulous. I thought the TIMES coverage of the conditions of the Jews in Europe was excellent; the news itself is terrifying; there just is no Jewish community left in Germany. It appears from the Middleton report that if there are 100,000 Jews left in German areas, it will be higher than current surveys show. Repatriation seems impossible - there is no such thing for these Jews; again and again as I read the reports it struck me that Palestine is the only answer. Current American treatment and camps can not be expected to continue indefinitely; a constructive solution must be found and can be when it is so clear.

2nd. Summer