

16 December 1945.

Dear Ones,

We have just held a meeting to determine how to close out our officers club - we voted that the salaries paid to the mess and laundry help be doubled in order to get rid of our surplus cash - if we don't get rid of it it will go to Hawaii and probably end up as part of a fund to redecorate some permanent Army post lounge. We voted that beer and coke be free all the time from here in and then we had to decide about liquor. We all agree to free nights and the Colonel (who was not there) let it be known that he would approve of only three free nights a week; he of course as the CO has to approve all such decisions. We only have 24 officers all told and half of us don't drink and we have a gigantic surplus in real "liquid" assets - it struck me as absolutely assinine to have only certain nights free and so I made the motion that all nights liquor be dispensed free over the bar. This is in the face of Trosper and Hoggatt who said the Colonel would not approve - my answer was simply that we should voice our feelings and let him do what he wanted. I made my little speech and the vote was unanimous - practically a revolt, I guess! Anyhow, we instructed Major Trosper to tell the Colonel what our wishes were and we worked on the assumption that they would be approved: if the Colonel limits the days he can chose them himself - it is a small thing, but very typical again. We tried to find ways to give liquor to the men, but we were blocked by regulation at every turn. This afternoon I am going out to show the Port officers what ammo there is to be dumped. I have a bunch of middle of the month reports to make out as well. I am all caught up on my mail with the exception of Loken - I'll sit down and drop him a note one of these days.

It is now Monday noon - I have finished writing an "answer by indorsement" explaining why the Ordnance stock records are not up to date: I had the answer all ready - all of Thorpe's little notes in which he bitched for more help. We shall see what happens - if the records had any value I would be concerned but I don't know what good it will do to try to balance them, we have no checks, and they will be as worthless afterward as they are now. Then Trosper bounced back my survey on the ammunition: this is a killer - I think I told you about my interview with Colonel Spalding a couple of weeks back when that bumbling old man tried to convince himself that the ammo was not stolen. He just doesn't know his ear from a hole in the ground - anyway, despite my report, the MP report, and the complete investigation of Wally Stout, the JAG, all of which reported the Ammo as stolen, they want me to change my report and just call it missing!! They are treating it like a murder case - no corpus, no murder: no ammo recovered, no robbery! What inane quibbling! How I long for an intelligent response! How I long for a logical approach to things! Trosper tells me that since the French delegate couldn't find the ammo and we couldn't, it obviously not a robbery - it is merely missing ammunition - oh, me! And through all of this I am in the midst of all my reports .. what a happy Monday: thank goodness that I am in a fairly cheerful mood.. I am in the midst of Dos Passos' excellent Three Soldiers - good reading to take my mind off this madhouse down here. Movie tonight is good Ameche, Colbert in something about a bartered bride or some such thing...

And on top of everything else we have another court-martial coming up! This is a killer, too - at 1 in the morning Lt Seidel couldn't find the guard in the PX area or attract his attention. He went back and got the corporal of the guard - no sign of the sentinel. So they shot three times in the air! still no answer - they then proceeded to blow the lock off the gate with four more pistol shots! What fun - they rushed into the area with pistols ready, fearing that the guard had met false play - no such luck, he stumbled sleepily from behind a stack of beer. Well, they couldn't charge him with sleeping on post, since that couldn't be proved. So he is to be charged with allowing firearms to be fired in the vicinity of his post and with allowing personnel to enter his post without his challenging them or admitting them. The first specification cannot be made to stick, but the second can, I think - and Stout is back so he can be a little help. Such is life at 1 in the morning on Santo. And I think that Sprague is in a little trouble - he failed to report for a plane at Noumea and that delayed his return to this rock: what disciplinary action will be taken I do not know. I hope that it is no more serious than a reprimand.

This morning I managed to squeeze in the writing of the report of our last trial and I hope that that is out of the way for good now - but if it like everything else here, it will have



to be retyped at least six times before being tentatively approved. But now to try to get to some of your letters ( I am sweating profusely at this point.) I whittled your clippings down to three envelopes and a page of notes, here goes:

I can't help but note in all the columns I read - Pearson, Lippmann, even Mrs Craig - a growing note of severe pessimism; and of course it coincides with my growing concern for way in which our democracy is failing to function at this critical time - the Congressional stalemates, our temerity in the declaration of foreign policy, our indefiniteness in complementing our commitments with action promises, our inability to follow up economic programs with effective and agreed-to national policy, our public indifference to these myriad problems. Maybe Dorothy Thompson is right in her Cassandra-like, almost mystical insistence that nothing will work without wholesale moral regeneration in public thinking and action - even minimum programs seem to get stymied, the bottom is dropping out of realism to the point where realism seems to say that no policy will be accepted. As our problems increase, we seem to be increasingly incapable of facing them, we aren't even ready to face them, let alone to solve them.... you tell me the answer. Either we get leadership, or..... and leadership is not limited to the executive branch: it means the individual congressman, the individual city councilman, the individual political leader ...

But we still have to look at the problems - every once in a while there is a glimmer: apparently the Truman statement on China was not too bad - I haven't heard its full text yet and I will have to wait for your letters for that. In all the comment on the German trials and the German attitudes of this season, there is the recurrent note that the humility and willingness to be self-reconstructive along peaceful lines that we hoped would come with a total defeat is not present - every reporter seems to find the "next time" idea expressed all too frequently - what more of a reminder do we need of the job that still faces us? The SEP article by Stanley High on the American Communists touches upon the old familiar strain - the odds are pretty good that the Readers Digest will reprint it. The communists do not have much political integrity left on which to base their arguments in self defense. To my mind their inability to phrase their programs in an intelligible and defensible manner for the American public is their big failure - they are not willing to be intellectually honest and it nullifies everything they do. The Communist is in the position of the complete internationalist - he defines his policy in terms of his own nation and in terms on an international program of communistic change into which his own nation would fit as part of a pattern. Russia's particular position as the nominal guide of the international programming of the Communist pattern leads to the natural confusion of say, US national interest and Russian interests within the American communist body. The rub is that the communists for some reason want to keep these secret and it proceeds to foul them up irrevocably with the average American. The result is that their faulty strategy is everyone's predominant concern .... I hope that I am little clearer than the Daily Masses. The issues of communism are seldom discussed...

It is now 4:30 - just heard that the Colonel approved the free drinks all the time idea - hell, that's a minor victory. This has been a quite day - and the somewhat frantic tone of this letter sort of reflects it, I guess. One of these days all hell will break loose for sure - it came close today: great. I am glad that Daddy's book gift from the MJC worked out so well - I knew that sooner or later, Daddy, you would locate a "replacement" for Jack Scudney. The idea just struck me: you mention that you hope that the weather is more comfortable for me - right now I am not worried as much about the weather as about the "heat" that is on me!

Back to the clippings - I jumped a foot when I read the British claims that we share joint responsibility for the Java deal: the British story is that MacArthur told Lord Mountbatten to go ahead and clean up the Japs and this other deal is a necessary corollary: how do the British explain their use of Japanese troops for fighting then??? As nearly as I can tell the Indonesian dispute has never centered around the disarming, demobilization, and removal of the Japs. The British claim is a logical opening for us to make a clarifying statement... I hope. The news of anti-Semitism in Argentina is disheartening but not surprising - one more place where action is called for, and in South America all we have to do is to follow the lead of little Uruguay. I was very pleased to note that Conant has come strongly for a continuance of the draft in peacetime as long as the Army personnel problem remains - good stuff, a little inconsistent with his opposition to peace time service, I think. OK for now - All my love, *Truman*