

April 17, 1945

Dear Sumner:

The greatest political personality of the present era has now been placed in his eternal abode. History will find a prominent niche for him in its Hall of Fame, for he served longer than any other President of his country and served as its chief executive during the world's greatest catastrophe. That much it requires no seer to prophecy. Whether, however, he will be placed on as high a pedestal as Washington, Jefferson or Lincoln it is impossible at this time for any one to predict with confidence. History takes decades, and often a generation or two, before it evaluates the true worth of the man.

May I give you my personal appraisal of Roosevelt? His outstanding quality was his great heart. He loved people and he could find no distinction in race, color or creed. Perhaps it was his deep physical suffering that made him the great humanitarian; perhaps it was a natural love of mankind. Whatever the reason, he honestly and deeply wanted to improve the lot of mankind. He possessed great personal charm and he was always conscious and confident of that fact. What is why he dared to attempt to transform constitutional government into personal government. What is why he was ready to pack the Supreme Court and to order the Congress to pass "must" legislation. He knew he was benevolent, he knew that by and large only the highest motive prompted him and he believed that the end justified the means. Everything centered about him; he saw to that. He was his own Secretary of State. When he created bureaus and they failed he did not abolish them but superimposed another bureau on top of the old one and he felt he could do that because in the last analysis he was the one who made the decision. He wanted it so as to legislation and he wanted it so on matters of law. He was terribly self centered and that is why he regarded himself as being the only man in this country able to carry on after he had had the traditional two terms. Then when the time came for a fourth term and we were deeply enmeshed in this world holocaust, then, of course, he was the only one that could carry along. Nobody else could do the job but he. Only the realization that no peace treaty would have to be ratified by the Senate and that to disregard that powerful body would lead to disaster even as it had when Wilson assumed to write a peace treaty without giving thought to the powerful Senate which had to ratify it, did Roosevelt bring into the fold the Senate leaders and take them into part of his confidence. Not all of it, for, as you will recall, we still don't know what happened at Teheran and we know already that at Yalta there was a secret agreement as to the number of votes Russia was to have. That secrecy was uncovered by a reporter from the Herald-Tribune. In military affairs he may have been responsible for the broad and bold strategy but many of the major factors and all of the important details he left to the men who knew their business and then left them alone. That attitude, however, he never adopted when it came to home affairs and policies. He left us in sixes and sevens in those things for that very reason as well as for the reason that he did not have the great mind to accompany his great heart. He could spend money as no other President had spent it before and, for that matter, as no other Governor of New York had spent it before. I do not think he had any sense of money values. I do not think that he had any definite policy for reestablishing a sound economic structure after the depression. We had as many men unemployed after his first eight years of office as we had when he took office. He was the great national philanthropist. He was the great patrician. But philanthropy never built a sound economy.

But because personality is the outstanding factor in the life of an individual I think his mental weaknesses will in due course of time be forgotten. People will remember him as the great humanitarian who wanted to raise the standard of living of the underprivileged whose heart sympathized with the the less fortunate. People will forget that his plan of spending and spending and taxing and taxing would in the end have heaped greater hardship on the very people whom he wished to help. The weakness of the men of his cabinet will long be forgotten. People will remember only the President. People will think of him as he sat with Churchill and Stalin. In the ability to



dramatize himself and project himself upon the pages of history he was the master of them all. That is why he was such a consummate politician. His sense of timing was perfect.

I am dictating this in the office without being able to sit down and coordinate my thoughts and write you in a less rambling fashion, so you will understand if I am not as coherent as I might be in the reflecting calm of home.

Now as to Truman, it is literally thrilling to see how all America has stood up to pat him on the back and wish him well. Here is no showman, no exhibitionist, no charming egocentric. A plain, simple man of proven honesty. He will, I believe, give us a less spectacular administration, but one which is based on constitutional government and one which believes that the legislature and the judiciary each have its important place in the structure of our democracy. I think people will like him and I do not think he will make enemies, at least not as bitter ones. I think he will in course of time have a really strong cabinet because he will delegate responsibilities and I think he will find that there will be less bureaus, less confusion, certainly less chaos, and more efficiency and more orderliness. The Roman Holiday, I believe, is over and the something for nothing philosophy is a dead duck. At least I hope so. At any rate conditions at home after the war will be chartered on a sounder plan than that of spend and spend and tax and tax. It appears at the moment that he will have even greater support in Congress for the international policy of cooperation, the foundations of which were laid by President Roosevelt. And it certainly will be a healthier situation that Russia, for instance, will look to America and not to a single individual as its partner in a world plan for peace. Like every other American, I am at the moment optimistic enough to believe that President Truman with the heartiest cooperation of the Senate will work out a peace which will be built on sound foundations and which will be internationally cooperative in every phase of its effectiveness. In that regard it is possible that Truman will do an even better job than Roosevelt could have done. As for the post-war economy of our country I am also optimistic in the belief that Truman can put this country on a sound economy. In that regard, too, he will have much more cooperation from the Senate. I believe he will give us a real labor head as a member of his cabinet. I think labor trusts him and I am sure that capital and management has infinitely more confidence in him. I am positive that Truman will not be another Harding.

Affectionately,

*Daddy*