

April 21st 1945

Dear Ones -

Lawrence Tibbett is singing "Accentuate the Positive" - oh, my! Shades of Rigoletto!! Tonight is Saturday and reputedly the loneliest night of the week - most of the fellows went to the movie and we will probably play poker tonight; this is report season and tomorrow I have a busy day ahead. The volleyball tonight was good and was fun. The news is that the Russians are moving -- happy birthday, Adolph!

On the question of selection and the GI Bill of Rights, I can not agree with the defence which Dean Chauncey has made of the Conant stand in answer to the criticism by the Boston Globe. I do believe that "exceptionable and demonstrated ability" in students should be provided for so that although they lack equivalent service time their educational opportunity will not be truncated; however, I do not see why a necessary corollary is that men who do not show sparks of genius in their formal education should not be given the full equivalent time privileges. With all the screening tests, with all the psychological analyses that can be made to test skills and aptitudes and abilities, the criterion of "passing grades" is ~~xxxxxxxx~~ a sufficient standard. I think that the Globe is right in insisting that what Conant has labeled as "demonstrated ability" be defined as normal collegiate standards. In other words I am all for extending the Bill so that the government will step into the breach for the recognizably exceptional student who cannot sponsor or continue his education through private means; but that extension is no reason to limit the opportunity of education as currently expressed. It is much too much to go into the whole question of the relative importance of education and of types of education - or as the Alumni Bulletin puts it: "What is a good education above high school level?" ...I insist on several other points: the majority of veterans are going to want technical training for one year and no more. A fair section of the rest will prove to be too restless for an extensive stay in pure liberal arts endeavor - in advance professional or technical training (law, engineering, etc.) the incapable or the unprepared will be easily weeded out by the conscientious school and Veterans' Administrator. And the number of slackers, of riders of the gravy train, will be negligible.

The volleyball is more pleasant these days; we used to have one player who managed to spoil everybody's fun - all of us have a tendency to criticize the others, to point out mistakes, and to call for better play, but he carried the "coach approach" to the point of irritating everyone on the court, his opponents as well as his teammates. And he would always try to arrange the sides so that he was the key figure - my favorite comment was that he would be happiest with a group of midgets on his side so that he could monopolize all the jumping and smashing play at the net! He was forever rearranging the team he was on, chiding his teammates, and seldom admitting his own errors. You can imagine the result - certainly he was not wholly to blame but he did bring the bad spirit in: the game tended to get mean, everyone was critical, there was a lot of bad feeling and hurt feeling, and in defensive measures that type of approach was adopted by the rest of us. Sometimes the criticisms got so caustic and prides and bragadoccio reached such a peak, that men left the game in disgust - the result was that the whole intent of the game, of a little fun, a little relaxation, a little exercise, a little friendship, with winning a very secondary consideration, was being lost. I think that we are well on the way to reestablishing the game on the basis which originally should have dominated it. Just one of those little things - the touches of personality that make the world go round.

I heard from Al Laue today - he is still on the Canal. Feeling pretty much the way I do, I guess. Your letter of the 2nd also came - you forget the APO 708 on the envelope and it took about a week longer to get here. (That was the letter which dealt with Daddy's visit to NY and the current human picture on which I have pretty well commented already.) I will not get much letter writing done tomorrow, but aside from the material from you, I only have Al's letter and that card from Mrs. Emery to be answered - the latter will wait.



I have separated your clippings on the current Jewish matters into three groups: the first is on the Jewish Brigade. I take it that this is the force which created such a row a year ago, when American popular support was solicited. I do not recall what my stand was then, what I say now may be a reversal of it, but I think that every effort of this nature which spotlights the effort of the Jewish people in this war, which identifies our cause and work with the cause of Democracy, deserves wholehearted support - to question whether it should be a Palestine Brigade or a Jewish Brigade is quibbling: it grows increasingly obvious that our strength is in being strong not in compromising - our minimum requirements are enunciated and every stone in the building of our edifice is necessary. The Brigade is indisputable proof of the positive and tangible contribution which a Jewish society can make to the work working for peace.

The statement by the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds on the UPA-JDC split was all very nice from the point of view of community giving and fund raising - but I am too aroused on this question to settle back with an answer like that. There will always be differences of opinion and there will always be healthy disagreement, but when the question is one which may affect the fabric of the entire post-war world, and to my mind the Palestine Problem's solution is that integral, it is no time to pussyfoot. You know that I feel that these many splits in the widest range of Jewish activity can be traced to the fact that eventually Palestine becomes an issue and the myriad ranges of opinion and resultant failure to agree lead to a currently inescapable bog. I believe in tact and in diplomatic handling of such questions - but I believe even more strongly in the necessity of reaching a conclusion and a policy of agreed action.

The interchange of letters and press releases from the Emergency Council of the ZOA and from the American Zionist Policy Committee from March 6 through April 6 is one of the most discouraging series of papers I have read in a long time - there is more lip service and less actual effort paid to real cooperation than I would have imagined possible. This series of papers in itself is proof enough of the need of something new in our leadership. Arthur Lourie's releases for the ZEC are well written: his analysis of the results of Yalta is good and I liked his last sentences; "The aim to reestablish the Jewish Commonwealth must continue as basic in our propaganda. But the apparent delay with regard to a decision of the major issue makes it the more imperative to redouble our efforts to secure the immediate opening of Palestine to Mass Jewish immigration." That is as well put as you might ask. And it certainly can well be the keynote for an Zionist of any shade of opinion. Then comes the AZPC letter calling for prompt action, reorganization of the ZEC and ZOA for militant leadership, specifically the person of Rabbi Silver. (I see that Uncle Joe and Irving Usen were also among the signatories of that letter, Daddy.) I think that that call is justified on the very face of things - even without the argumentation which follows in the next exchange over the actual status of Silver and the conditions of his resignation. I do not think that the ZOA-ZEC is correct in crying that you are creating another split, etc - what hurts my soul is that with all the sweet words of welcome to the effort of the AZPC the subsequent dispatches show absolutely no results toward the goal of getting together; nothing is to be gained by placing the blame for that wholly on the ZOA-ZEC. All the cries for leadership and action inspired by the reassertion of the tragic British closed door policy are empty. Perhaps I am politically naive - perhaps I am naïve to believe that these men (of any faction) are putting the best interests of the Jews first - perhaps I am naive to think that in critical moments the play of personal politics and clashes of personality do not outweigh the matters crying for agreement in solution in importance. What do the anti-Silver forces stand on? Is it not manifest from the fact that there is a split that something is wrong? Certainly I am partisan - I cannot be neutral and watch the salvation of the Jewish people be sabotaged by unthinking leaders. Why cannot the hatchets be buried, why cannot the acrimony which penetrates today's dealings be subordinated to our great need? This threatening split must be avoided - American Jewry stands on the brink of tragedy. To split in search of strength is criminal - the ZOA exists and is recognized. The answer to the dilemma can and must be found - it will be found if we will it.

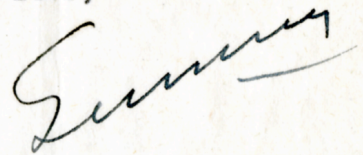


Well, this is turning out to be another pretty long letter. I will save the various remaining clippings for next time. These certainly are stimulating days to be home - there is the famous line about fighting the war and making history, but all the soldiers do is prepare the ground for the real history-making of the peacemakers. It is a time when clear thinking and careful evaluations will mean the difference between night and day in the years to come, when the quirks of leadership and "fellowship" may well set the keynote for a generation to come. It is through your letters and your clippings and other material that I bridge the 10,000 or so miles and become a part of that; there is no sense kidding myself - that is my primary interest: my link with the home front, the stimulation and activity I get from it - my personal war effort has given me no substitute for it.

Ok for this Saturday evening -

All my love,

Regards to Doris.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Sammy', written in a cursive style.