

April 9, 1955

Personal and Confidential

Dear Bill:

I have just received your note of the sixth. I think it would be very unwise to repeat anything publicly that was said at a private dinner. While in this case I see the logic of your suggestion, still this could lead to the most dangerous of practices and would eventually eliminate informal personal affairs for any President.



In addition, your understanding is not quite what I think I said at the dinner. You say, "Efforts to persuade our Government not to permit the Russians to enter the Pacific War." Actually I think I said that I recommended strongly that we not ask the Russians to come into the Far Eastern War. One of the reasons I gave was that in my opinion it was impossible to keep them out of that war -- another was that they were not needed.

Another important factor that would make any release of such information entirely beside the point in the present public discussion of this matter is one that I think you have overlooked. It is that my suggestions, made to President Truman and to the Secretary of State verbally, were made toward the end of July, 1945, when these two officials landed at Antwerp. The present discussion apparently centers around the time of Yalta. At that moment I knew nothing whatsoever about the Far Eastern situation -- I was too busy fighting my own battles. But as we neared the end of the European war and during the weeks following thereon, my staff and I became convinced that the Japanese were on their last legs. (I assume that a lot of other people, by that time, believed the same thing.)

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On the other hand, when I suggested to Secretary of War Stimson, who was then in Europe, that we avoid using the atomic bomb, he stated that it was going to be used because it would save hundreds of thousands of American lives. So that I suppose that as far as I was concerned I still believed in the difficulty of any assault against Japan. But you must remember that there had been many bloody battles in the Pacific and certainly you cannot blame anyone for wanting to save American lives.

All this is written without reference to existing records and, indeed, it is possibly doubtful that any recorded opinion of the kind I have just stated would appear in the official records of SHAEF. Also, we must remember that the Far Eastern subject was really none of our business. Any opinions we expressed on it were gratuitous. However, I am sure that General Smith -- possibly Governor Byrnes -- and I think one or two others of my wartime staff would find that their memories of these incidents substantially parallel what I have set down.

Give my love to Edna.

As ever,



The Honorable William D. Pawley,
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