

Tokyo, May 1

Friends:-

I reckon some of you to whom I send this personal circular will be somewhat depressed by the low state to which I have sunk in the company of generals and brass, but I let myself in for it.

When the arrangements for this trip were made I proudly reserved independence of the military so I could represent the Civil Liberties Union, a couple of international agencies and the Japanese Americans, throwing in what help I could to the occupation on the side. General MacArthur had approved, but I landed in Yokohama without any indication in writing of my status or where I would stay or under what conditions. I figured on shifting for myself in some native family, sleeping on the floor.

I was suddenly pulled out of such speculations on the boat when I was called to the purser's office to meet a major who said that Genl. MacArthur had sent him to get me off the boat without going through ceremony and to take me to Tokyo, twenty miles up the coast. A private car was waiting, and I was hustled off on a sunny, crisp spring morning with the cherry blossoms out along roads teeming with people in assorted costumes, in a jumble of old and new shacks and burned-out areas. Arriving in Tokyo I was deposited at the swankiest joint in the city, the Imperial Hotel, given a large room with mosaic bath, meals in a luxurious dining-room served by a corps of pretty Japanese girls in flowing purple kimonos, and told that the car that brought me was mine, with GI chauffeur day and night, for the duration. I noticed it had painted on the wind-shield the cryptic letters "VIP", and learned to my consternation that they meant "very important person" (no kidding). I squirm now every time I glance at them. But they evidently meant it, for I was taken over to headquarters, introduced around, given an office, secretary and interpreter, with a military aide thrown in if I wished. I didn't wish.

To cap this all Genl. MacArthur's office called up and invited me to lunch with him and Mrs. at the embassy the next day. He greeted me with the word that he had been awaiting my arrival, gave me the keys to the kingdom and told me to report to him personally if I did not get entire cooperation throughout his staff. You can imagine what I have since had, for the word of God got around. I still wonder what all this is about, or how I got invited

in the first place. I can only conclude what appears obvious - that the general means to promote civil liberties, and figures I can help.

The general is a charming, wise, witty, most unmilitary man with a strong sense of mission, a genuine democrat who sees his role in large historic outlines, and with great confidence in the Japanese. He entirely approved my aiding in forming a civil rights agency, in promoting United Nations cooperation and assisting the 10,000 Japanese Americans in Japan desirous of returning to the U.S. He requested my observations on all civil liberties phases of the occupation. He will get them, and they are plenty, but on the whole so far favorable. Indeed I am and have been enthusiastic over what the occupation is accomplishing in reorganizing Japan on democratic lines,- a terribly tough job against all the autocratic traditions and popular attitude of follow the leader.

Since then my days have been crowded from early morning till late at night with interviews and group meetings with Americans and Japanese, generals and civilians, high and low, common and uncommon people, barons, princes and Communists,- all to find out what effect this amazing experiment in transplanting democracy is having, where the soft spots are, and what organized effort I can promote. I have started three associations,- civil rights, United Nations, and Japanese Americans. I have addressed the Tokyo Rotary Club, the Japan America Society and the Harvard Club of Tokyo; more coming. I have attended the War Crimes trials, the Allied Council, the election meetings in city and country, the emperor's cherry blossom garden party (I'm fed up on cherry blossoms) spent a week-end in a Japanese villa, dined with Americans in swell requisitioned Japanese homes, with Japanese in the homes the Americans haven't yet taken, and hob-nobbed with every general in the outfit who has the remotest connection with my interests.

All is sweetness and light, with such cooperation and facilities as I never enjoyed; and apparent agreement with what I stand for. Has the army caught up with us, or am I slipping? As they say to the GI's here, "You never had it so good".

I've learned so much about Japan that I could write a book easily. Next week or two I'll have so many reservations it would be a magazine article, and in a month or two I might write a letter to the editor with some tentative guesses. So I'll quit before I lose my assurance. General Hodge has now invited me to Korea and I shall favor him for a couple of weeks. I could stick around here indefinitely and put in some good licks with continuing excitement over this unprecedented drama.

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It's all pretty much home here for Americans. The U.S.

has been literally transplanted,- imported American food, quarters in the style to which you are accustomed at home, an all-day US radio, two daily papers in English, "Time" and "Newsweek" in local editions, two American movie houses running all day, free bus lines, a department store, special occupation money and cheap prices, a separate dial telephone system and directory, office buildings as well as any at home - marble, granite, brass, with uniformed snappy elevator boys, - a U.S. post-office, a bank, special cars on the railroads, street signs in English. Most of the GI's will go back never knowing they left home. The American and Japanese worlds are completely separated. Oh, yes, there are girls and jinrickshas and curio shops,- but all Japanese hotels, dance-halls, theaters etc. are off limits. (not to me; no rules apply)

Tokyo is a medley. It is like Washington, D.C., Jersey City and shanty-town thrown together. The business district was not burned in the incendiary raids that destroyed most of the wooden dwellings and killed over 130,000 persons. It stands solid, with broad avenues, fine modern buildings and parks. The residence districts were burned out over large areas, and are being rebuilt with wooden shacks; the more solid houses escaped together with the outlying districts. The people look healthy and energetic, the children with rosy cheeks; but the food shortage is acute, inflation rife and unemployment high. The streets show a mixture of old and new, - ox-carts and limousines, street-cars, buses and rickshas, with costumes from kimonos and wooden sandals to cut-aways and striped trousers and bobby-sox. That's Japan; the old feudal customs alongside the most modern, democratic purposes struggling against inherited hierarchy. "Anarchic", said one Japanese leader. "Changing", said I. "It comes to the same", said he.

Most of the Japanese like the occupation and want us to stay a while. We'd get a 75% vote not to quit if a poll were taken, because we have started a job of transformation which we should finish. They act as if they were a liberated not a conquered land, and as if we were their guests not their masters. And on our side we accept the role. Social life blooms with a host of parties, events, dinners, meetings, banquets between Japanese and Americans in the higher echelons (I've just acquired that word). Yes, I've had my inevitable geisha party, as the guest of the editors of a leading daily, - a most circumspect affair, stylized into behavior of artistic dignity,- but very cozy.

This is just the first few weeks after my arrival April 12th. My impression may change somewhat after another two weeks, but they check pretty well with those of newspapermen and old Japan hands! I have been out in the villages and among the farmers where I find the new impulses reach far more slowly. I shall go to southern Japan for some conferences, but not to the northern island. For my purposes Tokyo is Japan.

General Hodge will claim me next in Korea, but I can hardly hope to repeat the unqualified welcome and facilities here. Nor can I contemplate the occupation of a divided "liberated" country with the enthusiasm I feel here. I've asked the Soviet authorities for permission to visit their half, but I do not expect to get it, - not if they look me up.

I'll send out another circular just to keep you informed of my further corruption by the Military, which should be completed in Korea.

As we say around here (and it's about all the Japanese we can say) sayonara.

Roger Baldwin