

Taken From: *I'll Be Back: World War II Letters to The Home Front* by Harold Freedlander; pages 114-115

9th Army, Germany

April 28, 1945

Lo Darling,

It is a bright sunshiny day but much colder than we have at home. It surely should warm up soon. We now have electricity in our apartment.

The war goes on. At first I had expected that before we had gotten as far as we have, the Germans would surrender. I think I see why we are not being forced to fight into the last battlefield in this war. This cannot be measured by ordinary standards, especially by those of the last war. It is not Germany we are now fighting but National Socialism. The Nazi Party can be historically compared to the Jacobins of the French Revolution. We of the 20th century are confronted not so much by war as by the clash of two revolutionary ideologies—Fascism and Communism. We of America and the British Empire are more allied to the latter, mainly because of the 25 years since the communists found “their country” in Russia, they have abandoned world-wide revolution as an ideal while the fascists, who found “their country” in Germany, have not abandoned this ideal. The resistance we shall meet in the so-called “National Redoubt” in southern Germany will not represent Germany nor the German High Command. It will represent the Nazis, just as revolutionary French armies of 1790-94 did not represent France but the Jacobins. It makes no difference that the Jacobins were successful and the Nazis were not. They are both motivated by a religious fervor in their cause, even though the French revolutionaries were ultimately interested in “liberty” and the German in “order.” For Hitler substitute Robespierre, for Goering, Danton, for Goebbels, Marat. Substitute the German efficiency for French energy—and you have the French Revolution grotesquely repeating itself, in another key and with opposite lyrics. This whole thing is inexplicable without realizing that we are confronted with the dying rasp of an unsuccessful revolution. Wars die when the diplomats take over from the generals—and they die all in a moment. Revolutions die when the revolutionaries die, and usually they imbue the next generation with some of their ideas, even in successful revolutions such as the National Socialist. It had a tremendous hold on the people of Germany, and more on the rest of Europe. It will not completely die in our time. The opposing “religion” of Communism is all there in Europe to offer these people left in a vacuum by the “death” of Nazism, if it will die. You don’t kill ideas with guns. You kill them with other ideas. Can we implant in the people of Europe, our ideal of free society with new necessary economic controls (the New Deal) as an ideal to replace the one we are putting in the shade? If we can, we can win the peace.

Enough of the “philosophy of the State” as Earnest Hocking at Harvard use to call this kind of stuff. But I was surprised it took me so long to realize the character of struggle we are in. The armed part of it is about over—the real war, the one of ideas, is about to begin. So far we are still on the defensive. Let’s hope San Francisco will not present formulae so cold as to leave us without hope.

And please save this letter, honey. Ten years from now I want to see whether I was right or wrong about the fundamental character of World War II.

My love to everyone, snooky, but particularly to my own darling.

Ever, Harold