By the time he wrote this letter, and despite claims to the contrary, Eisenhower had begun to sound more and more like a candidate. He entertained a steady stream of visitors, including New York’s Governor Thomas E. Dewey, the unsuccessful Republican candidate for the presidency in 1948, all of whom urged him to run. And though he continued to disavow political ambitions, both publicly and in private, his speeches and correspondence took on an increasingly conservative and ideological tone as he inveighed against “statism” and called for a return to the “middle way.”

24 February 1950

Dear Swede:

Naturally, I cannot challenge your assertion that I had to take the red ink, but I do repudiate your additional postulate that I had to “like” it. To prove my point I am taking advantage of your approaching anniversary (or its approximation, in view of the leap year uniqueness of your birthdate) to send you a new typewriter ribbon. If on arrival, it appears to be packaged in a way that you do not like, I hope that you will find it possible to exchange for one
you really want. My additional hope is that, in black print, I shall occasionally get a letter that is as interesting and completely intriguing as your latest one to me.

In its reading, it took me half of the first page to decide that you had not gone a bit balmy. This, because of the fact that I had not previously seen the story about the “best dressed men”; I had not even heard of it. My reaction is that some people must not have a hell of a lot to do if they have time to devote themselves to such drivel. My clothes are made by a Jewish friend of mine who has been in the men’s tailoring business all his life. He has one or two tailors who make clothing on the “special order” basis. Since my friend keeps my measurements on hand, he comes up here with a new suit every several months, usually of a cloth and cut of his own choosing. So far as my own intervention in such matters is concerned, one of Mamie’s chief causes of complaint is that I will not even buy a pair of socks for myself. She keeps in constant touch with my friend [Sarg. John] Moanny (a Negro who has lived with me since the very first days of the war) in order that she can keep me stocked with the necessaries of decent existence. This constitutes my entire knowledge of my own sartorial requirements and equipment.

Gordon Gray strikes me as being a citizen of fine character and sensibilities. He is endowed with good judgment and a likeable personality. I do not suppose that you would class him as an intellectual giant, but such people are usually uncomfortable characters to have around anyway. I understand that he is a wealthy individual—which won’t be any handicap in the running of a modern university. I predict that he will eventually achieve a high place in the affections of the University family in Chapel Hill, including the faculty portion.

Like you, I was somewhat astonished that Milton finally made

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1. Swede had typed his letter of February 19 with a red ribbon on his “ancient Corona.” The package that Eisenhower refers to was a new Royal typewriter.

2. Gray, whose family held a controlling interest in the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, had held a number of positions in the Truman administration, including that of secretary of the army, and had recently been appointed president of the University of North Carolina.
up his mind to leave Kansas State. He was well situated there and his standing with the Regents and the Legislature was well exemplified when his most recent budget was not only approved in detail but, in certain important particulars, was increased over the amounts he requested. Recently the authorities completely remodeled his house, to include full air conditioning—something that is really more than a convenience in Kansas summers, as you well know. His state-wide standing was comparable and he was in constant demand in all the larger centers as a speaker and a distinguished guest. Moreover, he has been offered the Presidency of several other universities, including one or two quite large ones where pay and perquisites far exceeded what he was getting at Kansas State. Some of these he refused to consider for a single moment because of what he deemed to be unsatisfactory academic standards.

In my opinion, the decisive factors in finally taking him to Pennsylvania State were purely personal. First, he has gotten to the point where the doctors urge upon him some regular outdoor recreation and Kansas offers little or none of this in the only thing he really likes—fresh water fishing. Pennsylvania’s streams and lakes are numerous, and most of them provide exactly the kind of outdoor sport that he loves. On top of this is the fact that his wife’s parents live in Washington, D.C. One of our brothers lives near Pittsburgh and so, by coming East, both sides of the family tend to find greater family companionship than they do in the West. You must realize that, since our father and mother died, there remains in Kansas among our close relatives only [my brother] Roy’s widow and one of her daughters. Of course, the greatly increased pay and emoluments that go with the presidency of Penn State can scarcely be considered as drawbacks.

I have read some of the same comments that you have concerning my alleged dissatisfaction with my present position! They are merely examples of distortion and inaccuracy. It is true that in attempting, at times, to explain to my friends the difficulties

3. Milton Eisenhower, Ike’s youngest brother, had served in a variety of governmental posts before becoming president of Kansas State University in 1943. In 1950 he assumed the presidency of Pennsylvania State University. In 1956 he became president of Johns Hopkins, a post that he held until his retirement in 1967.
of my present life, I have dwelt upon the conflicts that arise between the details of university administration, unusually persistent adhesions from a past life, and, finally, the demands that arise out of my earnest effort to be of some help to people who are struggling manfully to support the essentials of the American way of life. Actually, I believe that if a man were able to give his full or nearly full attention to such a job as this, he would find it completely absorbing. On a campus like Columbia’s, the greatest opportunity is that of meeting constantly with fine minds, in every kind of discipline. Because I love to partake in or, at least, to listen to discussions on such subjects as economics, history, contemporary civilization, some branches of natural and physical science, public health and engineering, you can see that living with a distinguished faculty gives to me many wonderful hours that I could never have in any other environment. Sometimes, however, my loyalties to several different kinds of purposes lead me into a confusing, not to say almost nerve-wearing, kind of living. At such times, just as anyone else would do, I unquestionably express myself in tones of irritation and resentment, and I have no doubt that a chance listener could interpret some of these expressions as irritation with my “apparently” sole preoccupation—that of administering the affairs of this great University. Actually, such outbursts (which, of course, are nothing but a manifestation of a soldier’s right to grouse) are directed at myself for allowing confusion and uncertainty to arise where system and serenity should prevail. I hope you can make out what I am getting at but, in any event, I do assure you that, if I were convinced that I had made a mistake in coming to Columbia, I am not so stupid as to fail to recognize the instant and obvious cure. As long as I am here, you can believe that I am not only interested in the task, but I still believe it to offer a way in which I may render some service to the public at large.

With respect to my political difficulties, it is a curious fact that, while little mention of them is made nowadays in the public press, I am by no means free of the problem. A quite steady stream of visitors, to say nothing of correspondence, reaches me under one excuse or another, and with the frequent consequence of long political discussion that rarely fails to drag me, as an individual, into future speculation. I have heard much of my “clear duty” and have learned to answer this by inquiring as to the comparable duty of my caller. It is astonishing how frequently the conversation can
instantly be turned, by this query, into other channels. However, the attempt sometimes backfires, particularly when I learn that an individual has devoted time and effort and a great portion of his substance to the attempt to counteract government by bureaucracy and the discernible drift toward statism. Since I abhor these two things, you can see that occasionally I get myself into a conversational morass.

Fortunately, these incidents are not of great frequency, but on the other side of the picture, they usually involve people of prominence, who, therefore, cannot be disregarded. In some instances, I have the utmost respect for their expressed convictions. Some are businessmen, some are avowed politicians, some seem to be only public-spirited citizens and some can be considered no less than statesmen. In any case, I am merely trying to let you see that the problem is not entirely a thing of the past. It often plagues me at present and some people seem to think it has a future. This last, at least, I do not admit.

I do not recall the exact terms in which I previously expressed to you my opinion of Louis Johnson. I am quite sure, however, that those terms have never included the word “profound.” I am convinced he is honest but he is, of course, avowedly a politician and he is impulsive. These last two factors lead him to believe that the public likes rapid, even spectacular, decisions. Couple this attitude with a conviction that we had better economize or we are going to lose the things that are of the greatest value to us, and I think it is not too difficult to understand his general motivation.

You will recall that, for a number of weeks after Mr. Johnson first took office, he insisted upon my remaining rather regularly in Washington to consult with him and with other responsible officials of the Security Establishment. In recent months, he has not continued this insistence. While I am obviously welcome in his office, he no longer seems to sense the need he once expressed constantly and urgently. This change, I have no doubt, comes about because of increased confidence on his own part as well as a possible feeling that I do not fit into a situation which, after all—from his viewpoint—is political and partisan as well as professional and national. Moreover, he has Bradley as Chairman of the JCS and cannot, by any means, ignore his position and counsel. I know that you do not consider him an ideal public servant in his present post; but will you name any individual—who could be considered reasonably available—that you would think ideal?
I admire and like Spike Fahrion so it is not difficult for me to go along with a great portion of the Service quarrel analysis that he sent to you. I must remark, however, that it is almost impossible for any Service person to achieve a completely objective and disinterested viewpoint toward the development and incidents of that whole unfortunate episode. Actually, I think that you and I could probably come as close to achieving this attitude as could anyone; you, for the reason that you are naturally fair and just by temperament and were removed from the scene both geographically and functionally, while I, because of my wartime post and the way in which I was used, while in Washington, by the Commander in Chief. You, of course, saw nothing but a rather amusing and even slightly ridiculous aspect to the last two sentences of Spike’s presentation. [Fahrion had closed his analysis of the “revolt of the admirals” by remarking that “someone facetiously said last night that the solution to the whole problem was to have the Army join the Marines, and the Air Force the Naval Air; then make Johnson SecNav and the whole problem of unification would be solved. Not so farfetched at that, when you consider we have been running a unified show for many years.”] Yet to such people as Bradley and [Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Hoyt S.] Vandenberg, those two sentences, which for many months have been bandied about Washington’s cocktail lounges, presented something more than mere cause for a chuckle. They were acutely aware of the fact that the proposition was more than once suggested with some seriousness, at one time, apparently, with deadly earnestness. So far as I am concerned, I have always felt that if we could see anything logical in turning the whole job over to one Service I would be very glad to have the others bow out of the whole picture, no matter which ones might be involved.

But I have earnestly supported the proposition that each Service has an indispensable role in the provision of reasonable national security and that, if it will only perform that role adequately, it will have little time to devote to invasion of the missions of others. I think the sad part of the whole business is that each Service is seemingly incapable of confining itself to its own obvious tasks, but rather feels a compulsion—in order that it may demonstrate its own importance and indispensability—to assert a competency in the performance of other Security tasks which it does not and should not possess.
You may have read my testimony before the Investigating Committee or, if not, you may have seen the recent article, in U.S. News and World Report, in which I expressed my views on these points. Certainly I believe that there is in each Service the brains to do the job right if only each can become respectful of the importance of its own task and does not feel it necessary to try to grab off the jobs of others.

So far as Mr. Johnson's economy measures are concerned, there is a very long story involved. I do know that he has asserted a hope of saving money without hurting combat strength—and after many, many years in Washington, both in subordinate and in higher positions of authority and responsibility, I must say that I know of no way of forcing the Services to cut administrative and overhead cost to the bone except by arbitrary action. This does not mean that I would support every move that Mr. Johnson has made, although I understand that he has several times referred to his current proposals as the "Eisenhower Budget." Last spring when I was in Washington, my job was to propose a division of the available money, under varying assumptions as to quantity, so as to carry out as nearly as we possibly could the essentials of the agreed upon strategic plan. This says a very great deal in a relatively short sentence. Particularly, it says a lot in the way of difficult problems. My experiences in the attempt to achieve some success are far too long and involved for me to attempt to describe them in anything less than a full Volume. But I would be quite ready to wager that, if I could send to you the full record of all of the efforts that were made, of all the different types of approaches that were used, and could show you the responses received from each of the Services, you would agree that the answers recommended were about as logical and as nearly correct as any individual could make them. Such a wager I would make with some confidence because of the fact that I kept pounding away until the actual percentages of the total budget—that had to be allocated on my judgment (that is, outside the roughly agreed upon conclusions of all three Services)—were extremely small. While I am relying upon a weakening memory, I am quite certain that, even in the smallest of the several budgets on which we worked, the percentage could not have been more than three or, at the very maximum, four. So you will see that from my viewpoint the heat and intensity that characterized the quarrel were un-
justified and evidenced to me a flagrant failure to place national convictions and requirements above those of Service.

I realize that I have never before attempted to explain some of these things to you in such detail. I would probably be even more explicit in this particular exposition except for the obvious requirements of secrecy in all of the deliberations and functioning of the Chiefs of Staff and of their relationships with their civilian superiors. But I should like you to believe that there are many sides to this whole argument and it has been a weary battle to get men to forget self and to turn their minds to the critical situation in the world and to think of nothing else. It is because I believe that Sherman possesses a sensitive and logical concern for the national picture, as opposed to any more narrow one, that I spoke so warmly of his appointment. He has, so far as I know, both the ability to do the job and the will to do it properly. Each of these qualifications is extraordinarily important in this day and time.

Along with a letter of such length must come my profound apology, but I just felt today like attempting to give you a fuller explanation of some of the events of the past, and of which I have some knowledge, than I have given you before.

As a sort of postscript to the above, I must tell you that I agree with your opinion that no personal aide should be with any General too long. For this reason, as much as I appreciate his services and as grateful as I am to him, I have constantly urged my present aide to transfer to other duties. Moreover, no one has ever been on my personal staff for one single second except by his own preference. The only thing that I have not done is to insist upon a transfer against the expressed desire of the individual concerned. I must remark also that where you recalled the length of my service with MacArthur at 5 years, you should have used the figure “9.”

As ever,
tive in right-wing politics. In 1954 he would help lead a petition
drive on behalf of Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy. "That bozo should be
given the silent treatment," wrote Swede on 14 March 1950.

20 March 1950

Dear Swede:

Had I known that I could possibly have impressed you so much with one miniature typewriter, I would have sent you one a long time ago.

I am sorry to hear that you and Ibby have had this virus pneumonia. Mamie's father had a siege of it when he was visiting us this winter and I think it was only this new drug, aureomycin (possibly that is nearly correct), which pulled him through. This note brings my fervent hope that you both are well again.

I cannot recall the man from Abilene named [Walter] Alexander. Your story of the love life of his father left me a bit amazed; I did not realize that we had an Abilenite who was so light-footed and light-hearted as to jump out of one matrimonial venture in order to get tangled up with a senorita. It must have been the Naval influence!

I was interested to read your observations about Crommelin. By the way, you may have seen an account of one incident that occurred just after he reached San Francisco. (If I told you about this in a former letter, just please skip it here.) He asked for a press conference and talked rather wildly about a "Prussian General Staff in the Pentagon." Apparently failing to stir up comment as he had hoped, he finally fired a gun which he hoped would be of really big caliber. It was something about as follows: "I am particularly disturbed that a man in uniform who is definitely a candidate for the Presidency, but who will not announce his allegiance to either political party, is free both to influence decisions within the Pentagon and to present his views to the Congress." There was a bit more to the story, as reported to me by Forrest Sherman, but that will give you some idea of the fantastic lengths to which the man goes in order to attract attention. I think
that you understand, as clearly as anyone else, that I have gone to
the Pentagon or to the Congress only when ordered or insistently
requested to do so. Moreover, I have constantly pled that we
should forget the quarrels of the past and, particularly, the attempt
to fix blame for unfortunate outbursts. I have constantly urged that
we turn our attention to the future on the basis of *mutual cooperation
and understanding*. Crommelin, I think, cannot fail to know this as
well as anybody else. But I think, also, that he has gotten so avid
for acclaim and headlines that he will say anything in order to
achieve that purpose.

With respect to the handling of the case, I must say that I feel
sorry for the Navy, particularly for Sherman. While it has been my
practice always to ignore this type of thing and so deny to the
offender the opportunity to appear as a martyr, yet there finally
comes a point where the very good name of the Navy (or any other
Service in which such an incident occurs) is involved. The country
expects its Armed Services to be models of discipline and deport­
ment and the spectacle of successful insubordination is one to
create fear in the minds of the public that their traditions of service
and subordination to civilian authority are deteriorating. It seems
to me to be another case of ‘‘whether you do or whether you don’t,
you are bound to regret it.’’

No one respects courage and gallantry in battle more than I
do. Goodness knows that I have had more reason than most
people to be eternally grateful that in a pinch a young American
exhibits an extraordinary disregard for the dangers of the bat­
tlefield. Nevertheless, I feel that we cannot, in succeeding years of
peace, constantly excuse, condone and ignore serious offenses
committed by individuals, whether civilian or military, merely
because their physical courage has been established beyond a
doubt.

These are merely observations—I have no exact knowledge of
any kind applying to this case, and my information is based
entirely on what the newspapers have said and what Forrest
Sherman has told me. Incidentally, Forrest called me to apologize
for what he called ‘‘an unwarranted attack on one of the Navy’s
friends.’’ Personally, the whole thing bothers me not a whit; I
don’t believe I have mentioned it to anyone but you. But I repeat
that my sympathy is with those who have to handle such disagree­
able cases.
With respect to young [Alvin] Wingfield, I will, on your suggestion, always be glad to see him. However, he should be careful to telephone or otherwise communicate with my office (Mr. [Kevin] McCann, UNiversity 4-3200, Ext. 2773) well in advance of the proposed visit so that we can find a free period and set up the engagement.

Love to Ibby and, as always, warmest regards to you,

As ever,

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War began in late June 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea and President Truman committed the United States on the side of the South Koreans. Eisenhower strongly supported the president’s decision, though he was critical of the administration’s failure to mobilize more rapidly. He was also more critical of administration defense policies than he had been only a few months earlier. By September, when he wrote this letter, the fighting had temporarily stabilized along the “Pusan perimeter” on the southern tip of the peninsula. Three days later General MacArthur launched a daring amphibious landing at Inchon, some two hundred miles behind enemy lines. United Nations forces quickly rolled back the North Koreans and then pressed ahead, determined to crush the North Korean army and unify the peninsula under American auspices. This action, which Eisenhower had joined other American leaders in advocating, led to Chinese intervention and to an expanded and prolonged war.

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12 September 1950

Dear Swede:

This will probably be a very short letter but this does not mean that I fail to appreciate every single paragraph and sentence of your
fine missive of August 9th. Of course I am delighted that you liked my "Silver" lecture. I worked like a dog on it, during the odd moments of several weeks. Recently I have had to give another talk and again I worked the same way. This latest one, which I delivered on Labor Day, was even more difficult to prepare than the long one that you read. This was because I wanted to say a very great deal in twelve and one-half minutes. To undertake such a chore without allowing the text to become nothing more than a disjointed collection of empty platitudes and aphorisms is rather difficult for an old soldier. During the last days of my ordeal of preparation, I had a couple of friends come to visit me to help out. I am certainly lucky in the friends I have. These two had to come from a considerable distance, interrupting their own vacations, yet they came just as if it were fun to do it.

It is slightly irritating to learn that your typewriter is showing some defectiveness in operation. I remember when I told [Maj. Robert L.] Schulz to procure one of them, I told him I wanted one that was noted for its durability and for its general excellence in operation. I hope you will telephone the man who delivered it to you and give him instructions to get on the job with necessary repairs.

The Korean situation seems to be in something of a stalemate over the past several weeks. Most of us are puzzled by some of the developments and certainly all of us are experiencing a definite feeling of frustration. However, we should not fall into the slovenly and easily acquired habit of just blaming others for all our misfortunes. However, it seems quite clear that, in one particular, the civilian authorities of our government must take a very considerable share of blame. They have never been very seriously impressed by professional insistence upon the permanent maintenance of a "task force" or as it is sometimes called, a "striking force." It has always been obvious that a democracy, even one as rich as ours, could not maintain in peace the force in being that could promptly and successfully meet any trouble that might arise in any portion of the globe, particularly if such trouble should occur simultaneously in two or three places. But the existence of a fine, properly balanced, effectively commanded and reasonably strong task force would not only have a deterrent effect upon potential enemies, but would give us a splendid "fire department" basis on which to meet actual aggression.
Beyond all this, however, we must recognize that we, in America, have never liked to face up to the problem arising out of the conflicting considerations of national security on the one hand and economic and financial solvency on the other. We have always felt a long ways removed from any potential and powerful enemy. Our experience has given us the feeling that we have available a cushion of space that would provide, automatically, a similar cushion of time. Consequently, we have not pondered deeply over the individual's obligations to the State, which provides to him protection in his way of life, nor have we been compelled to consider how the discharge of these obligations could most effectively and economically be accomplished.

During World War II, I was so frequently shocked and dismayed by the results of the incomplete training of our youth and by their lack of knowledge of the age-old struggle between individual freedom and dictatorship, that I came, unthinkingly, to assume that after the war our people would at last meet all these issues head on and do something effective about them. As a consequence, all of my thinking during the latter part of the war was based upon the assumption that America would adopt at the war's end some system of universal military service, a system whereby every young man would be required to give some 18 months of his time to the government and that the professional element of our security force would, therefore, be held to a minimum. Since such service would, I thought, be performed in discharge of an obligation, there would be no pay other than that for maintenance and a very small monetary allowance. I likewise thought that we would develop means and methods of producing the munitions of war, including stockpiling, without profit to anyone.

In these assumptions I was, of course, proved quite wrong. When I came home, General Marshall told me that we could certainly get no more than a program of universal military training and that it would take a lot of work to put even this compromise across. I took his advice—especially when I found that the President was already sold on this idea—and worked hard for the UMT program. We were defeated even though I am still convinced that the great mass of our people definitely favor the proposition. I am sure that if the law had been passed some of our National Guard divisions would have, before this, been ready to leave for Korea.
With respect to your speculation that Germany may be the next place in which internecine warfare will break out, I should like to observe that if this should be the case, then Russia would, thereby, come very close to declaring open, all out, war. This is because of the fact that her troops are in actual occupation of Eastern Germany and in actual control of that area. Consequently, if she allows them to move to the attack, she cannot possibly longer hide behind the subterfuge that a “people’s government” is attempting to liberate their brothers in another part of the country.

I shall not be able to get down to Gordon Gray’s inauguration. The early part of October is already filled with so many engagements on my calendar that I am seriously thinking of going to the hospital for a week or so. I should like to be at his installation—more to have a long talk with you than to attend another ceremony. This is true in spite of the fact that I like Gordon Gray immensely and I am delighted that he is taking over a job that he is going to find a great deal tougher than he suspects.

My love to Ibby and the children.

Cordially,

In late October 1950 President Truman summoned Eisenhower to the White House and asked him to become supreme commander of NATO forces in Europe. Only Eisenhower’s great prestige and diplomatic skill, Truman and other leaders in the administration believed, would assuage French fears over German rearmament and permit the creation of an integrated military force in western Europe. Eisenhower agreed to take the post, as indeed his sense of duty dictated, though he was clearly reluctant to do so.
Dear Swede:

I am returning to you the partially written letter that Mr. [Louis] Graves sent to you some time back. Whenever I read such convincing evidence that I am held high in the esteem of a loyal and obviously thoughtful American, I experience a feeling that I cannot possibly describe. More than likely, it is a combination of a clear realization of my own unworthiness of such an opinion, but this mingled with an equal sentiment of pride.

As to conclusions concerning my future responsibility and duty, I think you know my ideas on this perfectly well. Moreover, the longer I live the more I realize that no individual can predict with confidence anything concerning "tomorrow." At this moment I am confronted with possibilities of profound import; possibilities that had not even crossed my mind as much as a month ago. You yourself mention them in your handwritten note on Mr. Graves’ manuscript. You say, "I do hope that this weekend you won’t be talked into that Atlantic Pact job."

I am a little astonished at your use of the expression, "talked into." As you know, I am an officer on the active list on which I will always stay, by reason of a special Act of Congress, affecting a few of us, unless I voluntarily remove myself from it. It is clear that my official superiors don’t have to do any talking if they actually want me to take any military assignment.

But over and above such considerations and addressing myself to the merits of the case, I would conclude from your statement that you do not attach the same importance to the success of the Atlantic Defense Pact as I do. I rather look upon this effort as about the last remaining chance for the survival of Western civilization. Our efforts in the United Nations have been defeated by the vetoes of hostile groups—but in the Atlantic Pact we are not plagued by the hostile groups and are simply trying to work out a way that free countries may band together to protect themselves. If we allow the whole plan to fizzle out into a miserable failure, it would seem to me that our future would be bleak indeed.

Of course, if the authorities can find anyone else who will tackle the job, and who they believe can perform it, then I hasten to agree with you that that man would probably do it far better than I could. Moreover, I believe, in my present job, I am supporting an effort that will be of unusual significance to the welfare of our
people. But I still would not agree that there is any job in the world today that is more important than getting Atlantic Union defensive forces and arrangements off to a good, practical and speedy start.

Of course, all this may be meaningless; I do not want or need any other job. Moreover, I understand from the morning’s paper that the [NATO] Council in Washington seems further than ever from agreement. But the matter still retains its grave importance and so long as it does, anyone of us—no matter what his station, his position or what personal sacrifices might be involved—must be ready to do his best.

As ever,