

Wells, George
1946-51

Wells, Geo.

July 24, 1946

Wells
City College
Potosi 131
P.
1946

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am enclosing a paper
which I took from a letter which
I received from a girl who had studied
at the school in China.

I thought this story
was of interest in view of the radio
comment which I heard this morning
on the statement of Mrs. Sun Yat
Sen. I have long believed that of
all the great nations, the one in the
most truly democratic and dignified
in the world being of her people,
would give considerable thought to
that the story.

Very sincerely yours,

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in Mexico City. Probably
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American Embassy, which is the official representative of
VA in Mexico City. The embassy refuses to do anything at all, so we'll
probably have to send a delegation to the ambassador and, eventually,
we may have to go to higher officials in Washington,

We're hoping to start a big enough fire under the embassy to
make them help us with a loan fund, free medical care, extension of
visas and similar problems, all of these things exist in theory only,
and usually the only way we can get anything done is by paying a bribe

ORIGINAL RETURNED FOR PRESERVATION

July 22, 1946

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am enclosing a paragraph taken from a letter which I received from a G.I. who was stationed for sometime in China.

I thought this might be of interest in view of the radio comment which I heard this morning on the statement of Mrs. Sun Key Sen. I have long believed that of all the Soong sisters, she is the most truly democratic and devoted to the well being of her people. I would give considerable thought to what she says.

Very sincerely yours,

July 22, 1945

Dear Mr. President:

The enclosed paragraph came in a letter from one of our boys who had been stationed for some time in China.

I thought it might interest you in view of the radio comment which I heard this morning on the statement of Mrs. Sun Yat Sen. I have long believed that of all the Soong sisters, she is the most truly democratic and devoted to the well being of her people. I would give considerable thought to what she says.

Very sincerely yours,

July 22, 1945

Dear Mr. Benton:

I thought the enclosed paragraph should be sent to you. It comes to me from a G.I. student in Mexico City.

I think you should work with the Veterans Administration and the different countries on something along these lines.

Very sincerely yours,

Wells 1

George B. Wells
Mexico City College
San Luis Potosi 131
Mexico D.F.
July 16, 1946

ORIGINAL RETIRED FOR PRESERVATION

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

Knowing that you are greatly interested in veterans' organizations, I am sure you'll be interested in our progress in Mexico City. Probably I am over-enthusiastic because it is new, but I really am optimistic about what we can do here.

We have only 20 members thus far, and we had our first official meeting today. I was elected chairman; the vice chairman is Fred Honkin, who is a student at the National university; the secretary is Harlan Athan (with whom I used to swim in your Val Mill pool); and the treasurer is Miss Iris Steta, an Army nurse who served in the South Pacific and now is attending National university.

Our membership already includes such various subjects as press correspondents for UP and AP, businessmen and engineers, Mexicans who served in the American Army, teachers, and students. Certainly we have all religions and political faiths, and we have one colored student. Best of all, they all seem to be international-minded and very serious in purpose.

We expect to contact every World War II veteran in Mexico eventually, and perhaps we shall eventually reach a membership of more than 100. Our only competition is the American Legion, and since that is a rather innocuous outfit here, we're not much concerned about anything except their cooperation. Already we have four members who are disappointed Legion men.

First of all, we're trying to get the VA to send through the G.I. Bill payments. There are quite a few students here who have been here more than six months and have received no money. Since there is no other source (except for an inadequate loan fund from the American colony), several students actually don't know where their next meal is coming from. You see, the Mexican government won't let us work here, and when a person's savings run out, he's really in a bad spot.

We have a committee now gathering statistics to present to the VA and to the American embassy, which is the official representative of VA in Mexico City. The embassy refuses to do anything at all, so we'll probably have to send a delegation to the ambassador and, eventually, we may have to go to higher officials in Washington.

We're hoping to start a big enough fire under the embassy to make them help us with a loan fund, free medical care, extension of visas and similar problems. All of these things exist in theory only, and usually the only way we can get anything done is by paying a bribe to the government.

J. J. Dalton
-2-

Whatever happens, we shall have accomplished a large thing in setting up an organization that will fight for a veteran whenever he runs into trouble in Mexico. Until now the veterans have been lonesome individuals with no interested person or persons to turn to; when the AVU becomes solidly organized, we'll have a measure of security that none of us has felt so far.

By the way, I wonder if you would do me the favor of writing a letter to the chapter encouraging the members and telling them something of what you told me about the value of veterans organizing. The AVU, you know, follows your beliefs pretty much, and the membership we have so far in Mexico is pretty seriously interested in backing such things as full participation in the UN and other international organizations, and in supporting the fight for the kind of society your husband was trying to evolve out of the tangled mess the U.S. is in at present. A note from you to the Mexico City Chapter would give them all a tremendous boost and would help to make them undying devotees of the "better world" that we somehow manage to keep plugging for.

*Copy of letter to you
for file*

I am curious to know whether you have talked over with your UN associates the problems of exchanging students with the various nations. I have learned now from personal experience how difficult it is to move about outside of the United States and how poorly the state department is organized to handle a situation such as we have here. I wonder if the UN could not reach some sort of agreement that would permit the free interchange of students without all the endless miles of red tape that one must unravel in order to study abroad. Certainly there is no better way to cement the world in friendship than through students studying outside their own country.

I think I shall let AVU rest there for a while until I hear from you. By the time I write to you again about it, I hope to have tremendous progress to report.

Meanwhile, despite my AVU activities, I haven't lost sight of my basic purpose in being down here. I've been studying Latin American economics, and I've been learning first hand how the Mexican government operates. In certain respects this country reminds me of China, but at least the government here is interested in the welfare of the people, and whether honestly or dishonestly, the racist element apparently was defeated again in this election just past.

Some of the most interesting persons I've met are the Spanish Loyalists. Certainly they are just about the finest people I've ever known. I went to a French 14th of July affair at Belles Artes last night with the widow of Spain's last President and her sister. They are sisters-in-law of my Spanish teacher, Mrs. Rivas. Her husband, by the way, had just managed to get out of Franco's jail after six years' imprisonment. He's still in Madrid, but she's praying that he'll be able to get out soon.

Although this letter is getting long, I shall add one more thing: Mike Sullivan, the friend I told you about, who teaches in China's Gin Ling college, and his Chinese wife, Kuoan, are coming to the States at the end of this month. They'll probably stay with me for a while, and I'd

ORIGINAL RETIRED FOR PRESERVATION

3 - *John A. Haynes*

like to bring them to see you, if you are interested. He has been in China for years and knows it pretty well. Before I close, I'll mention his letter:

"Yes, you were right about China, it's no Marshall's fault, he has done as much as anyone could have done. Since the Aumint's executive council met in March, soon after the sensational agreement, there has been no hope whatever of a peaceful solution. They reneged on the pact, as you know, that and American intervention on a very big scale (everything short of actually fighting the Communists) has put them in such a position that their existence now depends entirely on their being able to survive from the military point of view. The AMT right wing, now in complete control, is out to liquidate them, and it's a disaster for China that the US have thrown their weight in against them. To say this without malice: had Britain been still the great power, she would have done what America is doing now, it's a terribly short-sighted policy, it's goading the Russians on, and now they have very good reason to say that the western democracies are erecting a barrier against them, exactly the same process as after the last war, when the Allies backed the counter-revolutionary forces - to their cost later and don't think I'm pro-Russian. They are behaving just as badly as anyone else, if not worse. But the people in China must be given their chance; if they are bottled up again, the explosion, when it finally does come, will be terrific. . . . By the way, it's ironical to see B.H. Lund taking part in a campaign accusing T.V. Soong of corruption. . . ."

copy to [unclear]

Sincerely yours

J. A. [unclear]

George [unclear]

ORIGINAL RETURNED FROM PRESSWORK

*file
under Gen. Bradley*

July 16, 1946

Dear General Bradley:

I received a letter from a friend and I am quoting part of it below. Will you please tell me if this is true?

"It is unfortunate that no college or student seems to know just what the G.I. bill is or how the V.A. intends to operate the program. Because of this lack of information and pretty consistent blundering and mixing up of records, a large number of veterans has had to undergo real hardship. Here in Mexico City, because of the slowness of payments, the American colony has had to take up a collection of money to lend to students until their checks come through.

"I think the worst thing is that the various V.A. branches in the states have different interpretations of the Bill. For instance, some say that a student cannot work without having deductions made in his benefits. The Washington office says a student can work a maximum of 35 hours a week without losing any benefits. Some say checks are supposed to be mailed monthly; others say it always takes about six months for a payment to be made. And these are only

- 2 - (cont.)

Mild samples of the deplorable mixup in the G.I. bill administration. I hope that as a representative of an organized group I can do something about straightening it out in Washington. But perhaps I'm rather too optimistic. I'll make the effort, at any rate."

Very sincerely yours,

letter from:

Mr. George Wells
Mexico City College
San Luis Potosi 131
Mexico D.F.

*copy of
Bradley's
letter
to Her
7-1-46*

John

July 16, 1946

Dear George,

I was very glad to get your letter and very much interested in it. I expect to be in Hyde Park or New York City in August and September. My office telephone number is Algonquin 4-1458 and they will know where I am.

Best wishes,

Very sincerely,

Also wrote to Gen. Bradley about
marked parts in letter,
copy of letter filed under Bradley

George S. Wells
Mexico City College
San Luis Potosi 131
Mexico D.F.

July 5, 1946

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

My break with the newspaper profession now is a fait accompli, and I'm busy studying Spanish here in Mexico City. I guess that's a step in the right direction, although I might backslide if any one offers me a fairly good news job in Latin America. I'd much rather follow your advice and make a connection with some overseas industrial firm, but I guess I'll have to wait until my languages are a little more adequate.

I came here at an exceedingly interesting time. The elections are being held Sunday - a day during which all Americans are expected to stay home in order to avoid stray bullets. The outcome seems to be pre-determined -- Aleman. Since that's the party in power, he seems to have had little trouble in spreading campaign propaganda, apparently at government expense. You can't travel anywhere in Mexico without running into Aleman signs every place a sign can be tacked up or painted. Even the mountain tops have been made over into election posters. And poor Padilla, the limping opposition, hardly appears anywhere.

A lot of Mexicans I've talked to seem to have the feeling that the election is more or less an choice between evils, and they're not too greatly concerned about who wins. No matter which party is in power, the "mordida" will remain. That's a lot like the Chinese "bribe." If you're dealing with any part of the government, all your papers are bound to get mixed up and there's little chance of ever clearing any transaction. Put a little tip to the right person will clear out all the red tape in an amazingly short time. If you violate a traffic law, a policeman will promptly tell you what the fine is. The procedure is to hand it over to him, and he pockets it. If you get nasty about it and insist upon taking it to court, that means a long drawn out legal wrangle, at the end of which you probably pay much more, especially after the policeman testifies that you broke several other laws as well. Every function of government seems to be based upon the mordida system, and the amazing thing about this country is that it is so far ahead of other Latin American countries in spite of its rotten governmental structure.

The majority here seems to favor the liberal aims of Aleman's party. He'd win anyway, I think, but I'm sure the people will be better satisfied with him than with Padilla. The latter naturally represents the moneyed class (those who did not gain their wealth under the present regime), and his main backing seems to be the Sinarquista - the Mexican fascists. The fascist party and the Catholic church seem to be almost synonymous here.

over

The status of religion here is odd. The country is supposed to be pretty thoroughly Catholic, and yet the government has been almost consistently anti-clerical. I don't think it's anti-religious, but it certainly has discouraged the church from engaging in politics. In places like Morelia, I've seen churches converted into libraries and schools; and from the howls that emanate from well-steeped Catholics, one concludes that the Mexican government rarely allows the church to hinder its programs. I know one or two of the Sinarquista sympathizers here (one of them is a prominent American in D.F.), and I was interested to note that they are also Franco sympathizers.

Margarita de Robles Ortiz

The college is a good place to pick up the various viewpoints. Mr. Murray, who heads the American high school here and soon will become dean of the college, is practically a Catholic priest. And he is a Kadilla supporter, and proponent of the Sinarquista and, I gather from one long talk with him, a sympathizer of Franco. His co-worker, Mr. Cain, is a Louisiana Baptist who has opposite views from those of Murray's though somewhat colored by his Southern heritage. To counteract both of them, there are two Spanish loyalists on the teaching staff -- a Mr. Bosch (he escaped from prison and managed to walk all the way across France and get into England without a passport) -- and a Mrs. Ortiz who also has had rather embittering experiences. Mrs. Ortiz, who is about 26, has met you and is one of your rather long list of admirers. She first met you when she was a small girl and, as she relates it, she didn't waste a moment asking you what you and your husband were going to do about Franco. I'll ask her for more details about that little incident, and perhaps you'll remember it with some amusement.

I'm adding a new touch of political coloring to the school by organizing an American Veterans Committee chapter here. I was determined, when I was in the Army, that I would never join a veterans organization. Every experience I have had in the newspaper business with the American Legion and the VFW has left me with a bad taste in my mouth. But the AVC has a program so identical to my own beliefs that I've done a complete about face and become an enthusiastic supporter. I'm going to call the first organization meeting Wednesday. And after the first chapter is organized at the college, I'm hoping that we'll be able to organize those at the University of Mexico and all other veterans in Mexico. Then, as the activity expands, we may even be able to encourage the formation of a chapter among the Mexican war veterans.

I'm already a member of the AAAS, with which most of the other groups have merged. I think I'll maintain both memberships, because I'd like to see the groups merged someday. The last time I saw you in New York, we discussed that point. I've been thinking about it quite a lot since, and it seems to me that the best way to get all veterans together is to get them to join AVC in addition to their present group. If we could get a majority of veterans who've joined the Legion and VFW and AAAS to join AVC also, that would accomplish the same thing as a merger and would be face-saving all around. Then perhaps the merger could be accomplished when the AVC becomes powerful enough to be virtually a political party.

One of the reasons I'm anxious to see a chapter formed here soon is that veterans here have been left financially high and dry ever since they arrived. No one has yet received a check from the VA. However, if we are organized, I can go to the VA when I return to the states in August and talk as an AVC spokesman -- by the college and by individuals don't seem

I'm one new

could go to the VA and follow the matter through, it could all be straightened out.

It is unfortunate that no college or student seems to know just what the U.I. bill is or how the VA intends to operate the program. Because of this lack of information and pretty consistent blundering and mixing up of records, a large number of veterans has had to undergo real hardship. Here in Mexico City, because of the slowness of payments, the American colony has had to take up a collection of money to lend to students until their checks come through.

I think the worst thing is that the various VA branches in the states have different interpretations of the Bill. For instance, some say that a student cannot work without having deductions made in his benefits, the Washington office says a student can work a maximum of 35 hours a week without losing any benefits. Some say checks are supposed to be mailed monthly; others say it always takes about six months for a payment to be made. And these are only mild samples of the deplorable mixup in the U.I. bill administration. I hope that as a representative of an organized group I can do something about straightening it out in Washington, but perhaps I'm rather too optimistic. I'll make the effort, at any rate.

Unfortunately, because I've been concentrating so much on Mexico, I've rather lost touch of affairs outside, I wonder how the UNO is progressing, especially in view of the atomic bomb tests. The reactions should be interesting to watch.

From what I read about the first test in the Mexican newspapers, it seems to me that the Navy and Army both are trying hard to convince the public that large Armys and Navies still are practicable. They didn't use a bomb as deadly as the first one used in the war, but they give the impression that this test proves that atom bombs are not so deadly as feared. I'm curious to know your opinion on that score.

Incidentally, will you be in New York or Hyde Park in August and September? I'll be in and around New York and Washington during those two months while Jeannette is having the first Wells offering, and I'd like to talk to you about AVC and get your advice on the best procedures in dealing with the VA.

Sincerely yours,

George
George H. Wells

*Get in on place or
call off Jim Jim
I'm
Thank you
with me*

Wells, G.

November 14, 1946

Dear Mr. Hannegan:

I am enclosing an excerpt from a letter I received from a veteran in upstate New York.

"The Democratic party, of course, hasn't cut too wonderful a figure of late. The typical reaction in my district was that the Democrats were fighting too much among themselves and getting nothing done. I know persons who have voted Democratic for 50 years who voted against them this time. Since there is no one else to vote for but the Republicans, that's where their ballots went.

"At any rate, I must say it was a pleasure watching people voting the way they think, whether they actually know what they are doing or not. I haven't had the pleasure of seeing that happen in any other country."

Very sincerely yours,

W. D. ...

*Thank you for your letter
and for the help
of the
Verbank
New York
Nov. 7, 1946*

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

Last time I wrote you I was in Mexico City organizing a chapter of the American Veterans Committee. Since then I've been shuttling back and forth between Mexico and the States, mostly working on problems of Mexican veterans.

Now, however, I can report that things are pretty well ironed out and both students and resident veterans in Mexico are being taken care of by the VA. Through joint efforts of the embassy and ourselves, we have managed to get a VA representative sent to Mexico City and have speeded up the transmission of benefits to the several hundred students living there.

I want to thank you for your letters to the State Department and the Veterans Administration and the replies you sent to me. We certainly needed backing in our dealings with both agencies.

I won't go into great detail about what we have accomplished with the AVC chapter. However, we have started a series of weekly forums, we are giving free English classes to Mexicans (with the proviso that each Mexican so taught must teach reading and writing to an illiterate Mexican), we are serving veterans as a service organization, and we have built up a treasury of several thousand pesos from the proceeds of a Birthday Ball which we held October 15. The dance was held in El Patio, a leading night club which we leased for the occasion. Our features at the benefit affair were Mexico's top movie stars and guests of honor were Mexico's Secretary of War and Mexico's famous "201 Squadron" (which we have admitted to membership), and the American Ambassador and other diplomatic officials.

We are planning to use our funds to aid students in Mexico, to facilitate exchange of students between the U.S. and Mexico, to implement the English classes, and similar projects.

We had much trouble with the American Legion, although at the first I managed to establish the policy of not biting back. We were accused of the usual things, and on the night of our Ball, the Legion held a free beer party for veterans. However, despite planned opposition, the dance was a huge success and people flocked in numbers too great for us to handle.

Unfortunately, I now have to leave the Mexico City chapter (which is being registered in Mexico as the Comite de Veteranos de las Americas) behind me. I am waiting here in Verbank for

a sailing date to Europe.

On my last trip from Mexico, I ran into a fairly good public relations job with the military government in Vienna. In addition to its being useful professional experience, it will give me a chance to improve my German and French and to travel about Europe a bit. The Government would have preferred to send me to Korea, since all my experience is in the Far East. But I think I know enough European history to keep fairly well abreast of the strange mess of Continent politics.

I'll probably be spending a good deal of my time with friends in Switzerland, where I had tentatively been planning to go and study. As I recall from one conversation we had, that is a place you know exceptionally well.

Gilbert Harrison, AVC's vice chairman, told me that a chapter was being started in Vienna. So I won't get too far out of touch with my pet organization.

Some of us in Mexico have for some time been toying with the idea of encouraging an International Veterans Committee - to be composed of all World War II veterans of the United Nations. That has been a professed aim of the AVC, although that organization has never done anything to implement it. So during my travels about Europe, I am going to see how the idea is received.

The first step has already been taken in Mexico, where I persuaded the policy committee of the chapter to introduce a resolution to accept as honorary members all veterans of the United Nations. Thus, if it works out, we shall have French, British and Canadian members in the Comite, as well as Mexicans and Americans. If other chapters abroad will follow this lead, it may be possible eventually to form the IVC and organize veterans on an international scale to support the things for which they fought.

This project is just on the edge of the dream stage right now; but don't you think it has tremendous possibilities? In all countries, veterans are the persons who are going to lead their governments during the next half century. If they can be persuaded into an international organization in which they can hash out their differences without benefit of Churchillian kibitzing, it seems to me that half the threat of future war would disappear.

If you have heard any other ideas on this matter, I would appreciate hearing them. And if you know of any group besides the Mexico AVC with definite plans, I would like to get in touch with it. Undoubtedly the project would be as difficult to realize as the United Nations organization. But like the UN it is one that certainly ought to be accomplished.

