

Fischer, George
1946-51

[Fischer]

15 July 1946

421 Sterling Court
Madison 5, Wis

Dear Mrs Roosevelt:

last weekend I got a long personal letter from Berlin from an American military government official in the labor field. I thought that the letter gave such an interesting and many-sided account of one aspect of the "German question" that I had the non-personal parts of it mimeographed and am sending it around to some of the people I know would be interested. The main things he stresses, that continue to bother me too although I haven't found any ways to do much about it since coming home, are (1) intellectual vitamins for our German friends of the Left which they haven't had for over 12 years, and (2) the replacement of the ~~same~~ individuals of our type in US Military Government in Germany returning home by men with similar liberal outlook and knowledge of and interest in Europe and Germany. These two things are less cosmic than the diplomatic and political question, but as the letter shows are probably as important.

Will send a copy of the same letter to Joe and Trude, and also to Paul Hagen.

Was very happy to have had the opportunity to see you in May. It was hard for me to follow your activities as a public figure through the war years through the eyes of Time and Stars and Stripes alone, as I did for a few years. Talking to you filled in the gaps, and I am only sorry that not more youngsters can talk to you like that--but for that alas the 24 hour day is just too short, I guess.

My regards to Miss Thompson.

Yours,

George

PS Have been keeping my nose to the books pretty steadily--it's not easy but nothing else seems quite important with all the many stored up good intentions.

28 June
Berlin

Dear George:

I am not much on writing -- so now that I cannot postpone it any longer -- that you are doing so nicely by us people and your letters are so full of the stuff we look forward to.

To business. Thanks for your efforts on the cultural and educational front. That's the target here; that's where our friends fight with their hands tied and the question is: do they have a fighting chance. America's -- the prophet of democracy -- contribution in this respect is Nil. If it weren't for the British licensing in Telegraf and Social Democrat in Berlin, and a couple of party papers in the British zone, we'd probably already be patting ourselves on the belly in self-satisfaction -- "see, the Germans don't want any democracy and freedom." As it is they got the Stalin boys squirming and itchy. Both the Telegraf - now the most gobbled up paper in Berlin - and the Social Democrat, 50,000 three times a week -- are feeling their way. Now and then you begin to get a thoughtful article that touches the core -- like the enclosed clipping. It would be also bad that when opportunity for real publication, education and drafting the pattern for the future there would be no new thinking. So boy - vitamins for the brain! Anything and everything, but of course try to get some good stuff too. At present since most of the stuff is in English am turning it over to our "information bureau". There are a couple of people working on this, translating and typing -- for about a month already. When I get back from next trip will pay a visit and see what and how they are doing. Right now they are already of service to the two papers -- as you will note. Wherever you send four of an item -- they are apportioned one to Berlin and one to each land.

We are looking forward to your dad's coming. You may rest assured that if we can help in making contact with people he'd like to see -- it will be done with zeal. Have been getting his weekly and told the German friends they can use it. The issues of the Progressive started coming. Very valuable. A few more copies of New Leader would also help, for the Vestnik have not yet found the outlet.

Under separate cover am sending you some photos and a couple of SPD pamphlets prior to merger (for historic interest). If you want any other photos and we can provide them - please ask.

Since you left, made a number of trips to zone, got somewhat acquainted with the union people. They are good solid lot; as yet have not brought the next generation in to relieve them of the crushing work. (Several of them are collapsing -- so everytime I go down the zone take a duffle bag full of stuff and vitamins.) Their daily problems preoccupy them to use up all their energies -- so that as yet they have not started doing much about the larger issues that they'll face as soon as the grade work is done: I mean education of youth, reeducation of the adult, clarification of their status to the government, to the allies, to International labor, to world economy. Here and there a slight attempt at an educational program -- Bill can tell you more of these. But frankly it is not yet a self activated start.

As for the spade work. The Land-wide industrial unions are now forming. By the end of August this phase should be over and they'll probably follow up with Land-federations of Unions and Zonal Industrial Unions. Rough guess: by end of year the unions will be set up a zonal basis; will have about three TU publications; on the whole should have adequate quarters; and have felt their oats a little at negotiation of modest changes in their agreements. The snap enclosed is of the TU Building in Frankfurt. We are very hopeful it will be returned to them in the near future and serve as seat for many of the zonal Unions.

The party in Berlin is coming along -- but slowly. The good people spend their energy on necessary details -- and have as yet little time left for the constructive. We help a bit; but its a drop in the bucket. At least for the 'vitamins' (Packages from U.S.) we have a better way out. Louise Schroeder got the Arbeiterwohlfahrt going and so it simplifies matters. Am satisfied that the right people get assistance. In the Russian sector the difficulties are great enough that I doubt if they'll get anywhere. Personally I think they are paying too great a price and would be better off if they came out openly and said that it is impossible.

You probably know of the outcome of the elections in our zone. The SPD got the plurality in Hessen. Dr. Brill accepted an offer from Hessen to be the state secretary - as such he will have his finger in the drafting of the new constitution. His presence down there will also have a better effect generally.

Schumachers tour through our zone was very successful. The main attack he leveled at CDU, some at Commies.

Annie Gould -- whom you have not met, is doing a swell job in Stuttgart. Now am trying to see if she can be helpful to W. to get the necessary clearances to go to the States.

We could still use somebody in Bavaria. Was given a name and hope that next time am in Munich will get to see him.

In case you hear of people in Germany who would be interesting to meet be sure to send me their names and addresses.

As for myself. In a few days will see Werts and settle my own status. What is absolutely certain in my own mind is that I'll be going home -- am very tired, and I owe it to my family and myself. Whether will come back here or stay home will know rather shortly. Still have another month to go and will probably extend it for one more in any case.

You know Jeff's position on the importance of Germany is also ours. If he could come over it would give all of us once more a sense of security. But that's the rub at present -- everyone that left, also left a big void here. There is no hope for organized assistance here as long as we are so few. The best each one of us can do is to his best. I am punchy and run around in circles and on edge.

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Keenan went back. He did a good job and stirred things up - which expedited a good many things. Saposs is going back this month for a leave. If possible I'll stick it out here till he gets back. Had a scanty conversation with R. J. Thomas and Mike Ross on their way back from Moscow.

Be good and remember me to buddies when you run into them.

George