

Letter from Mildred Harnack-Fish (18. Juni 1932) – Quelle –

Extracts from a letter which Mildred wrote to her mother from Berlin:

My dearest Mother,

[...] On Tuesday I am giving my lecture on the Middle West in the Institute of Politics or University of Politics, the “Hochschule für Politik” here. Arvid has been speaking a good deal in public lately on the present crisis. [...] My next lecture in the University of Berlin will be on John Dos Passos, especially on “Manhattan Transfer”¹. [...] Did you ever get “Pelle the Conqueror”² or Sinclair’s “The Jungle”? Or „Boston“? Or „Oil“³? It is necessary to understand the social situation today, and these novels help to orientate one. After you have read one of them, we can discuss it in our letters.

¹⁰ The people with whom we live are nationalsocialists – a national-socialist in Germany is about the equivalent of a Ku Klux Klanner or a “100% American” or an American Legionist in the U. S. – i. e. he is a person whose patriotic feeling flares up without really sound reasons, who feels himself to be moral and superior merely on the basis of his nationalism, and who ¹⁵ is generally ignorant and confused about the real state of affairs and is therefore a tool in the hands of the big financial and industrial interests. And we are therefore about to move quietly. Would you please direct your next letter to “University of Berlin, Englisches Seminar, Dorotheenstrasse 6?” I shall let you know our new address as soon as possible.

²⁰ Auf Wiedersehen, dearest One! A good night kiss for you every night and much love always from
Your Mildred

Sammlung Rote Kapelle der Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand

Erläuterungen

- ¹ John Dos Passos' (1896 – 1970) novel *Manhattan Transfer* was published in 1929. It describes life in New York before, during and after the First World War. By following individual lives, the author creates a portrait of social opposites, of winners and losers.
- ² Martin Andersen Nexø's (1869 – 1954) novel cycle *Pelle the Conqueror* was published between 1906 and 1910. The autobiographical novels follow the fate of young Pelle who grew up in poverty and sought to improve his circumstances.
- ³ Upton Sinclair's (1878 – 1968) novel *The Jungle* (1906) draws attention to the living conditions of immigrant workers in Chicago and criticises the bad working conditions and the corruption within the local meat-packing industry. His novel *Boston* defends the anarchist Italian immigrants Sacco and Vancetti, who were sentenced to death for having committed two murders during an armed robbery in spite of the fact that the evidence against them was questionable. Sinclair's *Oil* (1927) is a satire caricaturing California's heterogeneous society. Its main character is the son of an oil tycoon whose sympathetic stance towards the workers antagonises his father.

Letter from Mildred Harnack-Fish (29. September 1932) – Quelle –

Extracts from a letter which Mildred wrote to her mother from Berlin:

My own dearest Mother!

I am sitting in the Gymnasium in an interval between classes. The work is easy and the students are kind and industrious. They are grown-up people who work all day and study in the evening.

- 5 There is just one thing which violates one's sense for truth: that is this school is based on the assumption that it is possible for workers and clerks to rise to better positions in society through study. This is an unwarranted assumption in Germany today. Fortunate individuals may perhaps still rise, but they are a few. If one speaks of society as a whole, it is a lie to say that
- 10 workers and clerks can rise. To a very large extent they are doomed to fall in the social scale rather than rise. There is little work to be had; they lose their positions; their unemployment insurance gives out after a time and they are thrown into a lap of charity, which means, when they have no other help, slow ruin and starvation by degrees. This is the truth with regard to
- 15 clerks and workers, and the belief in rising in the social scale is a matter of false optimism. [...]

A secure position is possible only if one takes the attitude of the leading capitalistic enterprises and serves them in some indispensable way. But most work is not indispensible to them today. There are exceptions to the rule in

- 20 what I say, but they are exceptions, not the rule.

It is obvious that we need a society based on other and juster principles and must strive to bring it about. The next question is: How? [...]

A goodnight kiss from Your M.

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Sammlung Rote Kapelle der Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand

Letter from Mildred Harnack-Fish (2. Mai 1933) – Quelle –

Extracts from a letter which Mildred wrote to her mother from Berlin:

My own dear Mother,

All day I have been sitting in the school hearing Abitur-Prüfungen – final examinations in the Gymnasium. Men and women of my age some older and some younger answer the oral questions of the teachers. They are
 5 dressed in dark suits, shoes are well shined, hair is well combed; and the under-lip is not quite steady when they sit down to face the examiners. They have worked in offices for years. They have come here hoping to win more freedom and breath in life by studying and climbing on their studies into a better place. But there is no hope for most of them if they have not had the
 10 time, energy and stimulus to become very brilliant in their tired evening studies. [...]

Yesterday there was an enormous May-Day celebration here. How beautiful it was! Thousands, thousands and thousands of people marched in order singing and playing through the majestic streets which radiate from our
 15 home. There was a wide fresh sky of sun; the trees were in small, fresh leaf. The new and the old national banners marched with the people. I thought of the preparedness parades in our country at the beginning of the war. They also mobilized millions with an exultant feeling of loving and being loved by their country. There is a great impulse in masses of people which can
 20 be roused – a very great and beautiful impulse. You know that I thought this impulse was directed rightly in the war and I think it is being directed rightly in the same way now. That is, it is being given the right motives: vs. the Jews & radicals etc. [...]

This love which sounds in marching feet when the aim of the march is
 25 sound and healthy for the future, is also a kind of necessary love, great and wonderful love – not personal but collective – love of a whole people going toward the sun. But it can be perverted. As I told you in my letter on „Winesburg“ it is being perverted in Russia today. Here as in our country in 1917 it is being used rightly, as I have said: vs. the Jews, the radicals (especially those connected with Russia), against machinery; obedience of
 30 the wife to the husband, for the winning back of the old German colonies so that capital can expand. [...] Think this over, for I want you to understand me. [...]

You know, Dearie, how I should love to see you!

Your own

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Mildred

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