

March 6, 1946

D. Beringer,
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Dear Dr Beringer and colleagues,

The French Consulate in Boston sent me your letter dated December 5, 1945 on February 21, 1946. A second letter, which you announced as a supplement, was not enclosed.

Your kind remembrance of my person after 11 years has fully brought to my consciousness the shocking experience of the year 1933/34.

One of those enchanting early spring nights, as they are experienced only in the country between the Black Forest and the Foothills of the Kaiserstuhl, made the atmosphere shake. Nature was ripe for the salvation of spring - but my soul was crushed and broken, homeless, ready for eternal slumber. The train that my family and I would take to the ship was snorting as it built steam in the Freiburg train station. Hundreds of schoolchildren surrounded my three girls, and women, including wives of my former faculty colleagues, brought my wife to the car compartment. Few men were present. They avoided seeing and greeting me for months. I was alone. "Must I leave, must I then leave the city," the schoolchildren sang. I believed the world was sinking under my feet. Everything I did, what I loved, my wonderful clinic that I was allowed to build, my friends - everything was lost. I was ashamed of myself. I could not even cry. Only the sight of my children and my brave wife suppressed the desire for a quick end. At that time, as well as later on, I was free from the feeling of bitterness and free of the wish to be compensated for the humiliation suffered. That night I realized that Christ was a Jew.

My friends from the Rockefeller Foundation, especially Dr. Robert Lambert, expected me and my family in the port of New York.

It was clear to me from the first hour that I had to forget everything that I had achieved in my fifty-year life in Europe. I crossed out my past and started all over again. Otherwise it would have been a life in memory and not a new productive life. It was hard, very hard, to prove myself as a scientist in my years. Teaching in English, setting up a new laboratory, adapting to the unfamiliar people of such diversity was so exhausting that I fell ill with my old venous thrombosis again and was down for months with a pulmonary embolism. During this time of illness, my new American friends, especially my senior at the Hospital Dr. J. H. Pratt, the old student and friend of William Osler, behaved so brotherly and helpful to my family and to me that I got a real feeling of home in the strange city. After the recovery from the serious illness, I was steadily on the rise. I felt that I was among friends.

The scientific person in the USA is evaluated only on the basis of his achievement not on his social status or familiarity with Western culture. The heritage of Western Civilization belongs to the museum. It is admired, but not counted for in the new life, which everyone has to justify and acquire with work "MADE IN USA." Anyone who does not do this, or who is too conceited to prove himself anew, will end up in the museum, or, if he has no "historical value," in the trash can. He will not starve to death, for in this land of abundance there is plenty of food

in the trash too. Fortunately, new clinical and physiochemical work has enabled me to achieve a place among the various award-winning research groups in Boston. Boston, with its numerous, scientifically operating hospitals today is really an Athens of medical science. In order to be valid as a refugee in these working groups, it is not enough to write good works; one has to understand how to keep one's person in the background and to give priority to the natives. For that reason, I never aspired to leadership or title in the USA, but was always happy to be consulted (but only when asked) to share my experience and advice. An ideal position for the less ambitious, because I was able to lead many things in the right direction. This is how the 'Bingham Associates Fund' program was built. An organization that spans the New England states of Massachusetts, Maine and New Hampshire, and has the mission of applying the latest medical research achievements to the hospices of small rural districts. Our diagnostic hospital is the center of more than a hundred smaller hospitals, which are provided by us with excellent radiologists, pathologists and laboratory staff. Only the most difficult cases come to the head office for diagnosis, and then return to the diaspora with diagnosis and instructions after a short time. In this way I see an unheard of, excellently worked out clinical material. It has been and still is a lot for me to learn and to revise old deadlocked views. I have to read a lot of new literature to keep pace with the vibrant, ambitious youth and to answer questions. There is no authority in this relatively new country of medical science, only positive knowledge counts. Very often, however, the written word is more valid than experience. Unfortunately, the "worship of numbers" often triumphs over natural intuition, seeing with trained eyes and the instinctive knowledge of long experience. But, all in all, it is wonderful to work in this atmosphere of medical evolution.

The way of teaching is different from teaching at German medical schools. It's more of a school with lessons in small classes than academic lecturing in front of a large auditorium. There isn't time here to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of both education systems. In our hospital, we teach the students at Tuft's University Medical School. They are nice, interested young people from all walks of life. Some have to earn tuition as elevator operators, clerks or workers in a technical shop to work through college. This applies to all medical schools in this country. It involves a great idealism and a gritty nature to persevere as a student with little means, and there are relatively many of them. I think my students are quite happy with me. As far as I know, they consider me to be an original whose brashness one must first get used to.

In my laboratory, I have a good number of researchers paid for by private funds. We are mainly concerned with lipid chemistry and enzymatic cleavage of phospholipids in the body. A book about lipidoses, a group of peculiar diseases of cell metabolism, was published by me in 1940 in Oxford University Press. This book and a number of reprints I have taken the liberty of sending as a part of this letter and as a testimony of my activity.

Since 1940, we, my family and I, have been grateful citizens of the USA. They believed I was a consultant internist with the victorious American Army in the field. At the outbreak of the war, I was no longer of the age for service. I did not push for military service. It has spared me from seeing with my own eyes the fate and shame of a people led by the devil.

I have described to you the departure from the ancient homeland, the evolution and current situation of my person and my work in the USA; so extensively in order to give you my answer to your kind invitation and to help you understand. I cannot return, the wound is too

deep, it will never heal. The disappointment of my trust in the good in German people, in the honesty of my friends was too great. The years that I can still work productively belong to the country that took me in during my deepest anguish and supported me.

One might object that I had the duty to return. Should I, for example, indulge in the illusion that I had the task of educating a German medical youth, who would treat me with suspicion in their deepest souls, with the poison that a devil has left as a legacy. My former German students are the biggest disappointment of my life. I believed that my students in Germany (and there were thousands of them) had instilled the love of man as a basis for the medical profession.

What's become of you? Voluntary or involuntary executioners! Here the core of moral resistance to Hitlerism should have developed. Instead, the young students and their teachers followed the devil's whistle. What is the point of singing about academic freedom "Vivat academia - pereant osiores; pereat diabolus" ["Long live the academy - may haters perish; may the devil perish"] if the song is only performed as a showpiece at academic ceremonies? But, in reality everyone, with few exceptions, followed this Great Satan in hysterical ecstasy just because he appeared as a patriotic popular speaker in uniform. "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" ["It is sweet and proper to die for one's country"] was the basis of German patriotic education. This sentence was paraphrased by the Hitler devil and his henchmen in such a way that it was not only the duty of every German to die for Germany, but that it was equally the duty of every "national comrade" to be adversaries of their own and foreign nationals, to let die, to torture, to murder men, women and children in villages, cities and concentration camps, when the state, the state of the devil, commands it. These gruesome, unchristian ideas can only disappear from the souls of youth if the academic teachers, who were silent witnesses of this disgrace and shame, step forward before the youth and revive in word and deed academic ethics and Christian morality. The youth must be taught that respect for human dignity, reverence for the divine in man, is above the commandment of the state.

Should I really return to join the ranks of Reforming and Reformed academic teachers? In such a case, the students would rightfully reject me, as a man who had spent most of the time of the devil's domination and murder in the safe haven across the ocean. You must therefore choose a man as my successor, who has witnessed and tasted the gruesome events, but who has remained pure in his academic soul and is worthy of replanting in the hearts of a contaminated and suspicious youth the seed of academic moral purity.

Such a man is in your own faculty! Professor K. Ziegler, whose steadfast attitude and academic integrity are a tribute to the Freiburg Medical Faculty, would be a jewel in the crown of the Department of Internal Medicine. In case Professor K. Ziegler would not be inclined to accept the office, I would ask the faculty for the chair of internal medicine to choose a man who was educated by my beloved teacher, mentor and friend Friedrich von Mueller. Even if this man could not display the great scientific qualities of his incomparable teaching abilities, he would bring with him, as the genome of Mueller's school, an upright, fearless character and academic ethics.

German doctoring cannot be saved from decay by scientific work, but by powerful personalities and fearless confessors of the mistakes made. Men like Professor Paul Martini in Bonn, Professor Kress von Kressenstein, director of the Lazarus Hospital in Berlin, Professor Duisberg, formerly in Frankfurt, Professor Alexander Pierach, former director of the hospital in

Memel [*NOTE: Memel was taken over by the Russians and placed in Poland*], now in Bad Nauheim are Mueller-students and worthy of consideration by the Freiburg Medical Faculty for the reoccupation of the Chair of Internal Medicine.

The last academic act that I was allowed to perform in my beloved Freiburg clinic was the acceptance of the bust of [my immediate predecessor, the recently deceased and much] revered Dean of Medicine and Founder of the Medical School, Christian Gerhard Baeumler. My academic speech was monitored by stormtroopers and Gestapo people. I end this letter with the final words of this speech (Dtsch.Med.Wochenschr. 1934, 1176). " No mortal is as close to immortality as the academic teacher. He can sprinkle seed grains which in every generation produce new blooms and in hundreds of years renew the core of his being. May Christian Baeumler's dutiful, wise and mild spirit of academic moral purity blossom out in us youngsters and as the inheritance of the German academic teacher be shared with our children and grandchildren."

Take again my thanks for the remembrance of my person. May the medical faculty of Freiburg experience an honorable new ascent, worthy of its great tradition. I spent the most beautiful and fruitful years of my life in this unique city, in the wonderful landscape between the Black Forest and the Rhine. Will I ever again see this wonderful spot of earth that I will always love?

Best Regards

S.J Thannhauser.

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