

1941 – Behind the Iron Curtain

U.S. & Foreign Securities Corporation, an investment trust on whose board of directors I served, decided to take advantage of this tax provision and write off its investment in a subsidiary set up for the purpose of doing business in Europe. Decision preemptorily to liquidate this subsidiary and take a loss was communicated to the European management and we received a protest: Do not wipe it out; let the German management and their French colleagues buy the subsidiary. We suggested a meeting at neutral Lisbon for negotiations but it developed the Germans could not get there. Then a cable: A meeting could be held in Vichy if U.S. & Foreign Securities would send a representative (1) familiar with the business from its inception; (2) connected with an organization which could be identified by the German and Vichy authorities; (3) authorized to negotiate and close the deal without communication back to New York; (4) have a certificate proving he was "totally Nordic." My law firm had had offices in Berlin and in Paris, and my affiliation would be known to the German and Vichy authorities. At our Board meeting someone suggested laughingly that Mr. Parlin had been described, and in a spirit of good fun they sent a cable suggesting my name. Just good fun, because the "Neutrality Law" would anyhow prohibit such a trip. Not many days later a cable came: Everyone delighted; German and Vichy authorities agree; Spanish and Vichy French visas already granted; assume the company can clear British embargo of the sea and Portuguese visa; have Parlin leave earliest possible for meeting at Hotel du Parc, Vichy. This had ceased to be funny because we may have already run afoul of the new communication prohibitions. I made an appointment by phone, took the sleeper for Washington that night, and at the opening of business saw Sumner Wells, Under-Secretary of State. I explained what had happened, expressed the hope that the State Department would not feel that we had violated either the letter or the spirit of the law, and gave him the file. I hoped that he would think the prank of my fellow directors amusing but instead, he read everything very carefully and looked very solemn. "Do you want to go?" "Certainly not; I have a wife and three children of whom I am fond." "Would you go if your Government asked you to go?" "Certainly." He asked me to return to

his office at 4 P.M. and when I arrived, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Admiral Leahy (recently retired and designated a Vichy Ambassador), and a representative of the Department of Justice, were there. Secretary Hull said the matter had been discussed at highest level and the President of the United States was asking me to go. How and to what extent the French and German banking interests were collaborating and how their financial structures were functioning it was important to know, and our Government could get no reliable information. I would have opportunity to see a group of important German and French financial people in operation; the Government could give me no diplomatic immunity because this would impair my mission; I would have to go on my own as just an ordinary business man and my assignment would be to thrash around and find out as much as I could about the German-French banking and financial affairs; the Department of Justice would enter in its records that the trip was being made at Government request and this would guarantee that no criminal charges would be made against me for violations of the Neutrality Act; Secretary Hull would give me a letter addressed to our Consulate Officers in case I needed their help (photostat attached); good luck! Miriam agreed with my decision to go.

I was able to get passage on a freighter bound for Lisbon and Miriam drove me to the pier. For Camilla and Blackie it appeared to be pretty much just another trip, but I always felt that Charlie sensed the danger because he climbed a tree and waved to me from there even though Miriam called to him to come down and say "good-bye." On the crossing everyone was tense and inclined to be suspicious of everyone else, but I did make friends with two Dutchmen of the resistance movement—Adrian Van Pelt, who later became a Deputy Secretary in the United Nations; and Nicholas Slotemaker, who, after the war, was Dutch representative to the Republic of South Africa. Both men were guests later at our home in Englewood, and it was through the latter that we met the Dutch family de Vries, who have spent so many happy vacation days with our family at Silver Bay. The boat pulled into the Lisbon harbor late afternoon on December 24, 1940, and I was feeling very lonesome and very sorry for myself. I had never been in Lisbon; knew nobody there; I had no knowledge of Portuguese; I did not know how I was to get from Lisbon to Vichy because in

wartime there were no air or rail schedules. As the boat was inching in toward the pier, who did I see but the manager of the Belgium Gevaert photographic company, a client. I knew the man only slightly but what a warm welcome I received! Poor fellow—he had gone from Belgium to Lisbon on business; Hitler had invaded his country and he could not get back to, or even communicate with, his family. Hearing that a boat was due from New York he had come to the pier out of sheer boredom thinking he might see a familiar face. I must accompany him to the Christmas Eve dinner at the Belgium Embassy! It was a strange evening, all in French, of course. There was champagne and toasts but more tears than laughter from these Belgium refugees stranded in Lisbon. For a Christmas Eve it was a gruesome experience.

Eventually, I got a rickety Spanish plane to Madrid; then in time a train that took me to a mountain-top pass on the Pyrenees at the Spanish-French border. That night I slept in an unheated room in the frontier building and came as near to freezing to death as I hope I ever do. I had taken only a light topcoat because I thought Portugal, Spain and Southern France, where I remembered seeing palm trees, would be reasonably warm. But the palm trees I had seen earlier were at Nice, not Vichy; and I hadn't counted on that mountain-top in the deep snow. I went to bed with literally everything I had on—all my underwear and two suits and my topcoat, and even then I was too cold to sleep. The next day an engine and a freight car came from, and returned to, the French side of the border, and with this I crossed into France, and eventually by train I got to Vichy. There were no taxis and I walked from the railroad station to Hotel du Parc, which turned out to be Petain's headquarters, with my suitcase. In the lobby there was great confusion, and before I could make known my mission I was hustled into a van under arrest and spent the night in jail. The next day I talked my way out and went to the American Embassy, and they offered me a bed. They checked and advised me that my group of German and French bankers, alarmed by the Petain-Laval feud (which had caused the arrest of everyone in the hotel lobby) had scurried back through the demarkation line to Paris in the German occupied part of France. I suggested telephoning to Paris and they laughed at me: There was no communication with Paris; for several months they had tried without success to get a courier, or even a telephone call, through to the U.S.A.

Consulate which they thought still existed in Paris; no American was allowed to cross, or communicate over, the demarkation line. They advised me to stay a few days in Vichy and rest, attend the festive New Year's Eve dinner which they were planning, and then start my trek home.

My Christmas Eve had been weird but my New Year's Eve was to be weirder. As preparations were under way for the U.S.A. Consulate New Year's Eve dinner, I was told an important fellow at the German Embassy was on the telephone and wished to speak to me. His message was that arrangements had been made for me to take the 10:00 P.M. night train for Paris; it was not necessary for me to have a pass for crossing the demarkation line as arrangements had been made by telephone. In our Consulate an argument ensued. Some of the staff argued I should not go—to attempt to cross the demarkation line without a pass was a very serious offense; I would no doubt be arrested and probably tortured during interrogation. Leader of the other side of the argument was young Douglas MacArthur, nephew of the soon-to-be famous General, and himself later to rise in the diplomatic service to Ambassador to Japan. He argued: The German who had called was a high-ranking responsible German official and therefore the invitation to cross the line was bona fide; our Government was eager for information and, so far as known to the Vichy Consulate, I was the only American to get such an invitation; it was my *duty* to go. These arguments eventually prevailing, I went to the railroad station; with some difficulty bought a ticket; with some difficulty talked my way past the gate onto the train platform (because I had only a ticket but no pass); I was in a second-class Wagon-Lits compartment with a German, in civilian clothes, in the lower berth and me in the upper. The French porter and conductor didn't want to let me go to bed; unimpressed with my story about arrangements by telephone they said without a pass there would be trouble at the demarkation line and I would be arrested and the train would be delayed. The German participated in the debate, taking the position that I would probably be arrested but that if I wanted to go to bed I should be allowed to do so. I told him I wanted to go to bed so he ordered the two Frenchmen out of our compartment; I got into my pajamas and into the top berth; we turned out the lights and soon the train started north. Needless to say, I couldn't sleep. About

midnight the train stopped at the demarkation frontier and a German official opened our compartment door with his passkey, snapped on the light and demanded our credentials. The German's in the lower berth seemed to be in order, and then I produced my passport but my explanation of the telephone arrangements failed to impress him and he said so, and he went away. A little later a squad of German soldiers came; it was the first time outside newsreels and newspictures that I had seen the grey-green uniforms, the steel helmets, and the bayonets of the German troops and they gave me an inferiority complex, as I sat in my pajamas, but I entered into a spirited argument: "I have no pass and I am not supposed to have a pass. If I had a pass it would be wrong because I am different. I am arranged by telephone; it would be wrong for me to have a pass!" Unconvinced, but apparently a bit shaken, the soldiers departed. After a time a high officer came, apparently the Commandant at the frontier. I saw in his hand a typewritten sheet, at the top of which I could see my name in cap letters. He asked me to repeat my story, which I did, and he said, "Every word you say is absolutely correct." A little after he left, the squad of soldiers returned and their leader, with a click of his boots, said, "Every word you said was correct. Heil Hitler!" Now I wasn't going to respond to the Heil Hitler and the outstretched arm-salute, but I hadn't figured on this. For some reason I folded my arms across my stomach and made a sort of a Japanese bow. This seemed to satisfy, and this is the way throughout my trip that I responded to the "Heil Hitler" salutation. In time, the conductor came through, snapped off our compartment light, closed the door, and the train started. I was on the other side of the Iron Curtain! The man in the lower berth who had been listening throughout said, "Well, I'll be damned!" And I went to sleep.

The next morning, at the Paris station, I was met by my Dillon, Read friend, Seymour Weller. His mother was an American (a sister of Mrs. Clarence Dillon) and his father was French. He had been educated in the U.S.A. but then in World War I had enlisted and fought with the French battalion known as "The Blue Devils," and after the war had stayed on in France as a French citizen. He said that the only place a foreigner could stay in Paris was the Hotel Bristol; Paris was having one of the worst cold spells in history; he had gone there to reserve me a room but there was no heat, most of the plumbing was frozen, and

living conditions were impossible; practically all the guests were Jewish people scared to death and trying to find an escape from Hitler territory. His wife, an American, had returned to America at the outset of the war and he had been able to work out with the German Occupation Authorities permission for me to stay with him in his apartment which had heat. We travelled from the station with my suitcase by Metro and he advised me not to talk as my English—or if I tried French my English accent—might cause trouble. In the Metro, more than half the passengers were German soldiers.

New Year's Day dinner I had at Prunier's Restaurant with my German friend who had arranged my coming, Dr. Alexander Kreuter. I say my friend because I had worked with him in the period after World War I when my law firm had an office in Berlin. When Hitler came into power, Americans could no longer do business and we had closed the office but I had kept in contact. In 1937 Dillon, Read had received a cable, purportedly from Kreuter because verified by his private code number, asking the status of his secret accounts with Dillon, Read. One of the Dillon, Read officers was preparing a lengthy cable giving all details of Kreuter's accounts when Mr. Dillon discovered what was in process, ordered work to stop and himself sent a cable: "Don't know what you are talking about. You do not have and never have had any secret account with us." Mr. Dillon's hunch was correct. Dr. Kreuter, who had not joined the Nazi party, was in a Nazi prison on suspicion that he had violated the Nazi foreign exchange regulations. The Gestapo had raided his office, found the private code for Dillon, Read and sent the cable about "secret accounts." A number of the charges involved his dealing with Dillon, Read and their related companies. Later, I had helped prepare and send to the German authorities a series of affidavits, supported by photostats of the Dillon, Read books. As it developed, his dealings with the U.S.A. had been absolutely correct but he had cheated in sending money to a lady friend in Holland, for which he paid a big fine. After his release, I had gone to Berlin in late 1937 and he was very grateful. Now he again thanked me, gave me advice on how to conduct myself in Nazi territory, and promised to help protect me.

Then followed our negotiations, but in Paris they had no books. To bring books of account from Berlin to Paris would be hazardous because

the ever-present inspectors and snoopers would surely think the columns of figures contained codes. I kept insisting I could not negotiate a deal without looking at the figures and in the end Dr. Kreuter and his colleagues left for Berlin to see what they could work out, and I was to have a period in Paris under the German occupation. It was strange. Every day at exactly noon, the German Army, led by a magnificent goose-stepping band, would march from the Etoile down Champs Elysees.

Food was strictly rationed and we had stamps which we had to give in the stores or restaurants. Dillon, Read offices were closed but the little office of the French Wine Company—Chateau Haut Brion—had not been molested by the Germans and we made this our headquarters. Almost every day a scurvy-looking little Frenchman would come to the office with a bag containing canned foods, soups, meats, etc., which he would offer to sell at black-market prices, and Weller would purchase on the ground that if the war dragged on his French money would be no good anyhow and the canned stuff he could hide away for a rainy day. Noticing that the cans were English origin I asked Weller to find out the source. The man confided in Weller that he was agent for a house of prostitution; that these materials had been captured from the British Army by the Germans at Dunkirk; from the German commissary German soldiers would steal the cans and use them as payment for access to the girls; then his job was to convert this bartered merchandise into currency.

Madame Hiret, Mr. Fiske's secretary, had up to that time kept the Fiske apartment from the German soldiers, and, knowing of Mr. Fiske's death, she begged me to take some of his most valuable things back to the family in the U.S.A. This, of course, I could not do, but I did accept a complete outlay of winter clothes, which I badly needed. Mr. Fiske was an elegant dresser and I abandoned my light-weight things in favor of his beautiful wool underwear and winter overcoat. Madame Hiret tried to push more and more onto me, saying she knew her boss would much prefer that I, rather than drunken German soldiers, should have those beautiful clothes. Later, when I arrived in New York clad head-to-foot in Mr. Fiske's clothes the family howled—because Mr. Fiske's style was very dapper and quite a bit smaller in height and size than me.

Word came that permission had been given for me to go to Berlin, which turned out to be a hazardous 48 hours by train. Here I was to have about three weeks in an almost regal suite at the Hotel Adlon. The Berliners were riding high; they had foodstuffs brought in from Holland and wines and liqueurs from France. The people knew that Hitler was master of Europe but they didn't yet know that the failure of the September blitz on London had so decimated the German air force that Germany was to become a sitting-duck for the allied bombers which were later to come. The father of Christof Maier-Rothe, who has been our guest a number of times at Silver Bay, was leader of a Luftwaffe squadron and was shot down over London the night of September 4-5, 1940.

All old clients of my firm's Berlin office were anxious to see me. I made my work headquarters at Dr. Kreuter's Deutsche Kreditsicherung where his efficient secretary, Frau Melhose, helped with my telephone calls and appointments. I visited the head of Siemans Halskie at his office and I spent several dinners which lasted long past midnight with August Diehn, autocratic head of German Potash Syndicate. Largely because I was able to remember so much detail from these sessions, I was eventually able after the war to salvage for his son Ludwig the substantial fortune which the father had been able to sneak out of Germany and sequester away in the U.S.A. and which, under the advice of Howard Sanborn, escalated into a substantial fortune. I dined on several occasions with Dr. Kreuter and his partner, Herr Boeszoermy, both of whom had beautiful homes, and was able to visit the homes of some of the Jewish relatives of Fritz Kempner and his wife. I saw Dr. Friedrich Rothe, distinguished leader of the Berlin Bar, who was now prohibited from practicing because one of his grandmothers "had not been baptized," and his son, Dr. Gerhart Rothe, who was also disbarred under the "Jewish" decrees was working for Deutsche-Kreditsicherung. They told me of the daughter, Renate, who had lost her husband in the war and had gone to Munich with her baby, Christof, because it was considered safer from bombing than Berlin.

I knew I could not keep notes. Any moment on the streets of Berlin I could be taken into custody and searched and, when I travelled by train, at the crossing of every military zone, inspectors came aboard and searched everything. The way I remembered was each night, before

retiring, I wrote out all the things I was trying to retain in my memory and then tore up the paper and flushed it down the toilet.

My German was poor, but I managed to get around. One Sunday I was invited to the home of a lawyer on the outskirts of Berlin. I would have to go by bus and this would involve the getting of a transfer and changing busses at the given point. I wrote out, to make sure it was grammatically correct, the request to the bus conductor for the proper transfer and request that he advise me when we came to the proper transfer point; then I recited the sentences so that I could rattle them off like a native. But on the bus, when I tried it, the conductor looked shocked and said, "Take it easy, Buddy, I'm from Brooklyn myself." Then he started to ask me when I had come, why I was in Germany, etc. How clever, I thought, to have planted a Gestapo there! But I evaded all answers and put questions to him, to which he gladly responded. For sixteen years he had been a waiter in a Brooklyn restaurant; he had never taken U.S.A. citizenship; he had come back to visit relatives in Germany and got stuck in the war; he was too old for the Army so they assigned him to bus duty. I have often wondered whether the poor fellow ever got back to his family in Brooklyn.

The German intelligence service was effective. The second day I discovered that my suite at the Adlon was wired and everything recorded, but I had been warned and never allowed anyone into my rooms, although nearly every time I went to retire a flashy looking blonde would take my arm and offer to accompany me. So the only thing on the recordings were my breakfast orders and German opera tunes which I whistled each morning in my shower.

Word came that Field Marshall Göring knew I was in Berlin; he knew of the death of his old friend from World War I, Anthony Fokker and that I was settling Fokker's estate in the U.S.A.; would I like to see him? I sent back word that I was on a strictly business trip and that it might complicate things if I met with important persons in government. Then came a message: Would I be willing to go to Bergen-am-See in Holland to see the old mother of Anthony Fokker and tell her of her son's death in the U.S.A. and about his Will and Estate? Göring felt a warm loyalty to his old friend Tony Fokker.

To travel to Holland (which proved to be two days by train) I had to go to the headquarters of the Gestapo for clearance. As I sat opposite the chief being questioned by him, little slips were constantly being placed in front of him and he would glance at them. About a dozen had been so placed when he said, "It begins to look favorable." And after about a dozen more he said, "Good—a pass will be issued." I never knew what those reports were; surely, one was the recording of my Adlon suite; others were probably negative reports that I hadn't been caught snooping around military installations.

Arriving in Amsterdam, I was hustled off to The Hague and placed in the Hotel des Indies with instruction that I must stay in my room from sundown to sunup; subject to this I could travel to Amsterdam and to Bergen-am-See. In Amsterdam I was able to see many old friends, such as my friend Jap Kraayenhof, head of the leading accounting firm and financial advisor to the royal family (whose children were to become friends of Camilla and her family); my lawyer friend Jan Asser; and the family of Jojo de Leuio (who was then in the U.S.A. to marry my partner Wyn Dulles and who after Wyn's death, was to marry another partner, Jim Wise). I got to Bergen-am-See and spent the day with the old mother and the sister of Tony Fokker in their quaint cottage by the sea. The old Dutch lady was extremely appreciative but very philosophical. Tony had had education until only about age 14; he was a genius and understood machinery and motion; for example, he had in World War I for the German air force synchronized a machine gun-fire and a spinning propeller so that in those crude World War I single-motor planes the Germans could go forward, shooting through the spinning propeller, while the Allied planes had to turn at right angles and shoot over the side of the plane; this invention had given clear superiority in fighting to the German forces. And he had been able to take motors made by others and mount them in plane bodies but we had come to a day of high scientific research and high science and her boy Tony was doomed to frustration and agonizing disappointment. He had made his inventions and spectacular contributions; perhaps it was wise that the Lord had called him.

Back in Berlin, members of the German Bar had a luncheon in my honor. As we walked into the dining room an old friend sidled up to

me and said, "Von Trott is a fanatic; keep your gloves on." Adam von Trott came from the high German aristocracy; had studied law in Oxford, after getting his German degree; had prospects of a brilliant career as a Berlin lawyer in international law but when the war broke had gone to the Foreign Department to work under Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. During the luncheon von Trott said to me, "What are you going to tell them about the bombing of Berlin when you get home?" At this point Berlin buildings had been scratched but I had not seen the big-scale destruction which our press had reported. I said, "Nobody knows I am here. I am not going to admit that I was in Berlin." "Why not?" "Because, as you know, my press has reported big destruction—your railroad stations and buildings—and if I report things as I have seen them my best friends will look me in the eye and call me a liar." They laughed but later that afternoon von Trott met me in the lobby of my hotel. "What you said at lunch worried me—we want to back you up." "Well, let me have some photos." "That's no good. I have looked up and found you were last in Berlin in 1937 and your friends will say they were taken then. I have arranged tomorrow for you to take some cinema." I remonstrated; I knew it was a capital offense for a foreigner to use a camera, but he said all permits would be in order. Next morning a military jeep called for me and there was a photographer and a representative of the Foreign Department with a list, on the stationery of Goebbels' Department, listing the Berlin buildings which they claimed reports of British Broadcasting, as monitored in Germany, had announced as totally bombed. They let me take a few shots but mostly they had me walk up and down in front of these buildings (which were, of course, entirely intact) while the photographer shot pictures. Next day I had to go to the War Ministry to secure censorship of the film and a terrible row ensued between representatives of the War and Foreign Department Ministries. At one time I was sure the film was a goner—and perhaps me, too. But they compromised, some shots were eliminated and censorship granted for the balance. That evening as I was packing to leave Berlin, a messenger came to my apartment and delivered a tin containing the 400' of 16 mm film and a letter on the stationery of the Foreign Ministry asserting that the film had been taken with permission and had received proper censorship. But I was much disturbed when the messenger later returned and asked for the letter back, because without that letter the

film could put me in jeopardy at the many Nazi checkpoints which I would have to cross. I could not flush it down the toilet and if I left it under the mattress of my bed it would surely be found before I got to the other side of the Iron Curtain. I was still deep in this dilemma when the messenger returned with the letter which now had typed at the base a directive to the Commandant at the last Nazi check-point. It commanded him to certify over his signature and mine that I had crossed the border with the film in my possession and the letter, with the two signatures, was to be returned to the Foreign Ministry. Relieved, but still wondering how I would make out, I started my trek back—I was to return to Paris, then south to Spain, across Portugal to Lisbon, where I eventually got a Pan American flying clipper ship to New York.*

The trip from Berlin back to Paris was a long, tedious one, several times interrupted by British warplanes overhead. The train arrived at Paris after midnight and I found my friend Weller waiting for me. He said we were in trouble: There had been some unfortunate incidents in the City and a tight midnight curfew had been imposed by the Germans. It would not be possible to use the Metro as it stopped at the curfew hour; it would not be possible to stay in the station because this was the last train in for the night and the station would be cleared and closed; after the curfew hour it would not be safe for a Frenchman—to say nothing of an American—to be out on the street and it was a number of miles to the apartment and it was snowing heavily. But directly across the road from the station was one of Paris' fanciest houses of prostitution and he had secured for us for the night a room where we could stay until daybreak. He said we would stay in a room together and he had arranged for a French gendarme to escort us past

* Adam von Trott was arrested in the June, 1944 bomb plot on Hitler's life. Our army subsequently captured the films made by the Germans of the trials and, in Washington, I was shown the recording of von Trott. There was no trial. Young von Trott stood up and confessed. He said he had helped in the attempt on Hitler's life because of love of his Fatherland, for which he would now gladly give his life. All of us viewing the film were reminded of our Nathan Hale. Then he was taken out into a courtyard and shot—all meticulously recorded on sound film.

the German guards and across the street. But he offered me some advice: If the proprietor invited me to see some of the other facilities of the place, decline—because he felt these houses, formerly run and regulated by the Paris authorities, were now under German control and he had heard they took delight in supplying non-Germans with diseased girls. The advice proved unnecessary as we were merely ushered to a room and nobody bothered us. The room we had was quite large with air-conditioning but no windows. There was a very big king-size bed. All the walls and ceiling were glass mirrors, except for one corner which was curtained off and contained a wash-basin, toilet and bidet. The door had three massive bolt-locks, which I imagined were psychological—to give the patron a sense of insured privacy. Eventually, there was a rap on the door and a voice telling us that it was daybreak, the curfew was off and the Metro running.

As I traveled through Nazi-held territory, the trains stopped frequently and the military came aboard, inspected credentials and luggage, and growled about the film but stamped my passport, saying the problem was for the inspectors at the final check-point, at which I eventually arrived. I had the film on top so when they opened the lid of my suitcase it was right there, and immediately there was excitement; and I produced from my pocket the letter. Soon the Nazi Commandant of the border post was in the act. The letter put him on the spot; either way, he could lose his post and perhaps his head. A young fellow, who seemed to me more British than German, was assigned to interrogate me.

He led me away from my suitcase where the inspectors were meticulously removing and checking everything, and I noticed that he deliberately placed me facing away from the suitcase. Suspecting that he was trying to detect any nervousness on my part, I never glanced back to what was happening to my belongings. He asked me to tell, in detail, how I happened to take and now possess this film, which I did, looking him straight in the eye. He said he believed me and would give me the benefit of the doubt. Then he convinced the Commandant who, with me, signed the letter, and I reboarded the train with my suitcase containing the film—but now without the benefit of the letter. Across the frontier, the Spaniards tried to take my film but after a big row I got it back; then across into Lisbon and the Portuguese tried to

confiscate it, but after another row I succeeded in holding onto it. In Lisbon I had to wait four days for a Pan Am Clipper, or flying boat, which was to make the run to New York. On arrival I had reported to the U.S. Consulate and that evening the Consul gave a cocktail party at a hotel in my honor. From that time on I was showered with presents and requests for interviews—desperate people who had fled Hitler territory and were now in Lisbon trying to get visas and passage to the U.S.A. The fact that the U.S. Consul had given a cocktail party in my honor indicated that I had the pull required. One Belgian refugee offered me \$100,000 cash if I would get him a visa.

Once aboard the Clipper I found an old friend, Harry Hopkins, a Confidant of President Roosevelt, who lived at the White House. It was a crazy crossing. The weather being bad, we went south down the west coast of Africa, but because of an ailing motor put down at Balomo, Portuguese Guinea, an almost landlocked harbor with an entrance so shallow that the only boat which regularly entered was a special shallow-draft ship which came in occasionally to take on a cargo of peanuts. Our plane anchored and a small boat came out to take the crew and the handful of passengers ashore, but we couldn't land because the bank was a solid wall of natives, all practically naked. A police detail of four blacks, whose uniform consisted of a red fez and a pair of shorts, came to our rescue. They took off their leather belts and, lashing at the naked legs, cleared a path for us from the wateredge to the Portuguese Governor's House, where we were housed. The Governor explained to us that once before a plane had landed in the harbor for repairs but had made them and taken off so promptly that only a few natives had seen the marvel. To appease the wide disappointment, the Governor had promised that, if he ever had word of another plane coming in he would give notice; this he had done when our ship had radioed that it was having motor trouble and would land, and the natives had communicated way back into the hinterland with their series of drums and all the natives had hurried down to the little harbor village to see the sight. We were stuck there 48 hours in the sweltering heat, and each of the two evenings we sat on the veranda of the Governor's House watching entertainment put on for us by the natives—dances, wrestling, juggling and acrobatic feats. This went on all night but about midnight I would go to bed. On one of the days the Governor proposed

to take a group of us in a truck into the backlands to see a real native village. At this point the radio operator from the crew (nice young fellow who was to be married to a girl from Ohio on his return) confided to me that he had a camera and one film hidden in a panel of our plane—should we try to take it with us? I conferred with Mr. Hopkins; to be carrying a secret camera in wartime was a very serious crime; Hopkins would agree to using the camera provided I would personally take and develop the film. Aboard with us were two tough West Point Colonels of the Air Force (who I discovered later had been over getting combat experience flying with the RAF). They were pleased to have some pictures but felt the young radio operator should get some disciplining for breach of wartime rules about a camera. They said, "We'll cook his goose." And at the mud-hut village they arranged a "wedding" scene, making the embarrassed young fellow stand close beside the most naked and pregnant village girl they could find, then herded a whole group of "family and relatives" around and the colonels stood, one on each side with gun in hand, to make sure the fiance would recognize the picture as a "shot-gun" wedding. Mr. Hopkins, falling in with the plan, stood in front posing as a minister, with an open black note book which was the closest he could come to a bible. I sent Mr. Hopkins a set of the pictures and he later wrote to tell me that President Roosevelt thought them hilariously funny.

We were to be six days and six nights from Lisbon to New York. The pilot took us down the coast of Africa, then across the south Atlantic and up the east coast of South America. The schedule called for a stop at Bermuda, where the British control had my credentials, but because of weather we put down at Trinidad. As we circled I could see the British warships and flags; I was once more among friends! On landing, Mr. Hopkins with his diplomatic passport was whizzed through and off for dinner at the Governor's Palace. But when I started through the routine my passport, smeared with swastikas from the many checkings in and out by Nazi controls, produced a traumatic effect. Then they opened my suitcase and there was the film! Also, in Paris I had made a collection of the little colored dirty propaganda cards which the German occupying forces were distributing ridiculing Winston Churchill—all revolving around the simple theme that his initials, W.C., stood for toilet. In Paris these little cards looked funny—but not

so in a wartime British-control shed! They had a conference and announced their decision: I would be held for the night under house arrest; I would be allowed to take nothing out of the control shed (so I had to empty all my pockets—even money); if they decided to let me fly in the morning I would be asked to strip, leave my clothes (because I had been up even along the Dutch invasion coast and I might have codes woven into the cloth) and they would give me Trinidad clothes adequate for the last leg of my flight; in the morning I would be brought back to the control a half hour before the other passengers and asked to strip; they were giving me the benefit of the doubt so they expected me to be a gentleman and submit to these regulations. I was furious. This was *their* war, not mine, and I had risked my neck for them! I said as haughtily as I could: "I have great respect for British secret service; I know you are not going to take anything away from me unless you know first what it is you are taking, and second, who I am." I was taken to a hotel where a guard sat outside my door all night. I tossed around all night, too angry to sleep, and early next morning, without benefit of tooth brush, razor or even comb, I was taken to the control where I was graciously greeted by a nice white-haired gentleman who told me he was head of the Secret Service in Trinidad. He was a member of a Solicitor firm in London which had done business with my firm; he found life in Trinidad for the winter quite pleasant but he did long to be back in England, etc., etc., etc. I was surly because any moment I expected him to order me to stand up and start stripping. But as Mr. Hopkins and the others arrived, the chief motioned to a porter to bring my suitcase and took my arm and escorted me down the long pier and bowed me into the plane, wishing me "happy landing" and hoping that soon the terrible war would be over and our two firms could resume their happy relations. After the plane had taken off, circled and headed north, I located my suitcase and cautiously peeked in. Everything was there—the film and even the dirty propaganda pamphlets from Paris. I sat down beside Mr. Hopkins and told him of the strange happenings in Trinidad. He laughed heartily and said, "I don't have the answers for everything but for this I do. Last night while you were under house arrest I was being dined at the Governor's Palace, and during the meal he was called to the phone on an emergency matter. When he returned he said: 'My secret service say there is a very hot

number aboard your plane by the name of Parlin and they want to know (1) why he was in Naziland and even up along the Dutch invasion coast, and (2) who is he?' So I told the Governor: 'I don't know anything more about his trip than he knows about mine*'; on board we are gentlemen and don't ask each other any questions; but as to who he is I can tell you that he is a lawyer, well and favorably known in New York and in Washington—and, Governor, I don't think I would be fair to you if I didn't tell you that Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., works for him' "

After Trinidad we put down for refueling at a Central America port. The crew and passengers were served a meal in an open-air little restaurant and during the meal a silly woman asked our young pilot: "Who does Pan American consider its number one pilot?" We looked with embarrassment at the young fellow but he came through: "Madame, we don't rate pilots that way; we all aspire to be the oldest pilot."

Of the risky events of the trip, two stand out in my memory. The first was in Paris, January, 1941, when I was invited to dinner by Gen. de Chambrun. When I arrived at the luxury apartment the General and his wife were there and their daughter-in-law, Jose, daughter of Pierre Laval; her husband was in the U.S.A. as a representative of the Vichy government. When it came time to leave the General apologized for not being able to provide a car and chauffeur, but Jose wanted to return to her apartment in another part of the city as there might be word there from her husband; would I please see her home by Metro? As I walked with her through the darkness of the wartime total blackout to the nearest station it was agreed that once in the Metro we would not converse as my accent might cause trouble. In the Metro, illuminated only with a dim eerie blue light, about half the passengers were German soldiers and the other half sullen French workmen, apparently changing work shifts. Jose, a very attractive French girl, was in a mink coat and wore diamond earrings. She was ogled by the German soldiers and scowled at by the Frenchmen. When we left the dim light of the Metro to grope through the dark streets I was deeply disturbed that we

* Later it developed he had been in England negotiating with Winston Churchill the "lend-lease" arrangement for 50 U.S.A. destroyers.

might be molested by German soldiers or attacked by Frenchmen who might have recognized the girl as the daughter of Pierre Laval, viciously hated in France because of his alleged collaboration with Hitlerism. It was about three blocks but it seemed miles and miles. I thought I heard movement in every dark recess and my heart was pounding with fear of impending tragedy. Having delivered Jose at her apartment, what a relief to be alone in the dim lighted Metro and on my way back to the Weller apartment!

The other scary time was in The Hague. In Amsterdam I had been invited to have lunch with Mrs. deLeuns and her daughter, Fre, and Fre's husband Hans Wieringa, a young Dutch lawyer. Jojo de Leuws had left for New York to marry my partner, Wyn Dulles, and the family was eager to learn about him and what Jojo's life in New York might be like. Hans saw me from the apartment to the railroad station, in sort of a rickshaw drawn by a two-man bicycle, and onto the train for The Hague. It should have been a short run and I should have been able to reach Hotel des Indies before sundown, but RAF planes were overhead and our train pulled onto a sidetrack and went into a total blackout as dusk fell. All window curtains were pulled down and guards came through commanding no smoking or lighting of matches of any kind. By the time the train started and we pulled into The Hague station it was past midnight. In the total blackout I doubted if I could find my way to the hotel and anyhow to be on the street after curfew would be dangerous. Germans had complained to me about the Dutch cities—no guard rails along the canals and how many of their soldiers had fallen in and drowned, because of their heavy winter overcoats and equipment, before help could come. The Dutch had another version: They claimed that the German soldiers with their big boots made tremendous noise on the cobblestones as they patrolled the city at night and that gangs of men, barefoot, would hide in a door or alleyway and then suddenly rush forward and push the patrol into the canal; their underground organization was keeping statistics on the nightly drownings. I decided the least dangerous alternative was to stay in the railroad station until daybreak, risking arrest for violation of my obligation to be in my hotel room before dark. As I left the track platform to enter the very dimly lit station I was accosted by a man who turned out to be the concierge from the hotel. He said he had come to

help me because I was in trouble. This was the last train of the night and the station would be closed and locked and nobody would be allowed to remain inside. The night was bitter cold and I could not stay outside the building even if the guards would permit—which they would not. It was quite a distance to the hotel and he would attempt to escort me there. He asked for my passport and German military pass entitling me to be in The Hague—under condition that I must be in my room during the hours of darkness. He had a pass entitling him to be out after curfew hours and he commanded that, under no circumstances was I to speak; if stopped by German patrols he would do all the talking. So the two of us started out through the blackness of the cold night, my guide pushing the bicycle on which he had come to the station. Suddenly a bright light was flashed in our faces and a sharp German command was given: “Halt!” With the light held in our faces so that we could not see our interrogators, my guide produced his papers and mine and explained that my train which was due at a daylight hour had been delayed. Blinded by the light it was impossible to know whether any of the many questions had been specifically addressed to me; in any event my guide did all the talking. I think it was eight times we were stopped and interrogated in this manner. Each time my heart pounded furiously because there was not only the risk that our story of the curfew violation would not be accepted but the additional risk that one of those barefoot gangs might silently rush and push all of us into a canal. I can still recall vividly the sense of relief as I entered that door of the Hotel des Indies at about 2:30 A.M.

In New York, Miriam was at the pier to meet me but I could merely say “hello and goodbye” because a government plane was there to whisk me to Washington for what turned out to be two days’ debriefing and making copies of my movie film. For the second night they brought Miriam down, and Senator (and later Vice-President) and Mrs. Alben Barkley had a dinner for us. I can’t remember who all were there but I do recall Supreme Court Justice and Mrs. Stanley Reed. This was the first of many times which I was to show my film and tell of my trip. Everyone wanted to see the film and hear the story! Mr. Dillon had a dinner at his home for a group of leading bankers; when I agreed to speak to the Celanese management and their best customers, so many accepted that Celanese had to rent a big room at a hotel. But I guess the

biggest crowd was when Howard invited his banking firm clients, and their friends, and so many accepted that he had to rent Little Carnegie Hall. That same night the Boston Symphony was playing in the main hall, and Ruth and the rest of us often laughed about the usher, who, as the crowds began to pour in, kept announcing in a loud voice, "Boston Symphony on the right—Mr. Parlin on the left!"