

C O P Y

HOTEL BRISTOL
WIEN

Telegr, Bristol Wien

Aug. 26th, 1933

Dearest Mother-

Mrs. Alice Page (Aunt of Mrs. Townsend)

The experiences we have just been thru during the past few days would easily fulfill one's desire for adventure, although from the standpoint of comfort and freedom from anxiety one could hardly call it a pleasure trip. As you know from my past cards if you have received them, we left Munich on the evening of Aug. 15th by SCHLAFWAGEN for Dresden. About six thirty in the morning the train was stopped by a sudden impact and the application of the brakes. It was raining when we left Munich and was still drizzling and foggy in the morning. Excited voices could be heard in the corridor and although not understanding the language, I knew an accident had occurred. Four workmen on the tracks, not seeing or hearing the train, had been run over and killed. Thus began our trip. Dresden was reached at 8:30 A.M. and we immediately went to the Bellevue Hotel on the Elbe River. Dresden is a beautiful city of 630,000 people. It has the third richest art gallery in the world. We hired a guide who took us thru the Dresden Gallery and saw crown jewels and other treasures of the Saxon Kings. August the Strong who was king of Saxony and Poland and who reigned in the 18th Century, was largely responsible for making Dresden a beautiful city. He was a good business man and made much money for his country and himself by developing the silver mines in Saxony and also founding the Royal Meissen China Works. Even today Dresden China is unsurpassed. He got his name from the fact that he could bend a horseshoe in his hands and also the fact that he was reputed to have been the father of six hundred children. We saw the Meissen China factory which is now operated by the State of Saxony. We drove out to Moritzberg Castle which is even today lived in by the Wettin family, the former Royal Saxon family. In the evening we went to a vaudeville show which was good. Several American arts and other nationalities were on the program. I had already been to a number of variety shows in other German cities and in every case all seats were filled. Dresden also has an interesting Hygiene Museum, the only one of its kind in the world. Our guide told us that there was no unemployment and many factories were on a 24 hour shift. Dresden is quite near the former Czechoslovakia border but no unusual number of troops were visible. It is only about 24 hours by train from Dresden to Berlin (125 miles) so the following afternoon we left for Berlin, arriving there at 6:30 and going to the Adlon Hotel. Berlin was quiet that evening. Duty Der Linden was brightly lighted for miles. The next day Betty and I took a sight seeing bus around the city and when that was over took the subway to Tempelhof Airport where we had lunch. Planes were coming in and leaving for all parts of Europe. An enormous new building is being erected and is now almost completed which will make this Airport by far the largest in the world. Great building activity is taking place all over Berlin and apparently all over Germany. The next day we went to Potsdam and continued the following day going thru

Wilm finish this letter on later as our train is about to leave for
Salzburg.

Munich. Aug. 30th. At last here and expect to leave tonight for Switzerland. In Berlin the political situation seemed to be quiet. 300,000 Germans were preparing to go to Tannenberg in East Prussia to hear Hitler's speech. At the travel bureau were our sleeping car tickets from Berlin to Konigsberg were obtained we were told there would be no trouble. So with everything so outwardly peaceful we took the night train to Konigsberg, passing thru the Polish Corridor early in the morning. We went to the Park Hotel and just missed seeing Von Ribbentrop by half an hour. He was on his way with 26 aides to sign the Russian agreement. We got into a taxi, after having breakfast at the hotel, and drove around the city and down to the harbor towards the Baltic Sea. It is a city of about 350,000 people and we were the only passengers on the car. We went to the station, had breakfast and then tried to discover if any one spoke English in the town.

the capital of East Prussia. Mrs. Mora and I met Donald Day, Chicago Tribune Correspondent, and he told us much about the situation. He was sure that Germany was going in and take Poland and it would be that they deserved as they did not have the capacity to govern themselves. In the hotel Grande music and dancing continued to a very late hour. at 6:30 A.M. the next morning we left for Danzig arriving at about eleven thirty. It was apparent immediately that the atmosphere was much more tense than any other city we had been in and after all the eyes of the world have been on Danzig for months. We hired a guide, a young woman who took us to see the sights of interest and they are many in this thousand year old seaport. As you know, it is at the mouth of the Vistula River which flows thru Poland. That afternoon the newspapers announced that the Poles had closed the border. We already had our tickets and sleeping car reservations to Warsaw. We did not know whether to change them and go to Berlin or to continue on our journey. We did not even know if we could get tickets to Berlin or if the trains ran. We would have to change cars if we went to Berlin which would not be necessary if we went to Warsaw. So we decided to take our chances and go to Warsaw, but if possible, go right thru to Buda Pest. Incidentally before we left Danzig Mrs. Mora and I were pounced upon by a secret service man in plain clothes as we left the bank and ordered in German to come with him. We were taken across the street to the Secret Police Station and questioned as to whether or not we had been taking any pictures of military objects. They were not any too polite about it either, but finally after making several telephone calls we were released without having our cameras or films confiscated. Before leaving we met three young men, all correspondents for the American Press. Mr. Kidd of the Associated Press, Mr. Knorst of the N. Y. Times and Mr. Anseberry of the United Press. At the R. N. Station for the first time the officials were reassuring that no difficulties would be experienced in going to Warsaw. So on we got and we were about the only passengers. After about half an hour we came to the town of Czem (Czen) in Poland. I looked out of the window and could see the troops walking along in darkness and silence. Men with bayonets on their guns were stationed at intervals along the tracks. I had seen the great activity on the other side in Danzig that day with movement of troops, trucks, guns and military supplies and now in the middle of the night but only a few miles away I was watching the opposing side. We were delayed nearly an hour at Czem. During the night we made up about half an hour but arrived in Warsaw only to see the Buda Pest train pull out. We went up to the hotel Emosedor and secured a room and got breakfast, which incidentally was quite good. I talked with several Americans there who advised us to get out as quickly as possible. I walked around the city, saw several of its large churches (all Catholic) and wandered into the Jewish section. 25% of Warsaw's population is Jewish, and Poland itself has some 3,500,000 Jews, due to the fact that one of Poland's kings was in love with a Jewish girl and invited the Jews of the world to make their home theirs. This is illustrated in a picture in the Palace at Warsaw. In the afternoon we engaged a guide who took us to the principal places of interest. Many soldiers were seen during the day. Their equipment, uniforms and military bearing were greatly inferior to that of the Germans. Delapidated farm wagons were being used to haul materials while the trucks were at least fifteen years older in appearance than the modern six wheel pneumatic tired Diesel trucks, I had seen everywhere in Germany. A comparison of the American Army with the Mexican where in Germany. A comparison of the American Army with the Mexican would almost be the same. At nine o'clock in the evening August 25th we went down to the R. N. station. It was packed and jammed with incoming and out going refugees. Wives were bidding goodbye to their soldier husbands, trains were coming and going every few minutes. Finally the Budapest train came in and the four of us got aboard and comfortably settled, as it was an 18 hour trip from Warsaw to Budapest by a fast train. We went to bed early in our two apartments expecting to sleep late and thinking that most of our troubles were at an end, as Hungary would probably remain neutral at least for some time and we would have no difficulty in getting out. Little did we know that our trouble had just begun. At 5:30 A.M. Mr. & Mrs. Morse in the next compartment were awakened by the conductor and told to get dressed as the Polish-Slovakian was closed and the rails actually torn up. We were a quarter of a mile from the R.N. Station of Cieszyn (Teschin) and after several hours it seemed the conductor came back and reported that there was a restaurant in the Station. We were the only passengers on the car. We went to the station, had breakfast and then tried to discover if any one spoke English in the town.

No one in the town spoke English and Polish is a language when spoken or written resembles no Western tongue. Fortunately a few people spoke a little German but Germany was their enemy and it wasn't wise to try to converse in that tongue. We were in a spot. We sent a wire to the American Ambassador in Warsaw telling of our plight but as the message had to be written in German and they translated it into Polish, it probably never reached its destination. At least we got no answer. At a nearby table were two girls, their mother and a young man. He finally spoke to us and explained that they were Hungarians, all bound for Budapest and had been on our train. The two girls played in night clubs and he was in the tea and spice business in Budapest. They were true Hungarians, cheerful optimistic and at least outwardly happy. His name was Stephen Kramer. He thought that we could take a train to Lemberg on the Polish-Hungarian border, and not far from Russia, and in that way get to Budapest. Rumors kept floating around such as air-planes had bombed the trestle, or that within an hour we would be told our fate. Kramer spoke German, English, Hungarian, French and Slovak, but not Polish. Fortunately a young man who turned out to be a doctor from Slovakia sidled up to our group who spoke Polish and through him we had a way of communicating our ideas to the natives. After many conversations with the station master it developed that if we called on the Mayor of Cieszyn he might be able to arrange auto transportation for our group of four Americans, four Hungarians and one Slovak to the border. We four men called on the Mayor and it was arranged that we proceed by a train leaving at 2:30 P.M. to Swierczyznolec and from there by car to the border. This we did and the Mayor of Cieszyn had kept his word, telephoning ahead to arrange for transportation by car. The cars which were very small, made three trips to the border with the nine of us and our twenty-two pieces of baggage. Our Slovak friend, who it turned out had no money and was in great danger of his life, got across the border into Slovakia and arranged with a farmer to come over in his wagon to get our baggage. Kramer and I were the last to reach the border and with all our baggage loaded up on the wagon and with Mrs. Mora and the mother of the two girls perched up on the baggage beside the driver, we proceeded to the Slovakian side which as you know, is a protectorate of Germany. One difficulty was experienced with the Customs and after our passports had been approved, our little band with the baggage wagon proceeded on foot for five miles to the town of Cadea, (pronounced Cha-Cha). There we took a train to Zilina, German troops were everywhere in evidence and along the road from the border to Cadea by careful watching machine gun nests could be seen. Zilina was an armed camp. We got good rooms at the hotel and after spending the next day resting and sight seeing we caught, not by choice or previous knowledge, the last train to leave for Budapest, arriving there in the morning of August 28th at 2 A.M. We had no trouble getting across the Hungarian line and I cannot say too much for the ~~Polish~~ politeness, appearance and actions of the Hungarian officials.

The Ritz Hotel at Budapest was deserted. So of course we had the choice of rooms. The next morning we called Geny Ackison of the American Consular Service, a friend of Betty's, who advised us to get out as fast as we could and by any means available. The first train and incidentally the only train for Vienna left at one o'clock. We caught this train, which was crowded. Much to our relief we had no difficulty at the German border, although we had grave doubts if the Germans would let us in. We arrived at Vienna at 6:30 and with much difficulty secured taxis which took us to the Bristol Hotel. After dinner I walked around the city until 10:45. We got up at 5:30 A.M. to catch the only train for Salzburg as there was no through train to Munich. It was packed and jammed with people fleeing to their homes. We passed troop train after troop train, loaded with men, guns and horses on their way to the Eastern front.

One man in our compartment spoke a little English and I foolishly asked him if it would be all right if I took a few pictures of the troop trains. He said, why not, there was nothing of a military secret about the trains. I took a few pictures and Mrs. More with a very small camera snapped just one picture of a troop train moving fastly by. At the city of Linz two officials came aboard and asked me to get off the train with my camera. Betty and Mr. and Mrs. More came with me and presented various credentials. They confiscated my films and let me get back on the train. After we were again comfortably settled, the officials again came on the train and said Mrs. More had taken a picture. They confiscated her films. I took my pictures in front of various officers and other Germans and not one stepped up to tell me it was verboten. I had been told that spies were every where. Now I knew it. It was most depressing to know that every move we made and perhaps every word we said was being watched and heard. We got off the train at Salzburg and had a wait of nearly two hours for the Munich train. If I had not realized Germany was at war, I knew it now. Troop train after troop train came there. The platform was a mass of humanity. Beth and her mother finally got aboard while Charles and I tried to look after our twelve pieces of hand baggage. Finally I got aboard and then Charley. We just had room enough to stand up, and there we had to stand in the end vestibule. There wasn't even standing room for another person on the car. One little boy had to go to the toilet but to get to the toilette was impossible, so he had to go out of the window. We stopped at several stations and people begged and besieged to get on the train. One woman said "For Germany's sake let me get on the train, my mother is sick in Munich and I must get to her", but there was absolutely no room for her. We got to Munich at about eight o'clock, Aug. 29th. Fortunately the Continental Hotel electric bus had not been taken over by the Government and we got up to the hotel. Betty and her mother picked their trunks the next day, Aug. 30th, and Mr. More arranged for a car to drive us to the Swiss border and fortunately the car was permitted to proceed here to Munich arriving about 6 o'clock, August 31st.

We go to Lonsouse tomorrow, Sept. 1st. We saw any number of private cars and private trucks with the name of their owner firms still on them loaded on flat cars bound for the front. Food cards have already been issued permitting each person one pound of meat a week, 1/2 lb. of butter, no coffee or tea, all the bread, flour and potatoes they want. Gasoline is strictly rationed, and few, if any, private cars or motorcycles are seen. The rifles are being threshed by women, old men and children. There was no gayety among the soldiers or the troop trains, it was all strictly business. Our guide in Berlin, an ex-soldier, told us that if war came it would be a short one, as the soldiers would revolt if it was a long one. The Germans decidedly do not want war but are under the lash of those in power. Outside of being brought up twice before officials because of our cameras. We were treated with great courtesy on the whole which is remarkable in view of the fact that many Germans are unable to distinguish between Englishmen and Americans and right now England is their great enemy. They are a disciplined nation but I believe at the expense of personal initiative.

It is, of course, with a feeling of great relief that we are here in Switzerland. We will get the first boat home when we can comfortably do so. Mr. and Mrs. Moises deserve great credit for the way they stood the physical and mental strain of the trip for after all he is 86 years old and she has not been well. Today, however, she said she wouldn't have missed the experience for any thing. I have only touched the highlights in this narration and when I see you I will have to go into more detail. Al. we can hope for is that those in power will not decree war as no one ever wins a war and I have heard any number of German people express the same sentiment. With loads & loads of love,

Zurich, Switzerland.

Aug. 31st, 1939

WILLIAM S. COVINGTON
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6/130/79

Dear Sam & Mary: Thanks for the nice
letter of congratulations - I haven't
finished reading them all yet -
but I was sorry, thing a day of
when going through a box of
miscellaneous papers I found a
copy of my letter to you about
40 years. Don't wish it as you
please but don't return it.

A few months ago we
dinner at Mr. James Douglas's house
Mr. & Mrs. were there. He had been
to B.S. & contacted for the Union
and he spoke very highly of B.S.
But left the next day for the -

Productions of my Vicky Cora -
sing to from H. A. in Pough
Ridge, N. Y. A few days
later, when months, another
grand day, with fine and
her young brother arrived here
by Bus from Wash D. C. for
nearly a week visit. In all
former it has been that
the sign don't miss her of
was just as glad to see
them go.

Betty is home now from
N. Y. but mostly worried about
her brother as each other feel the
of badly breaking many things
and is in the shop.
With Love
Betty