

Chateau Air-Bel, La Pomme, Marseille
18 31 Octobre, 1940

Dear Puss,

Thanks enormously for your letter. It cleared up a great many things I'd been wondering about, and made me realize also that it hasn't been all their fault. When you have been away a little while it is always very easy to forget, and I am afraid that I have allowed myself to forget how little everyone in the U.S. really knows about the situation here. If I have often cursed the New York office for its failure to answer my cables, even when I have repeated them plusieurs fois, I realize after reading your letter that they have cursed me at least as heartily for failing to inform them adequately of the situation I found here. And of course they are perfectly right.

Naturally there are extenuating circumstances. I found myself inundated with problems, and humanity, dès le moment of my arrival. I've already told you about the people lurking for me in the hotel and on the streets of Marseille. There were also innumerable problems, like finding an office and equipping it in a strange city where one did not only not know the customs but hardly even the language. There were the problems of finding and training a staff. There were innumerable problems of policy (to assist or not to assist scientists, e.g., and just which "friends" to help, and which not). But I suppose I could have found the time to write a weekly report, as you suggest, and it was really owing to my failure to hold the New York end of the combine clearly in mind that I did not do so. Now that your excellent letter has brought it all back fresh and clear, I shall try to do better in future.

The "trouble" was one of those absurd businesses which sometimes happen. It had no importance whatever. During my absence in Lisbon the prefect of the B.d.R. evidently called in the consul and told him that the prefecture was inquiet about the activities of Mr F and Mr B. I have had great difficulty getting the whole story from the consul myself, and now both the consul and the prefect have been changed. It appears; however, that the prefecture had got the absurd idea that some member of my staff had been conducting persons illegally over the border. Actually no member of my staff had been near the border, or has been since. What the charge was against Bohn I haven't the least idea. Anyway, the whole thing, so far as we are concerned, was a misunderstanding, and, as I reported in my cable, it has now been cleared up. I have met the new prefect and had the most cordial talk with him. I am on the best of terms with a number of his subordinates, as also with the Surete Nationale and many other official bodies. We have the best of legal advice, and of course we lean over backwards to avoid doing anything which might or could possibly be considered as suspect. The only trouble we have now is with certain members of the Am. foreign service (clerks, dormen, and secretaries), who evidently busy themselves with slandering and libeling our organization and the Americans active in it. If this continues I intend to make a vigorous protest to Washington, via Senator Wagner.