

# Laura Ingalls Pictured Self As 'Mati Hari'

Span 2/12/42  
Letters to Nazi Envoy Were Only to Win His Confidence, She Says

(Earlier Story on Page A-1.)

Laura Ingalls, the flyer, defending herself on the witness stand in District Court this afternoon against the charge that she was an unregistered Nazi agent, said that in trying to win the confidence of German diplomatic representatives in this country, so that she could learn their secrets, she saw herself as "a Mati Hari, an international spy."

Miss Ingalls said she thought every woman at some time longed to play such an exciting role.

The accused aviatrix admitted she wrote letters to Dr. Hans Thomsen, then Cherge d'Affaires of the German Embassy, which were introduced in evidence by the Government. The adulation for the German cause which she expressed in these letters, she told the jury, was actuated by her desire to ingratiate herself with the envoy so that he would trust her.

Describing one of her visits to Mr. Thomsen, Miss Ingalls recalled: "I said I was very sympathetic, I thought they were doing wonderful things and would like to bring the picture back to America."

**Tried to Make "Peace Flight."**  
At that time, she explained, she was trying to promote a "peace flight" to England, France and Germany in March, 1941; to drop peace pamphlets and to interview Adolf Hitler and ask him to renew his offer of peace. The Hearst newspapers, she said, agreed to buy articles she intended to write during the trip, but the State Department refused to give her a passport.

The explanation of one letter to Dr. Thomsen, in which she had written that she could "tear the world apart in triumph" at the German victory in Crete and the sinking of the battleship Hood, Miss Ingalls said:

"I was enraged when I wrote that letter. The lease-lend bill had just passed and I was enraged when I thought what the British were doing to this country. It was an expression of my feeling at the time, and at the same time an effort to square myself solidly with the Germans."

**Thomsen Seemed Bored.**  
Dr. Thomsen, Miss Ingalls admitted, seemed to regard her as a nuisance and did not reply to her letters. At her personal interviews with him, she said, he was noncommittal, and, while courteous, said there was no work he could give her. The day the German consulates in the United States were ordered closed, Miss Ingalls related, she went to see Capt. Fritz Weidemann, German consul general at San Francisco, and found him more communicative than Dr. Thomsen, but still unwilling to further her project. She said she had been trying to sell her property at Burbank, Calif., and she asked Capt. Weidemann if he could use the house, since his consulate was being closed. But he did nothing about it, she added.

**Made Contact at Last.**  
Next Miss Ingalls came to her successful contacts with a German Embassy official. She told of arranging through a friend she had met here, Miss Julia Kraus, for an interview with the official, who turned out to be Baron Ulrich von Gienanth, second secretary of the embassy. The Government's case against Miss Ingalls is based on payments which she admittedly received from the baron, supposedly for carrying on anti-war propaganda in this country.

Discussing her denunciation of Prime Minister Churchill in one of the letters introduced by the Government, Miss Ingalls said: "I have admired Churchill. I have greatly admired the British because they have character, but I like that character where it belongs—on the British Isles."

Admitting she had signed letters to Dr. Thomsen "Heil Hitler," Miss Ingalls said: "What else could you say to the German Minister?"

Although Miss Ingalls denied she had ever said "we should have a Hitler in this country," she said later she had expressed the belief that "we ought to have some one like Hitler or Churchill who cared as much about Americans as Hitler and Churchill cared about Germans and Englishmen."



Laura Ingalls as seen by Newman Sudduth, a Star staff artist, when on the witness stand today in her trial as an unregistered Nazi agent. A court stenographer takes down her defense.

## Tells of Receiving Money.

Miss Ingalls described receiving \$250 from Baron Von Gienanth in New York, \$100 which Miss Kraus telegraphed in Colorado Springs and \$50 telegraphed by the intermediary to Chicago.

Asked by her attorney, James Reilly, what she did with the money, Miss Ingalls said she carried it around in her wallet along with her own money. She had some idea, she added, of using it eventually to obtain espionage evidence but the opportunity never came and it may have gotten mixed up with her own money, she indicated, adding:

"I'll admit I'm a little careless about money."

## Never Told Miss Kraus.

Miss Ingalls said she never told Miss Kraus, who testified for the Government, that the real purpose of the arrangement with the Baron was to carry on the peace propaganda as the best means of helping Germany in this country.

## Faked Aid to Nazis To Betray Them, Flyer Tells Jury

In a controlled, modulated voice, Laura Ingalls, aviatrix, told a jury of two women and 10 men in District Court today at her trial as an unregistered Nazi agent that she made contacts with the German Embassy and pretended to carry out a mission for the Nazis because she wanted to expose espionage and subversive activities in this country and the F. B. I. had refused to put her to work.

Facing the jury calmly, often speaking as if she were addressing a public audience, the flyer identified correspondence which she had with J. Edgar Hoover, head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in 1939. She had offered her services as a secret agent, the letters brought out, and Mr. Hoover had thanked her and told her that the bureau did not employ women in that capacity.

In one point in her testimony, Miss Ingalls said "it was wonderful what Hitler had done—for the German people." This statement was made after she was asked whether she had expressed to a New York physician, who was treating her, some admiration for the German government.

Coming to the crux of the Government's case, Miss Ingalls described a visit to Dr. Hans Thomsen, then charge d'affaires of the German Embassy, in January, 1941.

## Accused of "Making Speeches."

"Why did you go to see him?" asked her attorney, James Reilly. "I became very definitely conscious of subversive influences in this country," Miss Ingalls replied. "I was conscious of British propaganda, and there was nothing I could do about it. I thought that if I could focus the attention of the country on some actual danger, we might stop all this help for Europe and keep something for ourselves."

The Government prosecutor, M. Neil Andrews, special assistant to the Attorney General, objected that the defendant was not answering the questions and was making speeches to the jury. Justice James W. Morris asked Miss Ingalls to stay as close to the issues as possible, though she could make any explanation she wanted.

## Sought to Outdo F. B. I.

"I thought," Miss Ingalls resumed, "I could find out by working into their confidence what might be going on in this country. I knew I had no training in such work, and I did not think I could outwit those Germans, but I felt that if I appealed to their emotions I might accomplish what the F. B. I., with its \$2,000,000 appropriation, could not. I could suggest that they needed friends and couldn't I help them promote in this country what they were doing?"

On that first visit to the German Embassy, Miss Ingalls said, when she offered her services, Dr. Thomsen, receiving her most courteously, told her: "No, no, I have nothing for you."

"We had just appropriated \$7,000,000 in aid Britain," Miss Ingalls added indignantly, "and there was extensive poverty in this country."

The prosecutor objected and again the court asked the defendant not to wander too far afield.

## Recess Taken At Noon.

Miss Ingalls was just launching into a recital of her late and more successful efforts to make contact with other officials in the Embassy when the noon recess was taken.

Early in the testimony she was asked concerning statements attributed to her by a New York physician, indicating she had pro-German sentiments. She said she (Continued on Page A-4, Column 2.)

## Sought Place in F. B. I.

Mr. Reilly read the entire statement to the jury before putting Miss Ingalls on the stand. In the statement, Miss Ingalls explained that she had been trying since 1939, when the war broke out in Europe, to persuade the F. B. I. to give her a job as a counter-espionage agent, but her offers had been rejected, with the explanation that no women were employed for this work.

The statement went on to explain that, since the F. B. I. would not employ her, she decided to do some investigating on her own hook and went to see Dr. Thomsen. In the statement she admitted receiving sums of money from members of the Embassy staff while on a speaking tour for the America First Committee, but insisted her motive was patriotic and she was trying to expose the inner workings of the Nazi espionage system.

Taking the stand, Miss Ingalls said she was born in New York City and now owned a home in Burbank, Calif. Her parents, she said, were born in New England, and her forebears had settled in Lynn, Mass., and Rhode Island. For 11 years she had been an aviatrix.

## Tells About Aerial Career.

"I always wanted to do something different," Miss Ingalls said. "I deliberately went into acrobatic flying because I consider it important. It is the basis of all combat flying and it has always been questioned whether a woman could do such work."

Miss Ingalls told the jury of making the first transcontinental round-trip flight by a woman and of a record-breaking 17,000-mile flight around South America on which she became the first woman to fly the Andes. She said she still held the transcontinental record for a plane of a certain type.

"I wanted to prove," she added, "that women could do something in war besides sitting on the sidelines."

So enthusiastic did Miss Ingalls become as she went into her flying achievements, that Justice James W. Morris interrupted to suggest that she get back to the matters at issue.

When her attorney asked her age, Miss Ingalls said "over 35."

Referring to testimony that she

## Says Britain Needed U. S.

Asked whether she had predicted that Great Britain ultimately would be defeated, Miss Ingalls replied: "Without our help, yes. It was perfectly obvious, despite all the talk of a British invasion of the continent, there would be none unless they got an A. E. F."

At another point in her testimony, Miss Ingalls admitted she had told audiences an invasion of this country was not possible. Miss Ingalls warning to the subject, went on emphatically:

"As Lindbergh said, the idea of a direct invasion of this country was fantastic unless we were supine and asleep. It was absolutely unthinkable. This superstitious fear, this creating of Hitler as a superman made me think of Orson Welles' report of an invasion from Mars."

"I don't say a bomber might not come across and drop a few stray bombs. But you don't take a country that way. You take it in the old-fashioned way, with infantry, and I said that if we had an adequate Army and Navy and Air Force, Hitler could never take this country."

The Government rested its case late yesterday. Among the documents which Prosecutor M. Neil Andrews read to the jury during the afternoon were copies of several letters assertedly written by Miss Ingalls to Mr. Thomsen.

Two of these letters closed with the salutation: "Heil Hitler."

## Letters Are Quoted.

Some day, she wrote in one letter, she would shout her admiration to "a great leader and a great people."

In another letter, dated April 27, 1941, Miss Ingalls was said to have written Dr. Thomsen exhorting British Prime Minister Churchill as "the great single menace to the peace of this country."

Miss Ingalls, according to the prosecutor, wrote the German envoy May 24 hailing the capture of Crete by the Germans and the sinking of the British battleship Hood, referring to the latter event as a tribute "to the glory of the reborn navy."

The last witness for the Government was Mr. McLaughlin, the F. B. I. agent. He described how he, in company with other agents, shadowed Baron Erich von Gienanth, Second Secretary in the German Em-

bassy, the night of October 10. They saw him leave the University Club, the agent said, get into a taxi and halt the cab at Thomas Circle, where he met Miss Ingalls in front of a laundry. They both got into the cab, the witness said, and drove to the baron's home on Bradley boulevard, Chevy Chase, Md., where they remained several hours.

The Government produced a letter allegedly written by Miss Ingalls to Catherine Curtis, identified as president of the Women's Executive Committee of America, Inc., in which the flyer said: "I know you'll want to visit me at my chalet near Berchtesgaden," referring to the mountain retreat of Adolf Hitler. Miss Curtis, it was brought out, turned the letter over to the F. B. I. Justice Morris overruled motions by the defense to exclude certain admissions by Government witnesses made in the absence of the defendant and to declare a mistrial because this testimony already was before the jury.

These concerned especially statements which Miss Julia Kraus admitted she made to Baron von Gienanth and others, Miss Kraus, who was on the witness stand parts of two days, described herself as the intermediary between Miss Ingalls and the baron, although the two met directly a number of times, according to the Government's evidence. A voluminous correspondence between Miss Ingalls and Miss Kraus was introduced in evidence and read to the jury.

There was a possibility that the case would go to the jury by tonight.

discussed the war casually with the doctor last spring.

## Calls Hitler's Work "Wonderful."

The physician, she said, expressed admiration for the efficiency of the Germans and she said she thought this indicated "a detached viewpoint which was admirable in an American." She indicated she may have told him Adolf Hitler had helped the German people.

"I do think it's wonderful what Hitler has done for the German people," Miss Ingalls said.

"Did you say that what America needed was a Hitler?" her attorney asked.

Miss Ingalls denied that she made such a statement.

The defense attorney paved the way for her testimony by calling to the stand at the outset of today's session Daniel T. McLaughlin, an agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He identified a statement which Miss Ingalls dictated at the bureau last December 18, a few short hours before she was formally placed under arrest.

frequently had spoken German and used German phrases in letters, Miss Ingalls explained that as a child she had a German governess, but she had not tried to speak the language much since.

"I know a few cut-and-dried phrases," she added, "and I can understand it if people don't go too fast."

Miss Ingalls said she spoke French better than German.

The defense attorney took up the Government's evidence that Miss Ingalls was pro-Nazi item by item.

Miss Ingalls denied that in a speech at Colorado Springs, Colo., she called the President "that stupid man in Washington," as an F. B. I. agent testified. The defendant explained that she probably referred to Congress as stupid because she felt that it was letting this country drift into war and every so-called peace measure passed was actually a war bill.