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Damian Pargas

Executive Director

Roosevelt Institute for American Studies

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Dear Damian,

As my happy sojourn at the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies in the charming ur-Dutch town of Middelburg draws to a close, it may be appropriate to say a few brief words about what I have been up to and how I have benefited from my association with RIAS. I also need to assure you that I have not spent the last four months just eating bolus and binge watching *Blakes7*.

As you know, I have been using the time to work on my next book, *Little Lindy Is Kidnapped: How the Crime of the Century Shaped the Modern Media*, a study of the media coverage of the 1932 kidnap-murder of the twenty-month-old baby of the most admired man in America, Charles Lindbergh, and the murder trial of the accused perpetrator, Bruno Richard Hauptmann, in 1935. The Lindbergh case, crime and trial, has a special if overlooked nexus with the arc of the Roosevelt administration in the 1930s. As Governor of New York in 1932, FDR took a personal interest in the case, ordering state law enforcement to "devote all necessary efforts" to finding the Lindbergh baby and, later, the baby's killer. As the case unfolded, the manifest incompetence of the New Jersey state police became yet another Great Depression example of the impotence of local and state power—and another powerful argument to expand the purview of federal authority. Indeed the most famous and long lived of all the New Deal "alphabet agencies"—the FBI—first established its bona fides and high-profile expertise with its work in the Lindbergh case.

What RIAS has given me is time to write—and research and edit—always the most important scholarly commodities. I estimate the book is now 84.3% finished and, thanks to RIAS, I should put it to bed early next year. You'll get a copy, with profuse acknowledgment to RIAS.

Of course, being among a cohort of diligent and congenial scholars is a terrific spur to scholarly productivity. You and your colleagues at RIAS have created an atmosphere at once nurturing and rigorous, and I have been a fortunate beneficiary. The informal get-

togethers in the main office, where we speak about our work—and just shoot the breeze—have been particularly enjoyable.

While working on my own project, I have also been educated by the ongoing work of the institute in an array of cognate Americanist areas highlighted in your conferences this past fall—on topics as diverse as runaway slaves, immigration, refugees, and public diplomacy. Likewise, Darrio Fazzi and I have had many discussions about his current project on American military bases in Europe. (Serendipitously, my sister, who grew up on military bases in Germany and later, as an Air Force officer, served in both the Netherlands and Germany, came to visit me in Middelburg and underwent a thorough Fazzian debriefing.) I also enjoyed speaking on animation and WWI propaganda with Giles Scott-Simon's public diplomacy class at the Leiden University and speaking on Lin-Manuel Miranda's Broadway play *Hamilton* with Patrick Mercy's students at Goes High School. Finally, I enjoyed attending, and participating in a small way, the annual meeting of the Dutch Association for American Studies in Amsterdam last weekend.

Best of all, I've enjoyed learning about the projects and exchanging information with the younger scholars at RIAS (not that Dario, Giles, and you could be considered old)—the PhD candidates Paul Brennan, Nanka de Vries, and Celia Nijdam and the post-doc fellow Cees Heere. I hope that my comments on their work—on role of the progressive reformers in the New Deal; Eleanor Roosevelt's activism with the United Nations; the Federal Theater Project; and the Russo-Japanese War, respectively—have been of some help.

Finally, on a more personal note, I need to express my personal gratitude to you and all the folks at RIAS for your many kindnesses and courtesies. To a person, they have been unfailingly good humored and supportive. They (and you, Damian) have listened patiently as I rambled on about the fascinating (well, to me) details of the Lindbergh case. You must know too what a treasure you have in Leontien Joose who, both professionally and personally, has been unfailingly helpful and generous to me and my wife Sandra.

I feel confident that the relationship between RIAS and myself, and my home institution, Brandeis University, will continue. As you know, Eleanor Roosevelt was a trustee at Brandeis from 1949 to 1962 and a Visiting Lecturer in International Relations from 1959 to 1962, when she taught with my late colleague Lawrence W. Fuchs, the founder of the American Studies program at Brandeis. The impact of ER as a guiding

light and teacher of undergraduates is still very well remembered at the school. Perhaps a shared pair of conferences might be in the offing.

Again, my thanks for allowing me to become a member of your community this past semester. I will always be grateful to you and your colleagues at RIAS.

Sincerely,



Thomas Doherty

Professor, American Studies

Brandeis University