

Barcelona, Sept. 2, 1938

Mother, darling,

For forty-eight hours I have been having a marvelous time. It was good to get back to a familiar big city after playing the sticks for so long. And even better was to see most of my best friends here again and to receive seven letters all at once. Two of the letters were from you and one each from Bill and David. Yours were dated June 9 and June 17, having been forwarded from the Sheeans' Paris address to Bloms, St. Margarets Bay, Kent, Angletterre, and then apparently brought into Spain by someone and given to Leigh White. I should have received them sooner, but no one knew where I was as I moved from one hospital to another. In any case, I think the best place to address me now is S.R.I. 17.1, Barcelona. I believe there would be a good chance of my receiving a package now if you sent it to Mrs. Waverley Root, 3bis rue La Bruyere, Paris. I am going to tell her to forward anything to me in care of Edwin Rolfe at the Hotel Majestic, Barcelona. Rolfe, who is a friend of mine, has just left the International Brigades to take Joe North's place as correspondent of the Daily Worker, and will be seeing me from time to time in the brigade.

This paragraph is confidential and possibly inaccurate. From a number of events and opinions and rumors I gather that a gradual and lengthy process of removing the I.B. from Spain has begun. Herbert Matthews, N.Y. Times correspondent, with whom I had my first whisky and soda in many months yesterday, says he thinks it will take six months or so. I, of course, would be one of the last to be withdrawn. All this is unofficial and by no means certain, especially if we receive any serious setbacks at the front. At present, the situation is promising militarily but not so good among the civilians. Catalonia is way overpopulated now and there is a shortage of food. If we get through the winter all right I foresee victory next year.

I arrived three days ago at Las Planas, the I.B. base through which all convalescents pass on their way back to the front. Probably in a day or two I shall be sent to Mont Blanc, a training camp, for a few more days and then to the brigade, which is now at rest after two very hard-fought actions near Gandesa. Las Planas is an old sanitarium situated on a very high hill among tall pines and overlooking Barcelona, which is a much more attractive city when viewed from above than I had ever realized.

Day before yesterday I got permission to come down here to the city, and I am to return tonight. The first thing I did was to go see Johnny Murra at the hospital. He was wounded the day after I was. The bullet entered his shoulder, traversed his left lung lengthwise, missed his heart and other organs and came out right next to the base of his spine. His lung was filled up with blood and other extraneous matter and his legs were temporarily paralyzed. He had to lie in No-man's-land within easy range of the enemy from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., most of the time in the blazing sun, before he could be brought back. This is just to show you how hard it is to get killed. He is going to be sent home when he is a little better and will recover completely. My other closest friend in the company, Elman Service, also was wounded, but I haven't seen him since.



Barcelona, Sept. 8, 1938

The next step was to come to the Majestic, where Norrth had left four letters, a cablegram and a carton of Camels for me. The cigarettes being from Walter at my request. Then I had a long talk with Matthews about the European situation in general. I had supper with five other I.B. members at a semi-private Jewish place. There was gefülte fish, an excellent vegetable soup, fried potatoes, a fried egg and some wonderful peach strudel. The price was 30 pesetas, which is way over the heads of the wage-earners, and, I think, only semi-legal. Then I went with two other comrades and rented a room with three beds for the night. This arranged for, I called on Leigh White, whom I must have mentioned to you some time. He is about a year younger than I, came to Spain to drive an ambulance and later became a foreign correspondent. He speaks beautiful Spanish and knows the country better than any of the other correspondents I have talked to. Recently, he was substituting for the correspondents of the London Times, the London Daily Express, The London Daily Mail and the London Telegraph and Post, simultaneously, while they were taking vacations outside the country. He is about to marry an attractive, vivacious Asturian girl, whom I met early in May. We talked so late into the night that I spent the night in their spare room instead of returning to the other lodging. After breakfast in their apartment, I got into touch with Douglas Flood, American Consul, and as a result today was returned 450 francs which I had left with the Consulate in May. I sold the francs to Leigh for transportation to Paris when he leaves the country with his bride in about two weeks. He is going to try to get a job in Paris, with the Herald or elsewhere, and if unsuccessful go to Mexico for a while. He doesn't like the United States. I forgot to mention that before I left he gave me his old ambulance driver's ~~uniform~~ uniform, which is the best I have had in a long time, three books that I have wanted to read and some detailed maps of Spain that I gave him when I entered the I.B. Also my wrist watch, newly cleaned and repaired. Yesterday I had lunch at the Majestic and dinner at the White apartment, again staying the night. Now, since I have eaten Leigh and bride out of all their food, I am taking them to dinner at the Jewish place. I have done a lot of errands for myself and others and am at present trying to think of a good wedding present, being very rich. And I just had a hot bath and put on all new or clean clothes. Those are all the luxuries of city life I can think of offhand, except that Johnny Murra gave me six caramels and part of a bar of chocolate.

There are still some phases of war that I haven't seen, so that I am not sorry to be returning to the brigade, but for your comfort it is very unlikely that we shall see action for some time. There is a lot of reorganization and remoralization to be done. One thing that makes me more satisfied with life than ever is that I have a very good idea of what I am going to do with my life. Some of the details may not work out, but I shall work hard toward a definite end, and I guess there is nothing better than that.

All my love,

Jim