

Barcelona, May 8, 1938

Dear Mother,

I know I shouldn't be writing from Barcelona, but that is where I happen to be today. Four days in Badalona were enough for me to see that there is not much chance of my getting into the artillery ~~at~~ just now. There are too many trained men and not enough guns. The International Brigade administration is very disorganized ~~at~~ at present, having just moved precipitately up from Albacete in the south, and anyway there exist no regular channels for a foreigner volunteering in Spain. If I stayed around here or at Badalona and waited to be placed, it would take weeks and weeks.

Tomorrow morning I am going to Mora-la-Nueva, on the Ebro River, where the Lincoln-Washington Battalion of the Fifteenth Brigade of the Thirty-fifth Division is stationed. There I shall confer with Johnny Gates, political commissar of the brigade. He will probably send me to a training base. Then I shall probably go into the infantry until another American artillery unit is formed. There are now two, but both are in the lower half of Spain. Gates is a quiet, honest and very brave former steel organizer from Ohio, about twenty-six years old.

Although my present course of action is on the advice of Lieutenant Al Cohen, who has some sort of a mysterious liaison job and is highly thought of in the Communist party, and I have a pass to the front signed by an I. B. executive, it is nevertheless a more or less independent ~~action~~ move, which some small-minded persons at Badalona might describe as desertion. I left the barracks there without permission, knowing that it would be practically impossible to explain the situation to the Spanish officer in charge. There is no chance of its getting me in trouble, though, as the right people know what I am doing.

This letter and a previous one, which should arrive at the same time, I am giving to Jimmy Sheean to mail in Paris when he gets there Tuesday morning. They are therefore uncensored. Most of the letters I write you will be censored, but I think that the only taboo subjects will be military information and hypercriticism. If you should become extremely worried at any time over a newspaper account of a battle where I was supposed to be or over not having heard from me, you can probably check on my safety by cabling the American Consulate in Barcelona. I know all the people there, and they will usually know where and how I am.

Love,

Jim