

Miss Margie Polon
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New York City.

Sept 16th 1938
Barcelona, Spain

My Dear Margie
I received your wonderful awaited letter and was sure happy to hear from you. I hope this letter will not take as long to reach you as some letters take to reach me.

You must have read in all the papers by this time about our advance over the River Ebro, in which we were able to push back the fascists some, and regain some of our lost territory in which we lost during our retreat last spring. During this battle I got a few pieces of shrapnel in the feet - & was evacuated to a hospital

I'm almost all better & waiting now in Barcelona to return to the front again. - But, first about the recent battle. In my last letter to you I told you that we were in the process of training new recruits and preparing for a coming offensive. Well since that time plenty has took place. Well, one nice quite evening after supper we were told to pack up and get ready to go places. No one knew what was what, we had no idea of where we were going, but we went. We ~~was~~ marched all night and rested during the next

day, until nightfall when we marched all night again. We had an idea of something taking place as we knew we were headed for The River Ebro.

While we were resting the last day, we had a meeting with our Commissioners & Commanders & then we found out what we were going into. The fascists at that time were pounding hell ~~about~~ out of the Southern Front around Valencia & therefore it was our job to start something on this Front to relieve the pressure from our comrades in the South.

About 3 o'clock in the morning we marched from our last resting place, guns equipment etc, this time to go across the river.

About 5 that morning we reached the vicinity of the river, where we learned that a ~~small~~ battalion had already crossed & had chased the fascists back into the hills, thus making it safe for us to cross around that sector.

In to row boats we went & in no time we were on the other side. (There were no bridges as they were all blown up during our retreat. For two days we chased the fascists trying to catch up with them, and believe me, they sure know how to run.

We finally came to a town called Fontevella

where we surrounded the place. There was very little fighting there as the fascist soldiers were happy to give up and come over with us.

The hated Civil Guard was able to make their get away when they heard that we were coming.

We captured a whole house full of guns, ammunition, trench mortars, bombs, machine guns, German Stalins, etc. The people came out in the streets and welcomed us, all peasants & poor farmers. They were sure happy to see us after being under fascist rule for so many months. They told us tales of how the fascist leaders & soldiers would come to their house and take their chickens & sheep, etc. & shout at them & threaten to shoot them if they dared to raise a voice.

After we captured that town we marched on towards GANDESA, where the fascists had a big base. It was here that the fascists were able to reorganize their forces and give us some real opposition. We fought up in the high mountains overlooking Gandesa for a few days, but still it was hard to take the city. In a few more days we found out that Franco had rolled up to this front hundreds of pieces of artillery besides a few hundred bombers which were in the air almost

day and night.

from 6.30 one morning to 8. P.M. one of the worst artillery barrage I ever was in took place. The fascists must have fired thousands of shells, besides their planes dropping plenty of bombs, but still their counter-attack was a flop. We are sure they lost plenty of men.

Their main strength was Moors, & the foreign Legionnaires, which is the worst element on earth. After we attacked and drove them off one hill we found that they had left plenty of their dead behind. Oh yes! we also took a great number of prisoners. which meant a big gang of Moors.

It was on one of these hills that a shell landed near me & a few pieces hit my foot.

I see where you like to know about the farmers etc. & our ~~sect~~ relations towards them as soldiers. That can be said in one word, its healthy. You see, a great bulk of this Army is made up of farmers etc., & most of this country is farms etc. So we have to be with the peasants in every thing we do. We fight side by side with them in the same trenches, and we fight on their land, among the grape fields & Olive trees etc. We get along with them very

well in the army & then same in Civilian life. When the crops are ripe and we are in a rest position we volunteer to help them harvest their crops. When ever we get anything from them that we need, we pay the highest price.

We never molest or ruin their crops. We take nothing, unless we pay for it. We never bother them in any way that would be of a rude nature; we speak to them of ~~the~~ the coming events & what victory would mean for the farmers.

All in all we are very much respected. Of course there are some troops amongst us who are bound to do something wrong once in a while, when they do, we see that they are punished with the knowledge of the town or farm population knowing about it.

In our training base when we were at, some time ago. Our relation with the peasants was so high that the women & kids ~~cried~~ cried in the streets when we marched off to the front. Why? Because we would all get together and hold a party for the kids every now and then & buy them candy & toys etc.

We would help the people in their work, we would keep order. Every time we marched along the streets we would

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sing songs, until the people & the kids learned our songs & sang with us.

This is true of life in the army, we learn their songs & they learn ours.

When we go on leaves, many of the Spanish soldiers take us to their homes to meet their people. They think the world of us, as news travels fast, and every one gets to know about the things we do.

In one sector where we were at, the people were short of bread (PAN) so we exchanged bread for wine & grapes. etc. This we do often.

This can not be said of the fascists on their side, whom do just opposite. They care nothing of the farmer's property, or the people in general. They violate every deal-principal that has ever been made, and it's true when I say that the people in Franco's territory hope and pray for the day when the Republican Army will come in and free them like we have done in many of the sectors in Spain.

Well that's only a small idea of our relations with the peasants.

Yesterday a few fascist planes flew over the port of Barcelona and some bombs. Most of them fell in the water. Our anti aircraft chased

Them away.

This Barcelona is a great city, its about 3 times over populated. With refugees from all over the country. Cafes etc always open, & ~~has~~ ~~not~~ if there wasnt the sight of seeing soldiers walking a round you wouldnt think there was a war on, of course a great part of the city is in ruins, houses blown all to bits by bombs etc, but still life goes on.

You know I covered quite a few pages, even tho it might look like its in Chinas, but that, do to a bum wrist of my, and the fact that I want to get this letter off in a hurry before you think I forgot the adress.

I want to thank you very kindly for the cigarets, they sure came at the right moment, when I didnt have a smoke for two days, It was sweet of you to send them.

There are ~~so~~ so many more interesting things I could talk about but they will have to wait till next time. What a coincidence we must of had, me reading about you paddling a boat & not knowing where you were going to sleep that night, & me the same way, of course we had a little idea that we were either going to sleep among the angels, or on some cold ground underneath a olive tree, but you say

You are put to bed & fed. - Oh my, how lucky
& wonderful life is. Some times we have to

go days without food, because the fascists bomb
our kitchens & trucks & none of us is put to
bed, we just pass out where ever we chance
to stop.

Any way, I do hope you had a wonderful
time up at Somerset, and really enjoyed
yourself.

Well my ~~love~~ dear, I better close this
letter before I change my mind & start writing
a book!

Wont you write soon? I'm awfully
anxious to hear from you., Until next
time, Salud

Loads of Love

Mike

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