**Slippery Sliwon**

Boleslaw (Slippery) Sliwon

15th International Brigade

Lincoln Battalion

c/o S.R.I. 17.1

Albacete Spain

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Dear Comrade Samuel

I was sitting by Doug’s bed when he received your letter, somehow it made me happy to learn that you have not forgotten me, and also that you received my letter, which you still question weather its on the level or not. Well if I got a letter from you I wouldn’t care weather it was all bull, just so I heard from you and now I ask you what you got against me by not writing to me. Aint I been a real comrade didn’t we work together and dine and dance, maybe youre sore because my name is Boleslaw. If that is the case, please forgive me for carrying that kind of handle, it aint my fault, anyway I still got the other one (Slippery). Everybody want to know why, how, did I ever get such nick name, so I starts back to my Mongolians ancestors, by the time I gets to the place where I was born, they seem to be in a hurry to see someone, or they have a important duty to perform. So they never stayed long enough to hear about how I got that name.

Oh you must know that I am in the hospital recovering from a physical breakdown, nervous breakdown, yellow Jaundice, at the present I have a minor touch of remuthism in my left shoulder, and a cold not worth mentioning, but since I began coughing while I began to write this letter, it made me do so. At this beautiful seaside health resort, there are some boys you may know. There is James Crooks, Dud Male, and Katz, now you wonder who Katz is, do you know Arrow in Frisco, the one who worked in the Center’s library, well they are brothers. Ben Sills is still with the Batt. Dean joined our batt.

Lately I have received some fan mail, as I call it, two from Frisco, and two from my girl in Brooklyn. One of the letters from Frisco was from Little Frenchy Rogers, tell him I got his letter and I am sending him an answer soon.

Over here it makes a guy feel like he inherited a fortune when he gets a letter, and if you put a package of Dentyne chewing gum like Hon does, it makes you feel like going back and kissing her. Somehow nobody sent me gum, but I didn’t care, when I get back I never talk to them, I’ll boycott them, I wont even tell them stories about this war, say maybe I wont get back, then probably they’ll all have tears in there eyes, for being so unrespectful to me. Aint that right Sam. (Some more if you turn over)

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Since I left you, as they say, (traveling broaden the mind) I seen planty, could go for days talking about my experiences. Since you’re a busy man now, meaning becoming a papie to Lee, settling down to a nice peaceful home like (Boy does that sound nice to me) and raising a bunch of brats, who’ll no doubt become sailors or some kind of W.P.A. writers. Any way I hope Lee, see that you don’t become a home pest and send you out to bring home (Dinero) hard earned cash.

Happy to learn that Lee has taken the job as secretary in the Friend of Lincoln Batt. That show you that she is doing her bit to help us. Dud told me about the article you want from me for the book your writing. I think you will get plenty material about exciting experiences at the front, but I’ll tell you what I’ll do, I will write a story about the kitchen and how we worked at the front etc.

Since I have a habit of confusing things I’ll write it on separate paper and letter.

I almost forgot to tell you about our bombing we got the other day. Sitting in a café the other afternoon eating some nice fried fish, there was a loud Booming, I jumped about two feet of my chair and fell on the floor, soon I heard a roar of planes, they flew over the café, with their machine guns strafing the road or street. Good Christ I say, they’re going to blow hell out of us soon, so they circled around went back to the railroad station, and then there was another Boom Boom. They flew low as hell strafing their machine guns at people who were panic stricken, running for shelter, the town being no military value, was not armed with Antiaircraft batters. Doing their bit of demoralizing the population they flew down where all the hospitals are situated and began bombing the railroad tracks, somehow their poor bombmanship, they missed landing their bombs near an orphanage.

This orphanage has small children from age of 6 month to 14 yrs who were rescued from the fascists when they took Bilbao, all these children are mother and fatherless due to fascists marching into town, killing people, with no mercy shown. If you could only spend a day with these kids or even watch them go through their daily routine, you would say, How different from U.S. kids, How brave little soldiers of misfortune. Every day they sing songs that sound sweet and melodious, why kids in the States can’t half compare to these chubby tots. They are in school in the morning, with an hour’s recreation on the beach, after lunch have siesta and recreation, later an hour of school, I am not fairly acquainted with correct routine, but it goes something like I just mentioned. During the bombing (in fact they were in some bad bombing before) they began panicky so the soldiers would take as many as possible and look for safe shelter, for it they ran they would be killed by bullets or bombs.

The fascists planes dropped their load leaving behind several bombs that didn’t explode, an investigation was made, in the unexploded bomb were found, stuffed with German antifascist newspapers, with letter that soon made public.

I hope they never come around again. I have been nervous since my hand shakes like as if I were cold or something. I was getting over a nervous breakdown from the bombing, I was at the front in a hospital, and now I’m back again, nervous. What a sensation to be bombed. When bombs drop near you and the noise grows louder and louder, and the next one it seems like you’re going to be blown to hamburger.

I have figured out a good punishment for people who want war, and those who provoke wars. First take the bastards and put them in a place surrounded by barbed wire so that they can’t crawl out, then have about 100 airplanes fly over the place for a while, low so these bastards could see the bombs. Next on the menu have the little pursuit planes come swooping down with their machine guns rattling, with hot lead dropping around this fence, but not hitting any of these guys for that would be too easy for them at once. After half hour of these little planes, let the bombers come over and drop their load of big bombs but not on the men, no near them so that the noise could be heard, but not touched by shrapnel. After several hours of bombing, let those bastards out, and I guarantee that they would be cured of their War Mongering or any kind of war propaganda, they all would become pacifists.

This kind of treatment would be the best, because when they send bombers to bomb children, how could a person be a humanitarian, and let bastards like that get away. Give them some of their own medicine.

Many times I went through a village where fascist bombed the people, their faces showed it, sometime I was so mad at the fascists that tears began to run down my cheeks.

Dud told me you wanted to know what I thought of war. Quote Slowen, War is something miserable, that cannot be described on paper, tales of war maybe written, but one must be in war to really know what war is and its effects. Those who start wars are not humans, for war become a place where people forget they are humans and fight with no mercy shown, its either you or I that going to exist or both of us shall die.

Unquote that my way of saying just how I feel, but I am sorry to say my emotions sometimes run high with hatred or pity. One day some fascists surrendered one had his arm shot off. He was in pain and was thirsty. Sez he to me, Please give me some water. Sure, I answered and gave him the canteen, he took about two swallows, and hand it back to me, he was afraid to drink more. I knew that he was dry so gave him the canteen and told him to drink all the water. Joy swept his face, he gulped down all the water to the last drop. Thanks comrade he said, tears rolled down cheeks with happiness, they were told by the fascist officers that it meant death and torture to be captured, but after they surrender they were happy that they at last were with the loyalist people. This young boy with his shot off arm was rushed to a hospital in our ambulance. Now he may be going to school with his fellow prisoners, many of them never seen a school house till they were sent to one by the Spanish Govt. One prisoner said he wanted to surrender but Italian officers who were in command threaten to shoot anyone who surrendered. So one of the prisoners revolted and shot all the officers and said to his comrades, now lets surrender. So drop me a line and lets hear from our devoted league members. None other than the Ex Mayor of Emb. With a Salud

Boleslaw (Slippery) Sliwon

*Editor’s note:*

* *We’ve left in most of the spelling and grammatical errors.*
* *Doug [Male], mentioned at the beginning was killed in March 1938.*
* *Katz refers to Hy Katz.*
* *Hon is Esther Brown, wife of Archie*
* *Lee is Lee Kutnich, wife of Samuel. He was head of the San Francisco chapter of Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*
* *league = Young Communist League*
* *Emb = Embarcadero, as the San Francisco waterfront was called.*
* *Slippery Sliwon was killed in March 1938, still fighting the fascists.*