

PRIMARY SOURCES: WRITTEN

Selected letters and correspondence

Hyman (Chaim) Katz - letter to his mother
James Lardner – letter to his mother
Carl Geiser – letter to his brother
Boleslaw "Slippery" Sliwon – letter to a friend
Canute Frankson – letter to friend
Samuel Levinger – letter to his parents
Bunny Rucker – letter from World War II (D-Day)
John Lucid – Letter from World War II
Martha Gellhorn – Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt

Interviews, speeches and other texts

Evelyn Hutchins – excerpts from an interview
Dorothy Parker – Soldiers of the Republic, *The New Yorker*, February 5, 1938
Ernest Hemingway – *On the American Dead in Spain*
Crawford Morgan - Congressional testimony
Roosevelt – Quarantine Speech

Hyman (Chaim) Katz

Hyman Katz was a volunteer from New York. He went to Spain without telling his mother because he did not want to upset her. But when he was wounded in action in 1937, the young volunteer decided to explain to his mother why he had enlisted against her wishes.

His letter home reveals the motives of many other Jewish volunteers.

Citation:

Aaron Katz, "Letter from the Front in Spain," *Jewish Currents*, XL (February 1979), pp. 4-6, 16-17.

11/25/37

Dear Ma,

It's quite difficult for me to write this letter, but it must be done; Claire writes me that you know I'm in Spain. Of course, you know that the reason I didn't tell you where I was, is that I didn't want to hurt you. I realize that I was foolish for not understanding that you would have to find out.

I came to Spain because I felt I had to. Look at the world situation. We didn't worry when Mussolini came to power in Italy. We felt bad when Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, but what could we do? We felt--though we tried to help and sympathize--that it was their problem and wouldn't affect us. Then the fascist governments sent out agents and began to gain power in other countries. Remember the anti-Semitic troubles in Austria only about a year ago. Look at what is happening in Poland; and see how the fascists are increasing their power in the Balkans--and Greece--and how the Italians are trying to play up to the Arab leaders.

Seeing all these things--how fascism is grasping power in many countries (including the U.S., where there are many Nazi organizations and Nazi agents and spies)--can't you see that fascism is our problem--that it may come to us as it came in other countries? And don't you realize that we Jews will be the first to suffer if fascism comes?

But if we didn't see clearly the hand of Mussolini and Hitler in all these countries, in Spain we can't help seeing it. Together with their agent, Franco, they are trying to set up the same anti-progressive, anti-Semitic regime in Spain, as they have in Italy and Germany.

If we sit by and let them grow stronger by taking Spain, they will move on to France and will not stop there; and it won't be long before they get to America. Realizing this, can I sit by

and wait until the beasts get to my very door--until it is too late, and there is no one I can call on for help? And would I even deserve help from others when the trouble comes upon me, if I were to refuse help to those who need it today? If I permitted such a time to come--as a Jew and a progressive, I would be among the first to fall under the axe of the fascists;--all I could do then would be to curse myself and say, "Why didn't I wake up when the alarm-clock rang?"

But then it would be too late--just as it was too late for the Jews in Germany to find out in 1933 that they were wrong in believing that Hitler would never rule Germany.

I know that you are worried about me; but how often is the operation which worries us, most necessary to save us? Many mothers here, in places not close to the battle-front, would not let their children go to fight, until the fascist bombing planes came along; and then it was too late. Many mothers here have been crippled or killed, or their husbands and children maimed or killed; yet some of these mothers did not want to send their sons and husbands to the war, until the fascist bombs taught them in such a horrible manner--what common sense could not teach them.

Yes, Ma, this is a case where sons must go against their mothers' wishes for the sake of their mothers themselves. So I took up arms against the persecutors of my people--the Jews--and my class--the Oppressed. I am fighting against those who establish an inquisition like that of their ideological ancestors several centuries ago, in Spain. Are these traits which you admire so much in a Prophet Jeremiah or a Judas Maccabeus, bad when your son exhibits them? Of course, I am not a Jeremiah or a Judas; but I'm trying with my own meager capabilities, to do what they did with their great capabilities, in the struggle for Liberty, well-being, and Peace....

Lovingly,
Chaim

James Lardner

The second of four sons of writer Ring Lardner, James was born in Chicago in 1914. Educated at Andover and Harvard, he went on to become a reporter for the New York *Herald Tribune*, and in 1938 he joined the Paris bureau.

After his articles about the Spanish Civil War did not have the expected impact, Lardner joined the Lincoln Brigade, the Americans fighting for the democratically elected government of Spain. He was the last American killed in the conflict.

In this letter, he explains to his mother why he has quit his job at the *Herald Tribune* in order to join the ranks of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

Citation:

James Lardner Mss, ALBA Collection #67, Tamiment Library, New York University

Barcelona, May 3, 1938.

Mother, darling,

This is a letter which I started to write on April 10. At that time I thought I was going to have to break the news to you gently, but you seem to have heard it before I had the chance. I have kept putting off writing you because each day it seemed as if on the next I would know what I was going to do and where I would be stationed. I still don't know exactly what the situation is, but I am leaving in half an hour for Badalona, about seven miles up the coast, where I will learn the rudiments of artillery in company with a new mixed international unit. It looks as if French will be the medium of instruction. I shall let you know more as soon as I can.

This is a most exclusive army. It has taken me twelve days of going from persons to person and office to office to get where I am. I have listened to advice of all varieties, a large part of it against my enlisting at all. The decision has been very much my own, and I took it after a great deal of consideration. My closest friend and principal adviser here has been Vincent (Jimmy) Sheean, who told me not to join, which shows you how stubborn I am, if you didn't know. Ernest Hemingway's advice was that it was a very fine thing if I wanted to fight against fascism, but that it was a personal matter that could only be decided by me.

I don't know how closely you have followed the war, but I imagine you must have an exaggerated idea of the danger of our position. On the map it looks as if Catalonia were a small fragment of territory about to be pushed into the Mediterranean, but in reality it is a lot of country, and I don't think it will ever be conquered. There are too many people here who are fighting for things they believe in, and too few on the other side.

My views on the whole question are too complicated for me to try to explain here. I hope you are on our side and will try to convince your friends that I am not just being foolish. Not that I mind being thought foolish, but American opinion is a very important factor.

I have made up a list of reasons why I am enlisting in the International Brigade, which is fairly accurate, as I did it for my own information. I am copying it here so that you may see for yourself which are the real ones. Some of them are picayune and most of them would have been insufficient in themselves, but all have something to do with it.

Because I believe that fascism is wrong and must be exterminated, and that liberal democracy or more probably communism is right.

Because my joining the I. B. might have an effect on the amendment of the neutrality act in the United States.

Because after the war is over I shall be a more effective anti-fascist.

Because in my ambitious quest for knowledge in all fields, I cannot afford in this age to overlook war.

Because I shall come into contact with a lot of communists, who are very good company and from whom I expect to learn things.

Because I am mentally lazy and should like to do some physical work for a change.

Because I need something remarkable in my background to make up for my unfortunate self-consciousness in social relations.

Because I am tired of working for the Herald Tribune in particular and newspapers in general.

Because I think it will be good for my soul.

Because there is a girl in Paris who will have to learn that ~~if~~ my presence is not necessary to her existence.

Because I want to impress various people, Bill for one.

Because I hope to find material for some writing, probably a play.

Because I want to improve my Spanish as well as my French.

Because I want to know what it is like to be afraid of something and I want to see how other people react to danger.

Because there may be a chance to do some reading and I won't have to wear a necktie.

Because I should like once more to get in good physical condition.

The first four reasons and the ninth, especially the first, are the most important ones in my opinion, but you may decide for yourself. I have also considered a few reasons why I should not join the army, such as that I might get seriously wounded or killed and that I shall cause you many weeks of worry. I am sorry for your sake that they are not enough to dissuade me. If it is any comfort to you at all, I still hate violence and cruelty and suffering and if I survive this war do not expect to take any dangerous part in the next.

If you still consider me one of your sons, you can send me an occasional letter and possibly a package now and then. My address here, I think, will be in care of the Brigadas Internacionales, but for a while I think it will be simpler to communicate through the Sheeans. Anything edible would be appreciated, milk chocolate or raisins, or anything in cans that does not require preparation.

Love,

Jim

Carl Geiser

Carl Frederick Geiser was born in Orrville, Ohio on December 10, 1910. He was the oldest of six children; his father, a farmer, died in the influenza epidemic at the end of World War I, and his mother a year later of tuberculosis. His maternal grandparents, Swiss immigrants who spoke little English, raised Geiser and his siblings. The young Geiser received his primary education in a one-room schoolhouse while helping to tend the family's sixteen-acre farm. Upon his graduation from Orrville High School in 1928, he enrolled in the YMCA School of Technology (later Fenn College) in Cleveland, where he majored in electrical engineering.

In 1932, following the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, Geiser was part of the first National Student Federation mission to travel to the newly recognized country. This visit had a decisive influence on shaping Geiser's political thinking. Impressed by the Soviet system and the tenets of socialist ideology, Geiser joined the Young Communist League upon his return to Ohio. He became an active force in the American Student Union in Cleveland and served as a delegate to the First Student Congress Against War and Fascism held in Chicago. It was there that Geiser met his future wife Sylvia, a teacher and organizer who shared his political fervor. The couple moved to New York where they were absorbed into a dynamic culture of political activism and organizing. Geiser wrote press releases and edited International Labor Defense bulletins, organized for the League against War and Fascism, and in 1936 was elected to the National Committee of the Young Communist League.

On April 13, 1937 Geiser boarded the *S.S. Georgico* to join the International Brigades massing in defense of the Spanish Republic. He served as an ammunition carrier at the Battle of Brunete, saw action at Quinto, and advanced to the rank of Lieutenant. Following the Battle of Belchite in September 1937, Geiser was promoted to Political Commissar and charged with the organization of a training school for commissars at Tarazona. Wounded at the conflict at Fuentes de Ebro, Geiser was hospitalized for three months. Returned to the front as Commissar of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion in January 1938, he was captured by fascist forces on April 1, 1938. For the next year, he was interned at San Pedro de Cardena, along with over 650 International Brigades prisoners. Through the efforts of the Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and the U.S. State Department, Geiser and a group of 71 Americans were released in April 1939.

Geiser returned to New York and secured an engineering position with Liquidometer, a manufacturer of aeronautic equipment. Working with the company in various capacities for the next 40 years, Geiser filed numerous patents and, as a research director, supervised the testing of a component used in the first lunar mission. He also served briefly as president of Local 1227 of the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America. He and Sylvia had two boys, Jim and Pete, before divorcing in 1946. With his second wife Doris he had a son and a daughter, David and Linda. In 1956 Geiser enrolled at Columbia University's

School of General Studies as a psychology major, and graduated with a B.S. degree cum laude in 1963.

By the early 1970s, Geiser turned his attention once more to Spain. At the promptings of his wife, Geiser enrolled in a memoir-writing class. The essay he wrote on a Christmas concert held in San Pedro de Cardena found publication in *The New York Times*, and its positive reception provided the impetus for Geiser to produce a more extensive treatment of his concentration camp experience. Upon retirement at age 71, Geiser began to write a comprehensive history of American volunteers captured during the Spanish Civil War. With the assistance of fellow prisoner Robert Steck, Geiser amassed biographical information on the 120 Americans incarcerated in Spanish prisons. He also corresponded with over 150 veterans worldwide to solicit their reminiscences, and traveled to archives in the United States and Europe to conduct research. Ring Lardner, Jr., (whose brother James was killed in action while fighting with the International Brigades) and members of Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, eager to see the project to fruition, provided financial support. Five years of research and writing culminated in the production of a 900-page manuscript. *Prisoners of the Good Fight*, a shortened version of his account, was published in 1986.

Carl Geiser

May 9, 1937
Albacete, Spain

Dear Brother Bennet & Grace:¹

Probably you are a bit surprised to hear I am in Spain fighting with the army of the Spanish Republic. And so I suppose you want to know why I am here.

But before I do this, I'll let you know I am well, busy and happy, and quite safe for the time being.

The reasons I am here is because I want to do my part to prevent a second world war, which would without doubt, draw in the United States and seriously set back our civilization. And secondly, because all of our democratic and liberty-loving training makes me anxious to fight fascism, and to help the Spanish people drive out the fascist invaders sent in by Hitler & Mussolini.

You probably have 2 questions, or rather objections to my being here. One, that the fight here is between the "Reds" and the church & democracy, and 2 that my being here tends to draw the U.S.A. into war.

If these things are true then I actually should not be here. And if you think they are true, you have been badly and maybe purposefully deceived. And in the time I have been here, I have been able to ascertain without doubt, that the fight here is between democracy and fascism, and not between communism & fascism or democracy.

Last July 16, an uprising was begun against the democratic legally elected Republican Government of Spain. It was organized and financed by Hitler & Mussolini. Fortunately the leader of the uprising was killed by a plane crash as he was returning from Berlin to Spain. The uprising was supported by few Spaniards, notably the big landowners who have starved the Spanish people for generations, the largest capitalists, the nobility, and the majority of the Army, especially the officers, and certain sections of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church who were rich & powerful & often held large lands.

The uprising would have been squelched within a short time, if Hitler & Mussolini had not sent in tanks, airplanes, weapons, and men, until today they are literally invading Spain.

What would happen if Franco, Hitler, & Mussolini were victorious? It would mean that fascism would be stronger everywhere, & fascism means war. Democratic France would be encircled by fascist states preparing for war. The conquest of Spain is part of the fascist preparation for a new world war.

On which side is the church? The great majority of the Catholics are on the side of the government. How much the fascists love Catholics may be seen from Franco's wiping out of a village of 10,000 in Basque territory which is completely Catholic. Also you know what Hitler is doing to the Church in Germany.

So you can see, it is a matter of checking fascism and war, of preserving democracy & peace. We ought not think that if the fascists take Spain we are safe, no more than we ought to think our house is safe if the neighbor's is on fire. Protect yours by helping your

¹ Bennet is Carl's younger brother by a year, and Grace is Bennet's wife.

neighbor put out his fire. That is why the idea of "neutrality", of keep out of Spain, is very wrong and harmful. Everyone who wants democracy and peace must help the Spanish government, and right away. Frankly, if the Spanish government is victorious, Germany & Italy will be surrounded by more or less democratic countries, and we shall have an excellent chance of avoiding another world war.

I am a member of a machine gun crew in the American Battalion of the International Brigades. And the members of the International Brigades that had come from 52 countries, (I don't know if there are any more countries) and are representing the working people of his country, and here to fight fascism & war. And it looks now, with the continued support of the peace & democracy loving people of the world, that the Spanish government will win in time, and that fascism will be greatly weakened. But our powerful democratic Republic of the United States is not doing enough, is not carrying its share of the fight for peace & democracy. The rich & reactionary men of the USA, who too want fascism, have many Americans deceived and inactive. That is something we have to change.

A few words about my life here. At present I am perfecting my knowledge of the operation of the machine gun. Food is plain, not enough of course, it consists mostly of soups, beans, rice, bread, bully beef & wine. Since there is a shortage of water one has to drink wine. Milk, eggs, chocolate, most vegetables, pastries, are not served and can be bought only occasionally. Soap is also lacking, and we feel this more than anything else. But on the whole, the food is good, the weather quite warm & sunny & the exercise very beneficial.

Quite a few of my friends are here both from New York & Cleveland. And our relations with the Spanish people are very cordial.

I wish I could write to all my friends in Orrville, but it is not possible, and I shall have to trust to you to tell them I am here, and why. I hope you will especially tell Marie, Amos, Rose, & Gus.² Tell them all I send them my warmest regards.

You can write me here — Carl Geiser
Socorro Rojo Internacional³
Place Altozano
20 G.P.
Albacete, Spain

And I hope you write very soon.
& give my regards to Leonard also.

Very sincerely,
Your Brother, Carl

P.S. 12 oranges for 4 cents, so we eat them all day long.
They grow them here and they are plentiful.

By the way, I don't need any money or anything else. The best way you can help me is by helping the people of Orrville know the truth about what is happening in Spain.
Carl

² Sister, uncle, and an aunt who married Gus back in Ohio.

³ Socorro Rojo Internacional (SRI), International Red Aid, took the place of the Red Cross in Republican Spain.

Slippery Sliwon

Boleslaw (Slippery) Sliwon
15th International Brigade
Lincoln Battalion
c/o S.R.I. 17.1
Albacete Spain
Nov 28, 1937

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 disrespectful to me. Aint that right Sam. (Some more if you turn over)

(Page 2 of the 'Unfinished Manuscript)

Since I left you, as they say, (traveling broaden the mind) I seen plenty, 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 if 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.*

Canute Frankson

Frankson was born in the Parish of St. Catherine, Old Harbor, Jamaica on April 13, 1890. In 1917, together with his wife, Rachel, he emigrated to Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, where Frankson worked as a machinist. Frankson eventually settled in Detroit, where he worked in the auto industry. Frankson joined the Communist Party in 1934. He sailed for Europe aboard the Queen Mary on April 21, 1937.

In Spain, skilled machinists were scarce and Frankson with his proven ability was rapidly promoted. He was appointed Head Mechanic at the International Garage in Albacete. Fellow International Garage veteran, Marion Noble, noted that Frankson's fluency in Spanish was a great asset and that many hours of his free time were spent teaching engine repair classes to young Spaniards.

Frankson returned to the United States aboard the President Harding on September 24, 1938. Frankson was killed in an auto accident in either 1939 or 1940.

Citation:

Cary Nelson and Jefferson Hendricks, *Madrid 1937* (New York, 1996), pp. 33-35.

Excerpts from letter

Albacete, Spain
July 6, 1937

My Dear Friend,

I'm sure that by this time you are still waiting for a detailed explanation of what has this international struggle to do with my being here. Since this is a war between whites who for centuries have held us in slavery, and have heaped every kind of insult and abuse upon us, segregated and jim-crowed us; why I, a Negro who have fought through these years for the rights of my people, am here in Spain today?

Because we are no longer an isolated minority group fighting hopelessly against an immense giant. Because, my dear, we have joined with, and become an active part of, a great progressive force on whose shoulders rests the responsibility of saving human civilization from the planned destruction of a small group of degenerates gone mad in their lust for power. Because if we crush Fascism here we'll save our people in America, and in other parts of the world from the vicious persecution, wholesale imprisonment, and slaughter which the Jewish people suffered and are suffering under Hitler's Fascist heels. All we have to do is to think of the lynching of our people. We can but look back at the pages of American history stained with the blood of Negroes; stink

with the burning bodies of our people hanging from trees; bitter with the groans of our tortured loved ones from whose living bodies ears, fingers, toes have been cut for souvenirs^{3/4} living bodies into which red-hot poker have been thrust. All because of a hate created in the minds of men and women by their masters who keep us all under their heels while they suck our blood, while they live in their bed of ease by exploiting us....

...We will crush them. We will build us a new society - a society of peace and plenty. There will be no color line, no jim-crow trains, no lynching. That is why, my dear, I'm here in Spain.

On the battlefields of Spain we fight for the preservation of democracy. Here, we're laying the foundation for world peace, and for the liberation of my people, and of the human race. Here, where we're engaged in one of the most bitter struggles of human history, there is no color line, no discrimination, no race hatred. There's only one hate, and that is the hate for Fascism. We know why our enemies are. The Spanish people are very sympathetic towards us. They are lovely people. I'll tell you about them later....

Don't think for one moment that the strain of this terrible war or the many miles between us has changed my feelings towards you. Our friendship has meant a great deal to me, and still means much to me. I appreciate it because it has always been a friendship of devoted and mutual interest. And I'll do whatever is within my power to maintain it.

No one knows the time he'll die, even under the most favorable conditions. So I, a soldier in active service, must know far less about how far or how close is death. But as long as I hold out I'll keep you in touch with events. Sometimes when I go to the fronts the shells drop pretty close. Then I think it's only a matter of minutes. After I return here to the base I seem to see life from a new angle. Somehow it seems to be more beautiful. I'd think of you, home and all my friends, then get to working more feverishly than ever. Each of us must give all we have if this Fascist beast is to be destroyed.

After this is over I hope to share my happiness with you....

So long. Until some future date. One never knows when there'll be time to write. There's so much to do and so little time in which to do it. Love,

Salud,
Canute

Sam Levinger

When he volunteered in 1937 to fight against fascism during the Spanish Civil War, 20-year old Samuel Levinger was an undergraduate at Ohio State University in Columbus, a Socialist, and the son of a rabbi. He was an exceptionally sensitive man. He was also an excellent writer—of stories, letters, and poetry.

Sam Levinger

In case of death only,
please send this to Mrs. Lee J. Levinger
2257 Indianola Ave. Columbus, Ohio
U.S.A.

Do not send in case of injury.
Thanks, comrade.
Samuel Levinger

Dear Mother and Father:

I suppose that by the time you receive this, I will have been dead several weeks. Of course, war is a confused thing, and I have seen enough certified corpses walking around to make me a little skeptical, but if you receive this and an official announcement too, count it as definite.

This is the last day of relief. We are going up to some front tomorrow to clear out the Fascists. I do not doubt that we will be successful in repatriating the boys across the street, but it will be at considerable cost, and as the Lincoln Battalion is good it should be in the middle of it.

I still stick by my original conviction that I will be alive long after a whole lot of dictators have died of lead poisoning or hardened arteries; but I've been wrong on other matters before. Hence I decided to write this letter.

Certainly I am not enthusiastic about dying. I've gotten a good bit of fun out of my first twenty years despite the fact that, except for the last six months they were pretty useless. I suppose I would have enjoyed my next twenty just as much. I wanted to write this letter, however, to make clear that there is absolutely nothing to regret.

If I were alive again I think I would join in the battle again at this crucial place. There was an extremely important job to do over here and I was one of the men who decided to do it. That a good many of us were killed while doing it is unfortunate, and the fact that I was killed is still more unfortunate from our standpoints. However, this has no relevance to the necessity of doing the job. This difference between world Fascist and world socialism is too great to permit out safeties to be a factor for consideration.

Next I want to beg both of you not to see this out of context. World change is a stern master. It had killed and will kill millions of boys as dear to somebody as I am to you. The Fascists want war, and bitter war we will give them.

You are more fortunate than many of the parents, for you still have two children with extremely bright futures. You have your extremely valuable work. I am less able to evaluate Father's work, though I realize its great worth; but in my field, that of an author, I can say I think Mother should become one of the most valuable authors of the generation. And you still have the emancipation of America to be achieved.

I think my ideas on immortality agree largely with yours. I once wrote a lousy poem "If there is darkness beyond I shall sleep, if light I shall wake." So if I meet you folks again all to the good-- if not, we've had quite a bit of pleasure in each other's company while it lasted. As for my friends, give them my love if you run across them. Tell them I said there's only one thing to remember--that there's one comrade less to do the job of soldier of discontent. They'll all have to do some work to make up for my getting perforated. See if that will get a few of these mugwumps into action.

This has been a clumsy letter. I just want to say that I love you both a great deal, and so forth. Also that it isn't such a serious thing.

Love and revolutionary greetings.

Joy to the world.

Samuel Levinger

Poem written in the hospital after being wounded a second time at Brunete.

The War Is Long

Comrades, the battle is bloody, the war is long:
Across grey hills ahead hear the shout of the guns;
Above us sweep white planes pregnant with pain:
See the tanks sullen and savage, hating flesh:
And listen--the rifles are pointing men out for oblivion:
The winging machine guns are beating the drums of death.

Comrades, the battle is bloody, the war is long:
There lies a comrade, head swathed in blood and bandages:
There stands a broken comrade with white face twitching;
There lie our dead, waiting for a little sand.
And we are tired with war and sick with danger.
Dreaming of girls waiting a long ways off:
And there is blood on our hands we cannot wash clean.
Blood on our souls which will not wash off for a long time.

Comrades, the battle is bloody, the war is long:

Still let us climb the grey hill and charge the guns.
Pressing with lean bayonets toward the slopes beyond.
Soon those who are still living will see green grass.
A free bright country shining with a star:
And those who charged the guns will be remembered:
And from red blood white pinnacles shall tower.

Editor's Note:

After giving a lecture recently at the University of Vermont, I was approached by Levinger's niece, Laurie Levinson, who offered samples of her uncle's writings.

The first is a letter that is self-explanatory as to its purpose and intention and, fair warning, will touch most readers deeply. The second is a work of poetry.

We publish both pieces with the permission of Ms Levinger who has recently published a biography of her uncle, Love and Revolutionary Greetings

- Peter N. Carroll

From: *The Good Fight Continues. World War II Letters from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*. Ed. Peter Carroll, Mel Small, and Michael Nash. NY: NYU Press, 2006.

FROM JAMES BERNARD (BUNNY) RUCKER

June 6, 1944

D-Day

The Second Front is jumping, and here we are, at the farthest point in the world from the war. Very strategically placed reserves in Arizona. The "Charging Buffaloes"! who are trained to seek out the enemy and defeat him in battle. What's going on, on the other side of these mountains around us? I hear there's a war going on somewhere. We're doing a good job of lying around camp. Plenty beer in the PX. Roller-skating, books in the library, tennis courts, baseball games. Typical Army camp life you civilians have ordered for us.

I am carrying out your specific order to FIGHT. We are all holding the Huachuca Front, just in case Geronimo's ghost or Pancho Villa's start an attack on our democracy. The bitterness rises with each new bulletin that comes over the radio. Many things come to mind as one contemplates an immobilized mass of trained soldiers. Immobilized by Jim Crow. Behind the formidable barriers of the Huachuca mountains. We are in an impregnable position from which to "seek out and defeat the enemy in battle."

Love,

Bunny

But how in the world can I hope for a picture you presented of the American people openly denouncing Jim Crow as fascist. [. . .]

The other night in a newsreel, an Oklahoma white soldier, recently released from Hitler's prisons, was interviewed. He related how he told the Nazis that we have equality in America. The whole theatre rocked with boos for 15 minutes. Does this soldier call Oklahoma Jim Crow—equality? Is that the support which Negroes will expect from a Postwar America? Will a returned army tell us that we have equality in America? Oklahoma "equality" is certainly not a war aim of the Negro people, but that is what we have. Our general was booed something terrific the other day at a ball game. I was at the game but the booing could be heard all over the Post for a long time. The 92nd song was played and no one sang. The general stepped to the middle of the field insisting that everyone sing. It sounded like a Brooklyn-Cincinnati ball game. The general can't be blamed. He was assigned to this job and is under his orders[. . .]

John Lucid

October 14 [1942]

Dear Archie [Brown],

Didn't get a chance to see you when I dropped by on my way out. At the time I was considerably cheered up because it seemed that I would stop putting on fat as my contribution to the defeat of fascism. Altho I knew the outfit here was a Quartermaster company, even truck driving or warehousing is better than sitting on your ass--if you can't stay in a combat outfit.

However, I hadn't looked forward to being in the Wehrmacht. And that is what I am in here, in effect. Altho it is called the 358 Quartermaster, it consists largely of German nationals or people of German extraction. There are a few Italians. Moreover, these people are I am sure not a cross-section of German-Americans. Anti-semitism is the core of their intellectual processes. Not all of them perhaps, but most of them certainly. One bastard, perhaps the smartest character in the bunch, ran for congress with Coughlin backing some where in the middle west. He is a veritable sewer of Fascist ideology. Another guy, a well educated bloke! apparently, spent the hour before lights out last night spewing out filth that marks him as a careful student of Streicher and Goebbels.⁴ And from down the line of double-tiered bunks came appreciations of his efforts.

There are also some anti-fascists here. Besides a small cadre of soldiers assigned to start the company--it is only a month or so old--there are three veterans of the International Brigades--you may know Morris, for one. And there is a guy named Spencer from Philadelphia who was active in the unemployed movement. And one from Wisconsin, a left-winger in the youth movement is here--his name is Hudson. Altogether ten or a dozen anti-fascists I think.

So, naturally it is necessary that these Nazi sympathizers and so on be put on ice. I would even say they are getting too good a deal here, as most of them are quite glad to be out of danger. There is little enough to do, and the sonsofbitches are far from downhearted. But, of course, the handful of antifascists want to do our part in the war and hate like hell to rub elbows with such a bunch. Or so I think.

Best Regards,
Jack

Jack Lucid (1915-77), a student at the University of Washington before going to Spain in 1938, eventually fought with the Rangers in Italy, earning a Silver Star at Anzio, and participated in the liberation of a Nazi concentration camp in Germany.

⁴ Julius Streicher and Joseph Goebbels were leading Nazi propagandists.

Martha Gellhorn – Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt

Martha Gellhorn (1908–1998) was an American novelist, travel writer, and journalist, considered to be one of the greatest war correspondents of the 20th century. She reported on virtually every major world conflict that took place during her 60-year career. Gellhorn was also the third wife of American novelist Ernest Hemingway, from 1940 to 1945. She and Hemingway were in Spain together during the Spanish Civil War. She was a friend of first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Hemingway worked together with the Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens on the Spanish Civil War documentary *The Spanish Earth*, which they were invited to screen at the White House for FDR and Mrs. Roosevelt on July 8, 1937.

1938

G. F. L. HORN

Dearest Mrs. Roosevelt:

Your letter made me very happy. It was a kind of de coeur avec vous, and what you say about the Neutrality Act is what, for a year seeing it work one-sidedly in Spain, we have ^{all} thought ^{here}. Yesterday, the papers ~~x~~ say, the Act was coming up for revision and we do not yet know what happened. We are asked by everyone and we ask each other, and we wait for the news. Right now, the Neutrality Act is of the greatest importance. Because the fight is far from lost here, but material is sadly needed. The much bragged of Italian advance to the sea was done with planes and artillery, against brave men who were inadequately armed. Whole ~~big~~ divisions (amongst them the American Brigade) were surrounded and cut off, and fought their way through the Fascists, back to Government territory, reformed their lines and fought again, again to be surrounded, again to fight their way through and reform. The military history of the period of the war since Gandessa, on April 2, is a story of men overwhelmed by planes and guns, who never saw enemy infantry, but who have somehow managed now (April 24) to reform and reorganize their lines and calmly, serenely and determinedly carry on. There has been neither panic nor disorder, neither in the rear -- Barcelona -- nor at the front. A retreat before impossible ^{heavy} armaments was carried out with order, and the line now holds. Even the refugees -- and they leave home often with a small bundle wrapped in a handkerchief, abandoning everything to get out, -- are quiet and patient on the ~~xxx~~ roads, neither hysterical nor dramatic, but only determined not to live where the Fascists rule.

Just before the Fascists reached the sea, I was out on the road and watched for ⁵ fifty minutes twelve black German planes, flying in a perfect circle, not varying their position, flying and bombing and diving to machine gun: and they were working on one company of Government soldiers, who had no planes or anti-aircraft to protect them but who were standing there, holding up the advance so as to permit an orderly retreat. That same day we watched thirty three silver Italian bombers fly in wedges over the mountains across the hot clear sky to bomb Tortosa: and anywhere and everywhere is proof of the huge amount of new material sent in for this drive, and everywhere is proof of the unbending resistance of Loyalist Spain. But to penalize

these people, who are our kind of people and believe what we believe and want a kind of society we take for granted, seems unheard of. I am again impressed by the unshakeably democratic quality of Loyalist Spain, talking with del Vayo, reading their newspapers, seeing the troops and the officers, watching life as it goes on here. And it goes on. ~~My~~ It goes on in a way to make you very proud of the human animal. Franco will have to do away with about twenty million Spaniards before he could ever rule this country.

Now, for instance, new plans are afoot for children's homes and hospitals, and no one thinks in terms of time, ^{of war operations,} but in terms of the future of Spain. The air raids, lately only on the port, go on, and the siren whines over the city. We were in a movie house Sunday morning seeing the Spanish Earth (remember?) It had been running five minutes when it flickered to a stop. A man's voice announced apologetically: "There's an air raid." There were about a thousand people there, and bombs have fallen all over this city and you'd have to see what they can do ~~xxx~~ within a radius of five blocks to know what destruction is like. But no one in that theatre moved, or panicked. Presently the orchestra appeared and played the national anthem and after that a selection of fine ^{brassy} romantic music that sounded very funny indeed and everyone chatted and waited and after an hour the electricity went on again and so did the film. This morning at five there was another siren rising and falling and wailing over the city, and then against the night sky the searchlights climbing up and bending back against the clouds, and the tracer bullets from the anti aircraft slowly going up like hot red bars. And the searchlights crawled against the clouds and the ^{anti-} ~~anti~~ aircraft pounded over the city and when it was all over, I heard a man walking down the street, singing to himself, and the city was as quiet as a village before dawn.

I do not see how they can lose, unless the democracies allow Hitler and Mussolini to continue sending unlimited supplies. Neither man power nor ability nor determination are lacking: but it is not a fight between Spaniards, it is a fight between one democracy and three Fascisms. And so we sit here and hope to heaven that a sense of justice and a sense of self protection will guide the House and Senate and that the government of Spain will be allowed to buy with good gold those things its armies need to save its people, its land and that droll thing, the faith in a kind of freedom we still call

1938

democracy.

I am writing this by the light of two candles, uncertainty, after a day out at a quiet part of the front. It has been one of the things to do lately, to go about and find one's old friends. To find them so sure, so unchanging, so excellent and humorous and simple and brave, is a good thing to have known in one's life. I find myself foolishly patriotic about the Americans -- about half of the Lincoln-Washington Brigade is lost since this last push-- I find that I love them immeasurably, am immeasurably proud of them, individually and collectively, and proud of their record and proud of the reasons that brought them here and keep them here. I never saw better men in my life in any country, and what they are willing to die for if need be is what you -- in your way and place -- are willing to live for.

You must read a book by a man named Steer: it is called "The Tree of Gernika." It is about the fight of the Basques -- he's the London Times man -- and no better book has come out of the war and he says well all the things I have tried to say to you the times I saw you, after Spain. It is beautifully written and true, and few books are like that, and fewer still that deal with war. Please get it.

My plans are uncertain. I am staying to see what happens next. Things look fixexxx now, ~~and~~ the Fascists are directing their attack on the other half of Spain so it is very quiet here, for the moment. I have a huge job to do in Cheko-Slovakia, England and France for Collier's, and my daily bread may drive me out for a while but then I'll come back. What goes on here seems to me very much the affair of all of us, who do not want a world whose bible is Mein Kampf. I believe now as much as ever that Spain is fighting our battle, and will not forget that night when we brought the film, ^{to the White House,} and the President said: Spain is a visarious sacrifice for all of us... But I think Spain is maybe not a sacrifice, but a champion: and hope to God that America at least will not go on letting this country down.

And you know something else, this country is far too beautiful for the Fascists to have it. They have already made Germany and Italy and Austria so loathesome that even the scenery is inadequate, and every time I drive on the roads ^{here} and see the rock mountains and the tough terraced fields, and the umbrella pines above the beaches,

and the dust colored villages and the gravel river beds and the peasant's faces, I think: Save Spain for decent people, it's too beautiful to waste...

This is very hard work, writing in this light, and I've written enough. I only tell you details, and what you think is what I think about this thing, and all along it had made me proud to know that you were always understanding this and always hating (as we all hate more and more) this ruthless invading war. But words are going to do nothing: Fascism has the best technique of words, the daring sustained lie, and it works... Around now, the people of Spain need airplanes.

What a world we live in after all: it seems such a ghastly mess that I place blame very heavily right now on two men, and wish I knew one cannot begin to place blame. It is as horrible and senseless as more history. earthquake and flood, and the faces of the people caught in the disaster -- the old women walking on the roads, with heavy bundles, walking away from their homes, and stretching out their opened hands, wearily and desperately, to all cars, wanting only a ride to go some place else, away, though they do not know where and they do not care -- well, one won't forget these faces, ever.

Don't know when I'll be back in America, have three months work over here at the minimum, and always wanting to see how things go, and why. I wish I could have seen you but I left so fast, after reading the papers, and anyhow you were on the west coast I think. But someday I'll hope to see you and tell you about all this and someday write it. There's a curious similarity between the endurance I saw in the unemployed -- a kind of heroism in peacetime disaster -- and this: and I want to write it. ~~And~~ And this letter is now like a book and enough of it. I send you as always my love and admiration, and please give my respects to Mr. Roosevelt.

Always,

Marty

Barcelona

April 24 or 25

Evelyn Hutchins

Evelyn Hutchins was born in Snohomish, Washington in 1910 and developed an independent spirit as a child. Her divorced mother was a worker and agitator for suffrage for women, her stepfather a maritime worker blacklisted on the west coast for striking. Evelyn moved to New York as a young woman to be a dancer, but wound up in sleazy burlesque clubs when the Depression forced her to accept any work.

Educated in the school of hard knocks, she demanded respect as a feminist. When the Spanish Civil War broke out, she drove trucks to collect clothing and other humanitarian aid to ship to Spain, and when the call for recruits for the American Medical Bureau went out in late 1936, she volunteered to be an ambulance driver. However, the organizers considered her unqualified for the risky work because she was a woman. Hutchins continued to agitate for the opportunity and eventually convinced them to send her to Spain. There she served courageously as a truck driver, experiencing dangerous combat conditions on many occasions.

After the war, the Yale University sociologist Dr. John Dollard interviewed Hutchins as part of a study on the meaning of fear in battle; his published work was used by the U.S. Army for morale training during World War II.

Dollard's interview, conducted around 1942, is excerpted below.

Citation:

The complete interview can be found in John Dollard's manuscript collection: ALBA Collection #122, Tamiment Library, New York University.

Excerpt from an Interview with Evelyn Hutchins

I went to drive. They probably considered that in case something went wrong I could do a lot of clerical work. On that basis they were willing to send me there.

I had driven a number of ambulances here around the city, taking them back and forth to the boat, and they were satisfied that I really could handle the cars. It was found that I could drive the car as well as, and better than, some of the fellows who were going...Some fellows thought it was very funny that I should be there driving. I am little but I never made any attempt to swagger or act mannish. I acted just the way I always acted. I used to argue with them about it. They would say, "You are so little, what can you do?" And I would tell them, "I am just me." I was a girl, I was small and didn't weigh much but I was doing a job and wasn't that enough. They would like to take pictures of me next to my truck; because I was small they thought it was very funny. Some of them would say, "All I have to do is give one hard blow and you'll keel over." But the important thing was that the fellows who understood why I wanted to be there, why I had taken the job of driving which was the only

possibility of getting as close as I could to the actual fighting, they didn't think a girl shouldn't want to fight and have a machine gun instead of driving a car - these fellows were the fellows who took the thing seriously, and I found them to have a more serious and level headed attitude about things that happened.

I always had to shift for myself and take care of myself and make my own decisions, and sometimes it would be tough on me. If that conditions you, I was conditioned. On the other hand I have always been very incensed at a lot of different injustices I have seen, and at the injustices I have seen against women. I have been frustrated so many times because I was not a man. So I probably see things faster than somebody else who doesn't care. Some girls might not mind not being allowed to go to the army...I was always told by everybody that I must not do this, or I must not do that because girls don't do those things. I was told so many times that girls are inferior to men, that men can do things and girls can't, and I couldn't take it. I didn't care how hard it was on me.

So far as the political situation in Europe, I am not like some people who think that all this stuff is just propaganda. I remember when Mussolini issued a decree - I was just a kid at the time - he issued a decree that women were not to wear short skirts, and that they were to keep their proper places. Well, Mussolini was definitely out so far as I was concerned. I was convinced that anybody with that kind of an attitude was absolutely no good for the people generally. I never felt that I was an outstanding genius, but people had to give me a chance to think and develop whatever thinkabilities I had. If a person would not give me a chance I would fight them. Hitler has the system where he sends women to camps to be breeders. That strikes me at my very most innermost desire for freedom, and self-expression, and for culture, and education. Just being an ordinary human-being I couldn't tolerate a thing like that. It has gotten to mean so much to me that I don't care what I do in the process of fighting against conditions like that.

I got the idea of going to Spain first and then my husband got the idea and my brother got the idea, and they got there ahead of me. And I worked so hard to go over there. I had saved money for it, I had to convince people. I had to argue with them, and to prove things. But the average fellow or my husband had no difficulty getting there. It might have helped that he was there. I don't know....I went over there because I wanted to do a job.

Dorothy Parker

Dorothy Parker (August 22, 1893–June 7, 1967) was an American writer and poet, best known for her caustic wit, wisecracks, and sharp eye for 20th century urban foibles.

She sold her first poem to *Vanity Fair* magazine in 1914 and some months later, she was hired as an editorial assistant for another Condé Nast magazine, *Vogue*. She moved to *Vanity Fair* as a staff writer following two years at *Vogue*.

Her greatest period of productivity and success came in the next 15 years. In the 1920s alone she published some 300 poems and free verses in outlets including the aforementioned *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, "The Conning Tower" and *The New Yorker* along with *Life*, *McCall's* and *The New Republic*.

Some of her most popular work was published in *The New Yorker* in the form of acerbic book reviews under the byline "Constant Reader."

Citation:

"Soldiers of the Republic", originally appeared in *The New Yorker* on February 5, 1938.
This biography excerpt was taken from Wikipedia.

SOLDIERS OF THE REPUBLIC

THAT Sunday afternoon we sat with the Swedish girl in the big café in Valencia. We had vermouth in thick goblets, each with a cube of honeycombed gray ice in it. The waiter was so proud of that ice he could hardly bear to leave the glasses on the table, and thus part from it forever. He went to his duty—all over the room they were clapping their hands and hissing to draw his attention—but he looked back over his shoulder.

It was dark outside, the quick, new dark that leaps down without dusk on the day; but, because there were no lights in the streets, it seemed as set and as old as midnight. So you wondered that all the babies were still up. There were babies everywhere in the café, babies serious without solemnity and interested in a tolerant way in their surroundings.

At the table next ours, there was a notably small one; maybe six months old. Its father, a little man in a big uniform that dragged his shoulders down, held it carefully on his knee. It was doing nothing whatever, yet he and his thin young wife, whose belly was already big again under her sleazy dress, sat watching it in a sort of ecstasy of admiration, while their coffee cooled in front of them. The baby was in Sunday white; its dress was patched so delicately that you would have thought the fabric whole had not the patches varied in their shades of whiteness. In its hair was a bow of new blue ribbon, tied with absolute balance of loops and ends. The ribbon was of no use; there was not enough hair to require restraint. The bow was sheerly an adornment, a calculated bit of dash.

"Oh, for God's sake, stop that!" I said to myself. "All right, so it's got a piece of blue ribbon on its hair. All right, so its mother went without eating so it could look pretty when its father came home on leave. All right, so it's her business, and none of yours. All right, so what have you got to cry about?"

THE big, dim room was crowded and lively. That morning there had been a bombing from the air, the more horrible for broad daylight. But nobody in the café sat tense and strained, nobody desperately forced forgetfulness. They drank coffee or bottled lemonade, in the pleasant, earned ease of Sunday afternoon, chatting of small, gay matters, all talking at once, all hearing and answering.

There were many soldiers in the room, in what appeared to be the uniforms of twenty different armies until you saw that the variety lay in the differing ways the cloth had worn or faded. Only a few of them had been wounded; here and there you saw one stepping gingerly, leaning on a crutch or two canes, but so far on toward recovery that his face had color. There were many men, too, in civilian clothes—some of them soldiers home on leave, some of them governmental workers, some of them anybody's guess. There were plump, comfortable wives, active with paper fans, and old women as quiet as their grandchildren. There were many pretty girls and some beauties, of whom you did not remark, "There's a charming Spanish type," but said, "What a beautiful girl!" The women's clothes were not new, and their material was too humble ever to have warranted skillful cutting.

"It's funny," I said to the Swedish girl, "how when nobody in a place is best-dressed, you don't notice that everybody isn't."

"Please?" the Swedish girl said.

No one, save an occasional soldier, wore a hat. When we had first come to Valencia, I lived in a state of puzzled pain as to why everybody on the streets laughed at me. It was not because "West End Avenue" was writ across my face as if left there by a customs officer's chalked scrawl. They like Americans in Valencia, where they have seen good ones—the doctors who left their practices and came to help, the calm young nurses, the men of the International Brigade. But when I walked forth, men and women courteously laid their hands across their splitting faces and little children, too innocent for dissembling, doubled with glee and pointed and cried, "Ole!" Then, pretty late, I made my discovery, and left my hat off; and there was laughter no longer. It was not one of those comic hats, either; it was just a hat.

The café filled to overflow, and I left our table to speak to a friend across the room. When I came back to the table, six soldiers were sitting there. They were crowded in, and I scraped past them to my chair. They looked tired and dusty and little, the way that the newly dead look little, and the first things you saw about them were the tendons in their necks. I felt like a prize sow.

They were all in conversation with

the Swedish girl. She has Spanish, French, German, anything in Scandinavian, Italian, and English. When she has a moment for regret, she sighs that her Dutch is so rusty she can no longer speak it, only read it, and the same is true of her Rumanian.

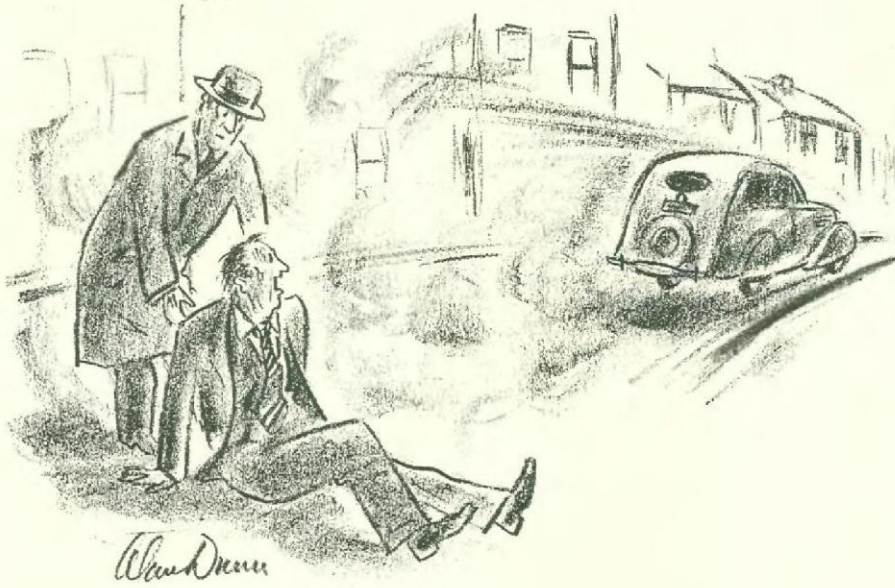
They had told her, she told us, that they were at the end of forty-eight hours' leave from the trenches, and, for their holiday, they had all pooled their money for cigarettes, and something had gone wrong, and the cigarettes had never come through to them. I had a pack of American cigarettes—in Spain rubies are as nothing to them—and I brought it out, and by nods and smiles and a sort of breast stroke, made it understood that I was offering it to those six men yearning for tobacco. When they saw what I meant, each one of them rose and shook my hand. Darling of me to share my cigarettes with the men on their way back to the trenches. Little Lady Bountiful. The prize sow.

Each one lit his cigarette with a contrivance of yellow rope that stank when afire and was also used, the Swedish girl translated, for igniting grenades. Each one received what he had ordered, a glass of coffee, and each one murmured appreciatively over the tiny cornucopia of coarse sugar that accompanied it. Then they talked.

They talked through the Swedish girl, but they did to us that thing we all do when we speak our own language to one who has no knowledge of it. They looked us square in the face, and spoke slowly, and pronounced their words with elaborate movements of their lips. Then, as their stories came, they poured them at us so vehemently, so emphatically that they were sure we must understand. They were so convinced we would understand that we were ashamed for not understanding.

But the Swedish girl told us. They were all farmers and farmers' sons, from a district so poor that you try not to remember there is that kind of poverty. Their village was next that one where the old men and the sick men and the women and children had gone, on a holiday, to the bullring; and the planes had come over and dropped bombs on the bullring, and the old men and the sick men and the women and the children were more than two hundred.

They had all, the six of them, been in the war for over a year, and most of that time they had been in the trenches. Four of them were married. One had one child, two had three children, one had five. They had not had word from



"I couldn't get the licence number, but it said something about the New York World's Fair."

their families since they had left for the front. There had been no communication; two of them had learned to write from men fighting next them in the trench, but they had not dared to write home. They belonged to a union, and union men, of course, are put to death if taken. The village where their families lived had been captured, and if your wife gets a letter from a union man, who knows but they'll shoot her for the connection?

They told about how they had not heard from their families for more than a year. They did not tell it gallantly or whimsically or stoically. They told it as if— Well, look. You have been in the trenches, fighting, for a year. You have heard nothing of your wife and your children. They do not know if you are dead or alive or blinded. You do not know where they are, or if they are. You must talk to somebody. That is the way they told about it.

One of them, some six months before, had heard of his wife and his three children—they had such beautiful eyes, he said—from a brother-in-law in France. They were all alive then, he was told, and had a bowl of beans a day. But his wife had not complained of the food, he heard. What had troubled her was that she had no thread to mend the children's ragged clothes. So that troubled him, too.

"She has no thread," he kept telling

us. "My wife has no thread to mend with. No thread."

We sat there, and listened to what the Swedish girl told us they were saying. Suddenly one of them looked at the clock, and then there was excitement. They jumped up, as a man, and there were calls for the waiter and rapid

talk with him, and each of them shook the hand of each of us. We went through more swimming motions to explain to them that they were to take the rest of the cigarettes—fourteen cigarettes for six soldiers to take to war—and then they shook our hands again. Then all of us said "Salud!" as many times as could be for six of them and three of us, and then they filed out of the café, the six of them, tired and dusty and little, as men of a mighty horde are little.

ONLY the Swedish girl talked, after they had gone. The Swedish girl has been in Spain since the start of the war. She has nursed splintered men, and she has carried stretchers into the trenches and, heavier laden, back to the hospital. She has seen and heard too much to be knocked into silence.

Presently it was time to go, and the Swedish girl raised her hands above her head and clapped them twice together to summon the waiter. He came, but he only shook his head and his hand, and moved away.

The soldiers had paid for our drinks.

—DOROTHY PARKER

AFTERNOON CONCERT

The music rises like a waft of honey
As from cut flowers;
In parquet chairs lean, earnestly at ease,
The solid citizens who feel their money
Well spent on hours like these.

The pure cry of the violins, despairing,
On treads of air
Climbs, while with stifled hearts and ruffled scores,
They also climb who only sit here staring
At joy's abandoned shores.

The shrewder will be safe, the concert over,
When they will go
Back to the streets, the rooms they lately crossed
And once possessed. At home they shall recover
What on these heights was lost.

The slender cry is stilled, the monster sorrow
Remains. But not for these,
Who wholly self-possessed now slowly move
Toward the wide doors, the usual tomorrow,
Where all's to spend but love.

—BABETTE DEUTSCH

Ernest Hemingway

Ernest Hemingway traveled to Spain as a journalist for the North American Newspaper Alliance four times during the Spanish Civil War. He also supported the Republican cause in speeches and writings, paid for the passage of some volunteers, arranged for the purchase of ambulances, and narrated the pro-Republican documentary film, *The Spanish Earth* (1937).

He used some of his experiences in writing the novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as well as several short stories and a play, *The Fifth Column*.

Citation:

"On the American Dead in Spain" originally appeared in *New Masses* in February 1938.

On the American Dead in Spain [Ernest Hemingway, 1938]

The dead sleep cold in Spain tonight. Snow blows through the olive groves, silting against the tree roots. Snow drifts over the mounds with the small headboards. (When there was time for headboards.) The olive trees are thin in the cold wind because their lower branches were once cut to cover tanks, and the dead sleep cold in the small hills above the Jarama River. It was cold that February when they died and since then the dead have not noticed the changes of the seasons.

It is two years now since the Lincoln Battalion held for four and a half months along the heights of the Jarama, and the first American dead have been a part of the earth for a long time now.

The dead sleep cold in Spain tonight and will sleep cold all this winter as the earth sleeps with them. But in the spring the rain will come to make the earth kind again. The wind will blow soft over the hills from the south. The black trees will come to life with small green leaves, and there will be blossoms on the apple trees along the Jarama River. This spring the dead will feel the earth beginning to live again.

For our dead are a part of the earth of Spain now and the earth of Spain can never die. Each winter it will seem to die and each spring it will come alive again. Our dead will live with it forever.

Just as the earth can never die, neither will those who have ever been free return to slavery. The peasants who work the earth where our dead lie know what these dead died for. There was time during the war for them to learn these things, and there is forever for them to remember them in.

Our dead live in the hearts and minds of the Spanish peasants, of the Spanish workers, of all the good simple honest people who believed in and fought for the Spanish Republic. And as long as all our dead live in the Spanish earth, and they will live as long as the earth lives, no system of tyranny ever will prevail in Spain.

The fascists may spread over the land, blasting their way with weight of metal brought from other countries. They may advance aided by traitors and by cowards. They may destroy cities and villages and try to hold the people in slavery. But you cannot hold any people in slavery.

The Spanish people will rise again as they have always risen before against tyranny.

The dead do not need to rise. They are a part of the earth now and the earth can never be conquered. For the earth endureth forever. It will outlive all systems of tyranny.

Those who have entered it honorably, and no men ever entered earth more honorably than those who died in Spain, already have achieved immortality.

Crawford Morgan

Morgan was born November 4, 1910 in Rockingham, North Carolina. While still a child, he moved with his family to Norfolk, Virginia where he attended high school. After graduation, Morgan studied to become a printer. In 1932, he joined the Young Communist League. During the Depression he became involved in organizations of the unemployed in New York and was on one occasion arrested in a demonstration at the Home Relief Bureau.

On March 10, 1937 Morgan boarded the Washington bound for France. In Spain he was assigned to the infantry attached to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion and later transferred to the Lincoln-Washington Battalion. His battalion went into action at the end of August 1937 on the Aragon front and Morgan received a leg wound storming the town of Quinto. After recovery, Morgan rejoined the Lincoln-Washington Battalion's Third Company. This was shortly after the action at Fuentes de Ebro in October 1937. Complications from his leg wound resulted in his transfer to the XVth Brigade's Transport Unit where Morgan remained for the remainder of the war. Morgan returned from Spain, on the SS Paris, on December 15, 1938.

In August 1942 Morgan enlisted in the U.S. Army and served in an all-black unit, until May 1946. After leaving the army Morgan resided in Norfolk, Virginia and worked as a truck driver until 1949. He later returned to New York and became an offset printer.

On September 15 and 16, 1954, Morgan testified at length on behalf of the VALB in hearings before the Subversive Activities Control Board (SACB) of the U.S. Department of Justice. The SACB was in the process of declaring the VALB to be a subversive organization. The VALB attorney called Morgan as a defense witness. He testified "being a Negro, and all of the stuff that I have had to take in this country, I had a pretty good idea of what fascism was. I got a chance there [in Spain] to fight it with bullets, and I went there and fought it with bullets. If I get a chance to fight it with bullets again, I will fight it with bullets again."

Morgan remained an active member of the VALB. In the early 1970's, he worked with the group's Historical Commission to gather information on other African American volunteers. Morgan died on August 27, 1976.

Citation:

This Ain't Ethiopia, But It'll Do: African-Americans in the Spanish Civil War by Danny Duncan Collum, Editor, and Victor A. Berch, Chief Researcher.

Excerpts of Congressional Testimony

In September 1954, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade (VALB) were brought before the Subversive Activities Control Board (SACB) in response to a petition by U.S. Attorney General Herbert Brownell to classify the VALB as a subversive organization.

On September 15 and 16, 1954, Crawford Morgan, an African-American member of VALB, testified before the SACB. The following are excerpts:

SACB: Did you have any understanding, Mr. Morgan, before you went to Spain, of what the issues were connected to that war?

Morgan: I felt that I had a pretty good idea of what fascism was and most of its ramifications. Being aware of what the Fascist Italian government did to the Ethiopians, and also the way that I and all the rest of the Negroes in this country have been treated ever since slavery, I figured I had a pretty good idea of what fascism was.

We have quite a few fascist tendencies in this country. Didn't come to the point of taking up arms and killing a lot of people, but for the longest time Negroes have been getting lynched in this country by mobs, and that was fascism on a small scale.

But over there [in Spain] it was one whole big group against the other. It was the Franco group that didn't like democracy. And they rebelled against the people after the 1936 elections and tried to stick their ideas down the throats of the freedom-loving people of Spain. So I, being a Negro, and all of the stuff that I have had to take in this country, I had a pretty good idea of what fascism was and I didn't want no part of it. I got a chance to fight it there with bullets and I went there and fought it with bullets. If I get a chance to fight it with bullets again, I will fight it with bullets again.

SACB: Mr. Morgan, were those thoughts in your mind before you went to Spain?

Morgan: Ever since I have been big enough to understand things I have rebelled. As a small child of three or four years old I would rebel at human injustice in the way I understood it at that age. And as long as I have been able to remember, up until now, the government and a lot of people have treated me as a second-class citizen. I am 43 years old, and all my life I have been treated as a second-class citizen, and naturally if you always have been treated like one you start feeling it at a very tender age.

With Hitler on the march, and fascism starting the fight in Spain, I felt that it could serve two purposes: I felt that if we could lick the Fascists in Spain, I felt that in the trend of things it would offset a bloodbath later. I felt that if we didn't lick Franco and stop fascism there, it would spread over lots of the world. And it is bad enough for white people to live under

fascism, those of the white people that like freedom and democracy. But Negroes couldn't live under it. They would be wiped out.

SACB: Were you aware, at any time, that you were a member of the International Brigades, of receiving any different treatment because of your race?

Morgan: No, from the time I arrived in Spain until after the time I left, for that period of my life, I felt like a human being, like a man. People didn't look at me with hatred in their eyes because I was black, and I wasn't refused this or refused that because I was black. I was treated like all the rest of the people were treated, and when you have been in the world for quite a long time and have been treated worse than people treat their dogs, it is quite a nice feeling to go someplace and feel like a human being.

Roosevelt's "Quarantine Speech"

Excerpts from Roosevelt's "Quarantine Speech" of October 5, 1937



..It is true that the moral consciousness of the world must recognize the importance of removing injustices and well-founded grievances; but at the same time it must be aroused to the cardinal necessity of honoring sanctity of treaties, of respecting the rights and liberties of others, and of putting an end to acts of international aggression.

It seems to be unfortunately true that the epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading. When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease.

It is my determination to pursue a policy of peace and to adopt every practicable measure to avoid involvement in war. It ought to be inconceivable that in this modern era, and in the face of experience, any nation could be so foolish and ruthless as to run the risk of plunging the whole world into war by invading and violating, in contravention of solemn treaties, the territory of other nations that have done them no real harm and which are too weak to protect themselves adequately. Yet the peace of the world and the welfare and security of every nation is today being threatened by that very thing....

War is a contagion, whether it be declared or undeclared. It can engulf states and peoples remote from the original scene of hostilities. We are determined to keep out of war, yet we cannot insure ourselves against the disastrous effects of war and the dangers of involvement. We are adopting such measures as will minimize our risk of involvement, but we cannot have complete protection in a world of disorder in which confidence and security have broken down.

If civilization is to survive, the principles of the Prince of Peace must be restored. Shattered trust between nations must be revived. Most important of all, the will for peace on the part of peace-loving nations must express itself to the end that nations that may be tempted to violate their agreements and the rights of others will desist from such a cause. There must be positive endeavors to preserve peace.

America hates war. America hopes for peace. Therefore, America actively engages in the search for peace.

Click [here](#) to read the entire speech:

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=956>.

Press Reactions to President Roosevelt's "Quarantine Speech"

From the *New York Herald Tribune*:

President Roosevelt, for all his eloquence at Chicago, cannot be credited with anything...specific. His world audience no doubt thinks that much of his speech had reference to Japan. But he did not say so. His talk of "quarantine" may be construed as an endorsement of economic sanctions but he did not mention them. His appeal was wholly emotional. It named no names. It cited no specific treaty clauses that are in default and no specific way of resenting treaty violation. If it was an appeal for anything it was a popular emotional mandate to the President to take whatever course in our international relations seemed to him the best.

From the *Washington Post*:

This speech, coming at the psychological moment, may well foreshadow a turning point in world history. The forces now fighting intolerable aggression, whether in the case of the Chinese at Shanghai or the Spaniards defending Madrid, are neither cowards nor weaklings. They are prepared to carry on the fight for human decency unaided. But with the assurance that the United States has not forgotten all moral standards in its ostrich hunt for security, the strength of their resistance will be redoubled. President Roosevelt has only to make explicit the assurances implied in yesterday's speech and the turn toward peace will, for the first time since 1931, become apparent.

From the *Boston Herald*:

The mantle of Woodrow Wilson lay on the shoulders of Franklin Roosevelt when he spoke yesterday in Chicago. It may be true that "the very foundations of civilization are seriously threatened." But this time, Mr. President, Americans will not be stampeded into going 3,000 miles across water to save them. Crusade, if you must, but for the sake of several millions of American mothers, confine your crusading to the continental limits of America!

From the *Chattanooga Times*:

Did Mr. Roosevelt intend to indicate, as it is apparently believed in some quarters, that the United States will join other powers and be contributing police work in the Far East and the Mediterranean, try to "quarantine" aggressor nations? Or does the President desire to encourage Great Britain and France to follow a more determined course in Europe and Asia, while standing on this nation's traditional policy of isolation?

Writing Assignment

Write your own editorial response to Roosevelt's speech, addressing this basic question:

Should the U.S. intervene to help the Spanish Republic in its fight against fascism or should the U.S. continue to remain neutral even if it means the defeat of the Republic at the hands of the fascists?