

George and Ruth
Songs and Letters of the Spanish Civil War

A play in two acts, for two readers and a singer

By Molly Lynn Watt and Dan Lynn Watt

Based on Letters written by George Watt and Ruth Watt

Songs selected and adapted by Tony Saletan

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AN INTRODUCTION TO GEORGE AND RUTH

This play tells a true story of George and Ruth Watt, newlyweds separated by war. The story is told in their words, adapted from letters they wrote to each other while George was in Spain and Ruth at home in New York. The play is set during the Spanish Civil War, fought between the poorly trained citizen army of the democratically elected government of the Spanish Republic, and well-armed, experienced soldiers led by General Franco, seeking to replace that government with a fascist dictatorship. George and Ruth are committed anti-fascists, vehemently opposed to Hitler, with several years of political activism in New York City.

The play begins when George arrives in Spain in August 1937, as a volunteer with the Lincoln Battalion, part of an International Brigade of volunteers fighting to stop the spread of fascism in Spain. At 23, George is a raw recruit with no prior military experience. We follow him as he learns to be a soldier, is wounded in battle, recovers in a hospital, and is selected to be trained as an officer. His letters to Ruth convey his love, his growing confidence as a soldier, his commitment to the Spanish people, his horror at the effects of war, and his optimism and sense of humor. Cut off and surrounded in one battle by fascist forces, he escapes by swimming naked across the fast-flowing, icy Ebro River to rejoin the rest of his battalion, where he is met by Ernest Hemingway, a journalist reporting on the war for American newspapers.

Ruth, 22, has a day job, but her heart is with George in Spain and with the anti-fascist struggle at home. Her letters cover a wide range of subjects. She writes about political activities, of work to promote a boycott of Japanese silk and to organize a citywide student peace demonstration opposing fascism and supporting the cause of Spanish freedom. And she writes about movies she's seen, her day-to-day experiences in New York, and loneliness and longing for her husband, and imagines them together in romantic settings. Her letters, like George's, are leavened by humor and clever turns of phrase.

The play ends in late December 1938 with an impatient letter from George just before he leaves Spain for home. Ruth's final letter describes a Hollywood movie, *Blockade*, that was made to support the Spanish cause. *The World Can Stop it! Where is the conscience of the World?* are the last words of the movie and of Ruth's letter, and of the play.

Our optimistic protagonists could not know that four months after George left Spain, the Spanish Republic would be decisively defeated, leading to Franco's fascist dictatorship that lasted more than 30 years. George and Ruth had a baby, Danny, born in March 1940 (one of the authors of this play). Tragically Ruth fell sick and died just five weeks later. The cause of her sudden death remains unknown.

George remarried Ruth's friend Margie Wechsler, and in 1944 Danny's brother Steve was born. George joined the US Army Air Corps to fight against fascism in World War II. Following the war he had a long career, first as a political organizer, and later as a social worker and administrator. He died at age 80 in 1994, after which his family found a closed box containing the letters that were used by the authors to write this play.

ABOUT PERFORMING *GEORGE AND RUTH: SONGS & LETTERS OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR*

Players: 1 Man, 1 Woman, 1 or more Singers

This is a play set between 1937 and 1939. It is a *one-of* because usually it is performed just once by an organization or class. It needs no theater, no rehearsal, no set, no line memorization, no financial backing, no costumes but everyday clothes, no commitment by the three players beyond the one performance. (Of course, a run through can be helpful ahead of time.) This is a play told by reading letters exchanged between a couple in their early twenties during their first years of marriage. George is a volunteer in the Spanish Civil War in Spain, Ruth is a working gal in New York and a booster of support for the Spanish people's struggle against fascism. The singer reveals the cultural context of the time and invites the audience to feel part of the movement supporting the Spanish cause by singing songs of the era. The singer may invite the audience to join in on the chorus. (You may want to provide the words, or a seasoned song leader can teach the chorus as part of the performance or before it starts.) George and Ruth listen to the music, but do not join the singing except perhaps for the last song of each act.

The set-up is simple. All three players are on a stage, or an area set off from the audience, for the entire performance. If the space is larger than a living room or classroom, consider setting up three microphones as hearing the voices is essential. Think about lighting ahead of time as each player will need individual light to read by and the audience will need to see them. But theatrical lighting is not usually necessary unless you happen to be in a theater and have it available. Each player stays put in one space for the duration, separate from the other two: a chair for Ruth (stage right), a bench for George (stage left), the singer (stage center) and perhaps music stands for scripts. If the room is on one level, each player sits on a high stool or stands throughout the performance, always visible. The space is not changed during the two acts of the play. Words carry the action. Only the person performing may make minimum movements. The other two do not move, distract or emote. Since the players are separated by an ocean in the story, they do not look at each other, they read looking straight out to the audience. The letters contain all they are eager to hear, good and bad news, gossip and entertainment, words are their lifeline, their connection.

The play intersperses the letters of George and Ruth with music sung at the time, in an approximate ratio of one third, one third, one third. The songs support the telling and the pacing. When we performed the play, Tony Saletan, well-known folksinger, teacher and musicologist, performed the songs he'd researched to go with this script. He is a superb singer and song leader. This would seem a high bar for a class or community group wanting to do a play once without a lot of preparation. We ask you to keep the songs. Consider having several people each learn one or substitute familiar songs that fit. Or read the song words as poems. Or play recordings. Or make up your own. You will find recordings of most of the songs on the Smithsonian Folkways Record, *Songs of the Spanish Civil War*, Vol. 1, or our CD available on Amazon, the same name, but an earlier version of the play. All songs are in public domain, as researched by folklorist, Joe Hickerson, unless we include just a fair use excerpt. Please keep the third of the play for the poetry and music of the time, of the struggle, of the people.

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS OF GEORGE & RUTH (2002-2017)

Dan Lynn Watt as his father George Watt,
Molly Lynn Watt as Ruth Rosenthal Watt,
Tony Saletan as Singer and Musician, alternate, Steve Watt
(Sylvia Miskoe occasionally accompanies on accordion & on CD)

Bemis Free Lecture Series, Lincoln MA

Boston National Poetry Festival, Boston Public Library, Boston MA

Boston Public Library, Boston MA

Brookhaven, Lexington MA

Club Helsinki, Great Barrington MA

Community Church of Boston, Boston MA

Folk Song Society of Greater Boston House Concert, Newton MA

Fuller Village, Milton MA

Harvard University, Real Colegio Complutense, Cambridge MA

Harvard University, Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement, Cambridge, MA

Heritage Heights, Concord NH

King Juan Carlos I Center, New York University, New York NY

Monadnock Folklore Society, Dublin NH

New England Folk Festival, Performances 3 different years, Natick MA

NY Pinewoods Folk Music Club, People's Voice Café, New York NY

People's Music Network, Queens NY

Private House Concert, Lexington MA

Silver Meteor Gallery, licensed to Michael Murphy, several performances, Tampa FL

Spanish Civil War Conference, NH State Library, Concord NH

Suffolk University, Boston MA

Tapestry of Voices, 2 performances, Arts at the Arsenal, Somerville MA

& Border Books, Boston MA

Trimedial Concert Series, Watertown MA

The Center for Arts, Natick MA\

World Fellowship Center, 2 different years, Conway NH

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Molly Lynn Watt and Dan Lynn Watt, are political activists who went south in the 1960s to participate in the civil rights movement. They were peace activists, opposed the Vietnam War, and enjoyed long careers as educators.

Dan Lynn Watt's books include:

History Lessons: A Memoir of Growing Up in an American Communist Family, Xlibris, 2017

Learning With Logo, McGraw-Hill, 1983

Teaching With Logo (with Molly Lynn Watt), Addison-Wesley, 1986

And much more

Molly Lynn Watt's books include:

Shadow People, Ibbetson Street Press, 2007

On Wings of Song: A Journey into the Civil Rights Era, Ibbetson Street Press, 2014

Teaching With Logo (with Dan Lynn Watt), Addison-Wesley, 1986

And much more

George and Ruth: Songs and Letters of the Spanish Civil War, a recording of an earlier version, available from Amazon as performed by the original players, Dan and Molly Lynn Watt, and Tony Saletan, accompanied by accordionist Sylvia Miskoe

George Watt's World War II memoir:

Escape From Hitlers Europe; An American Airman Behind Enemy Lines, The University Press of Kentucky, 1990 (Original title, *The Comet Connection: Escape From Hitler's Europe*)

ACT 1

LOS CUATRO GENERALES

*Los cuatro generales
Los cuatro generales
Los cuatro generales
Mamita mia
Que se han alzado
Que se han alzado*

*The four insurgent generals
The four insurgent generals
The four insurgent generals
Mamita mia
They tried to betray us
They tried to betray us*

*At Christmas, holy evening
At Christmas, holy evening
At Christmas, holy evening
Mamita mia
They'll all be hanging
They'll all be hanging*

GEORGE

Dear Ruth, Well I'm here in Spain and I feel great. As soon as I came into training camp, I was met by so many familiar faces among the other volunteers. My third day and I feel like a veteran. I'm learning very fast. I shot a rifle for the first time in my life and made an excellent score. I've just received my helmet and ammunition belt and you should see me. The uniforms we wear in the Lincoln Battalion make me look just like an American doughboy in the World War. Sometimes I get the feeling that we are a bunch of boy scouts playing war. It's hard to imagine myself as a soldier.

RUTH

Dear George, I'm terrifically busy now-a-days. Imagine me, a working girl on my own in New York! Sometimes it seems to me that I work an 8-day week, 25 hours a day. Even

the movies I go to are part of the routine. I saw Paul Muni starring in *The Life of Emile Zola*. It was really splendid. Of course, the Dreyfus affair protest was sort of watered down for the screen. But nevertheless, the impact of Zola's political awakening was terrific. I saw it at the Hollywood Get-Your-Ticket-in-Advance Theatre. Everyone was dressed up to kill. Except poor me. I was dressed as though I was going on a hike, in an orange woolen dress, a brown corduroy jacket and a brown beret.

The lobby of the theatre has a series of balconies overlooking the main hall. I swear, as I looked down from the highest balcony at all the swanky ladies and their escorts milling around below me, I felt like making one of my famous speeches from the balustrade. I had a lot of fun imagining their expressions if I had. I'm sure only the vision of your commonsensical, restraining hand, kept me from it.

LOS CUATRO GENERALES (CONTINUED)

Madrid, you wondrous city
Madrid, you wondrous city
Madrid, you wondrous city
Mamita mia
They wanted to take you
They wanted to take you

But your courageous children
But your courageous children
But your courageous children
Mamita mia
They did not disgrace you
They did not disgrace you

RUTH

George, Do you realize we have a celebration coming soon? Our first Anniversary! Remember? So just imagine when you go to sleep, I say, *push over*. And I crawl in next to you and you say, *brr you're cold*. And I say, *my, you're lovely and warm*. Later, you're dying to go to sleep. But I won't let you because of the way I keep kissing the corner of your eye, and rubbing my nose in your cheek, and fiddling with your hair and murmuring

silly things. And then you just turn around and go to sleep. And even then, I rub my face in your back and am so happy, I fall asleep, too.

GEORGE

Dear Muchachkele, At long last I got your letter. I had lamb stew, French fried potatoes and your letter for my main dish. I had grapes, lemonade and your letter for desert. Well there's hardly any need to say what difference your letter made. It's much easier now facing artillery and machine guns than it was before. I was really worried that I wouldn't hear from you before we went into action. Well, I'm happy, that's all, very, very happy. You write about my new vitality and depth of experience. Well, my new vitality consists of infiltration by running and flopping towards the enemy, usually done on very thorny, rocky ground. And my depth of experience comes from digging foxholes.

Yesterday our entire section was transferred into a Spanish company. This was done to strengthen the Spanish group. This is just the chance that most of us have been waiting for. Now we're doing the job the international brigades were really meant to do. That is to teach. We in the Lincoln Battalion cannot win the war for the Spanish people. They are the ones to do that. But now I've got to learn Spanish and I am learning it over a machine gun, over a rifle. And at night to the music of a guitar and the dance of flamenco. Today we spent all morning teaching our Spanish comrades all about the machine gun, about the rifle. We helped them take their guns apart, clean them and then in our own Spanish, explained how things worked.

Last night they invited us to their bunks (holes in the ground filled with grass and covered with reeds). They played the guitar and we danced and sang in the moonlight. Tonight they're coming over to our bunks and we'll entertain them with more material things, like coffee.

RUTH

Last week at a meeting a fellow led the group in some new Spanish Civil War songs. You could see how everyone really loved those songs by the way they joined in the singing, everyone really supports the Spanish people's struggle.

VIVA LA QUINCE BRIGADA

Viva la Quince Brigada, rumbala, rumbala, rumbala
Viva la Quince Brigada, rumbala, rumbala, rumbala
Que se ha cubierta de gloria, ay Manuela, ay Manuela
Que se ha cubierta de gloria, ay Manuela, ay Manuela

Long live our Fifteenth Brigade, boys, Rumbala, Rumbala, Rumbala
Long live our Fifteenth Brigade, boys, Rumbala, Rumbala, Rumbala
For her name is grand and glorious, ay Manuela, ay Manuela
For her name is grand and glorious, ay Manuela, ay Manuela

Against the foes we aim our rifle, rumbala, rumbala, rumbala
Against the foes we aim our rifle, rumbala, rumbala, rumbala
Death to the hirelings of the fascists, ay Manuela, ay Manuela
Death to the hirelings of the fascists, ay Manuela, ay Manuela

We have only one desire, rumbala, rumbala, rumbala
We have only one desire, rumbala, rumbala, rumbala
Forever end the Fascist terror, ay Manuela, ay Manuela
Forever end the Fascist terror, ay Manuela, ay Manuela

At Jarama we are standing, rumbala, rumbala, rumbala
At Jarama we are standing, rumbala, rumbala, rumbala
And we have no planes above us, not a tank, nor any cannons,
ay Manuela, ay Manuela
And we have no planes above us, not a tank, nor any cannons,
ay Manuela, ay Manuela

RUTH

Yesterday I lay awake trying to trace my understanding of war. As a young child, it was something dreadful that my parents used to talk about. I had nightmares about people who were called Huns, who used to come into people's houses and sharpen their axes in front of their eyes. They would cut off everybody's heads, including my sisters'. It's

true they never got me. I think the reason they spared me was, in all my nightmares, I was beautiful.

That stage of understanding was soon over. War was something I read about and studied in high school for its cause, effect, main events, heroes and outstanding debts to the United States. Movies on the World War were exciting, but a little boring – except in the love interest sections. I became conscious of the political and economic nature of war 4 or 5 years ago. I shouted slogans and argued at anti-war conferences in college.

I was honestly sincere in my fervent denunciation of war. Even emotional. But still sort of abstract. Well, war isn't so abstract today. It presses down on us!

GEORGE

We are now in in reserve position, near, but not at the front. The fellows are busy cleaning new rifles, we were just issued. I wasn't issued a rifle. Instead I have the special honor of being a machine gunner for our section. And boy how I love that gun. I got it last night. Took it apart and put it together a dozen times. This morning I couldn't sleep and got up at dawn to look at the gun again. It's too heavy for one man, so another man and I operate it. It is the pride of our section. It's a light machine gun and has the firepower of 60 riflemen. So you see I'm pretty important.

At present we are deciding on a name for the gun. But whatever it's called, I shall secretly name it after you, *Baby Ruth*. And you'd be surprised, it has many similarities to you. It's beautiful, a little awkward in spots, a little heavy, and oh, how I love to strip it. I treat it with such tenderness and actually sleep with it under my blanket.

It's got to be protected – that gun means the life of the boys. Baby Ruth shoots straight from the shoulder and isn't going to miss.

YOUNG MAN FROM ALCALA

*A Spaniard who hails from Alcala
When angered would shout mucha mala
He tossed a grenade at a Fascist Brigade
And blew all those fascists to Hella
Yippee ai attee ai ay, yippee ai attee ai ay*

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*Oh, the Lincoln Battalion by cracky
A bunch of brave bozos though wacky
They held down the line for months at a time
'Gainst Franco, Il Duce's lackey
Yippee ai attee ai ay, yippee ai attee ai ay*

*'Twas there on the plains of Brunete
'Midst a hail of steel confetti
With our planes and our tanks we would smash Franco's ranks
Got sick on Italian spaghetti
Yippee ai attee ai ay, yippee ai attee ai ay*

*Oh, the Lincoln boys fought at Jarama
They made the fascisti cry mama
They were holding the line for months at a time
And for sport they would play with a bomba
Yippee ai attee ai ay, yippee ai attee ai ay*

RUTH

Give my regards to your machine gun!

I wish I were a machine gun and could be with you in Spain. I swear I'd never jam or be awkward, even in spots. I'd keep myself spotlessly cleaned and oiled. Honestly I'd be no trouble at all. And if we ever got in a really tough spot, I'd just start singing. That would scare the enemy away all right, all right.

Maybe sometimes, after the day's work was over, I'd sidle up to you like those French women you wrote about and say, *voulez-vous enjoirement ce nuit?*

GEORGE

It was yesterday that I first realized the actuality of the war. An order came through for a labor detail. Eight of us marched two kilometers in a pouring rain through six inches of mud and water to the next town. Then we were told we were going on to Belchite.

The truck drove us over mountain ridges and flat tableland. It was an open truck and the rain lashed us in face and feet. We passed our former frontline trenches. They are narrow, zigzag and deep with sandbags piled on the parapets, half flooded with water, foreshadowing what we'll have to face in the trenches this season. On both sides of the road is stretched barbed wire and heavy steel spikes at an angle inclined toward us. The spikes are arranged in groups of 4 and are used to stop tanks. In the open spaces between spikes are explosive mines.

The approach to Belchite is beautiful. The road is on a high plateau, which tapers off at Belchite. On both sides fertile valleys surround the city.

But Belchite itself – what a sight. The most miserable depraving, horrible and horrifying, stinking, reeking, etc. etc. sight I'd ever seen. War pictures cannot tell the story – ever. It was my first taste (and smell) of war – of course not direct. I merely witnessed the results in one little community and it made me hate all the more the bastards who forced this destruction upon human beings.

Not one house was left untouched. Holes in the walls and floors – debris piled 6 feet high – and in the debris, pieces of bricks, furniture, mortar, ammunition belts – pieces of human flesh and bone. In one courtyard I tripped over the body of a fascist partially decayed. He was wearing only one shoe, his other foot stockinged and strangely I thought of that nursery rhyme, *my son John, went to bed with his stockings on, one shoe off and one shoe on.*

I didn't think of death or disgust. It blended too easily with the rest of the picture. The entire town was fortified with sandbags in windows, barricades in the streets and a maze of underground tunnels, which led through every part of the city.

Now we're waiting for the trucks. This time we're certain it's for the front – we hope.

RUTH

Yesterday, our friend, Dave Engels came home from Spain. When I went into the office and saw him standing in the doorway, I was speechless. All I could do was wring his hand. Dave talked into the small hours of the morning. Then I found two letters from you. Your letters, Dave's remarks, both very blunt, very matter-of-fact, very human. How can I tell you what I felt, what I learned?

Darling, I see Spain. And you. Oh, I know it's not accurate, not complete. I guess I should say, I feel Spain. And you.

Dave told us of Jarama, Brunete, Quinto, Belchite showing us the details by moving around knives and plates and sandwiches on the table. He described the time that Americans were caught in a barn. The time a group was forced to stay in a trench near the church for a full day in the hot sun without food or water. The taking of the church. The taking of the last stronghold – the last big house.

What's it like to go over the top? I asked.

Well, he said, the first and last five minutes are the hardest. The first five you think, it would be a shame if they got you before you could do anything. Then you just go ahead and do what you're told. Then, at the end, you can't help thinking, it would be a shame if they got you after all you've gone through. You get pretty used to death. But you can't help feeling badly about the comrades who died before they got a chance to show what they could do.

I read the news dispatches from Bilbao and I must admit my heart's in my mouth. But I've decided not to worry until there's something to worry about. Don't forget, you must write me all about everything.

GEORGE

Darling, I've been trying desperately to write for the past two days. The whole thing's too close, too real to represent in words. The first day we came up into the lines we attacked. And the Lincolns made history that day. I'm writing this letter from a military hospital in Reus. But don't worry darling, I'm not hit seriously, it's only a flesh wound and will heal in a couple of days. I got it while giving first aid to a pal of mine whom you don't know. He got it through the stomach and was suffering indescribable torture lying

right in the midst of the thickest fire. I rushed over, tore his clothes off and started bandaging him when I felt a sharp sting through my left hand and right shoulder – no pain just surprise. I'm darned glad I had my wits about me because I mustered all my strength and all his strength to get both of us behind a little slope where the bullets whizzed over our heads.

The Lincolns occupied the left flank, it was the flanking fire we went into which was so deadly. The fascists were strongly entrenched. We met with terrific resistance. But you should have seen how we walked into it like veterans. None of us flinched – really, none of us. Everyone's talking about our fine work.

And when I lay in the field, after having crawled from comrade to comrade because my wound was not so serious and I was able to move about, giving all the first aid I could – I felt a strange elation at the way we all acted. I had taken the test of fire and passed, and I'm going back as quickly as possible.

I want you to know how much I love you – how much I loved you out there under the fire when every *tsing* and *pang* of a bullet and cannon told me how much I loved you. Out there in the field I was so calm. I tried to sleep and thought of you and the movement and you were one.

I'm all skin and bones, yet the bullet finds plenty of flesh in my arm and shoulder to plow through without touching any vital spot. You should see my suede jacket all full of bullet holes, which never touched my body. I have a right shoulder wound and am writing with my right hand. Lucky, eh?

SI ME QUIERES ESCRIBIR

*Si me quieres escribir, ya sabes mi paradero
Si me quieres escribir, ya sabes mi paradero
En el frente de Gandesa, primera línea de fuego
En el frente de Gandesa, primera línea de fuego*

*If you want to write to me, you know where you can always find me
If you want to write to me, you know where you can always find me
On the wide front of Gandesa, in the midst of every battle*

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On the wide front of Gandesa, in the midst of every battle

*If you want to eat your fill, good food and not too many pesos
If you want to eat your fill, good food and not too many pesos
On that bloody battlefield stands an inn where you are welcome
On that bloody battlefield stands an inn where you are welcome*

*At the entrance of this inn there waits a moor by name Mohammed
At the entrance of this inn there waits a moor by name Mohammed
Who warmly greets you, Hurry, hurry, rare and spicy food awaits you
Who warmly greets you, Hurry, hurry, rare and spicy food awaits you*

*The first dish which they serve is hot grenades in quick succession
The first dish which they serve is hot grenades in quick succession
Followed by a burst of shrapnel, makes a meal you'll all remember
Followed by a burst of shrapnel, makes a meal you'll all remember*

RUTH

Dear George, The last letter you wrote was written from the hospital, but I have the feeling you're back in service by now.

Let me tell you about our state convention, it opened with a flourish in a swanky hotel in Brooklyn. What a place! Elegant is the word for it. Long mirrors, gleaming walls, thick carpets, huge auditorium ballroom. There was the usual stuff – singing the *Star-Spangled Banner*. Much taking of pictures. Then, Mike read a letter from Spain received that very morning signed by Solly, Hy, Joe, you and the others. It was one of the finest letters any of us ever heard. The audience response was overwhelming. I, myself, just curled up and almost died.

Then after the discussion period, round tables, and giving my 10-minute report, well, by the end of the day, I was a wreck. And there was still the dance in the evening. Now you know I can't dance very well and that I was tired. By some quirk, I danced all evening with people who seemed to delight in throwing their partners half-way across the floor and back, jerking, twisting, cavorting madly, and ending with Austrian dips.

GEORGE

Ruth, I just got your letter reacting to my blighty. I know just how you felt when you received the news. I think I know what it is that bothers you the most. You needn't worry about not being with me. You share in everything I do and feel in Spain. But it's a long time to be apart. Remember that old army song from the World War, *Old soldiers never die, they just fade away*.

Do you remember I said there is humor here? Remember the movie, *All Quiet on the Western Front*? The soldiers had humor there, too. But it was bitter, a grim substitute for lack of interest and morale. The boys tease each other here and kid the townspeople, it's as natural as, well, as anything is natural. And they make up new words to old songs. Here are the latest!

THE COOK HOUSE

*There is a sweet cookhouse not far away
Where we get sweet damn all three times a day
Ham and eggs we never see
Damn all sugar in our tea
And we are gradually fading away*

*Old soldiers never die, never die, never die
Old soldiers never die, they just fade away*

THE QUARTERMASTER STORE

*There is cheese, cheese, that brings you to your knees
In the store, in the store
There is cheese, cheese, that brings you to your knees
In the quartermaster's store*

*There is tea, tea, but not for you and me
In the store, in the store
There is tea, tea, but not for you and me
In the quartermaster's store*

*There are rats, rats, in bowler hats and spats
In the store, in the store
There are rats, rats, in bowler hats and spats
In the quartermaster's store*

*There's a chief, chief, who never brings us beef
In the store, in the store
There's a chief, chief, who never brings us beef
In the quartermaster's store*

*There are beans, beans that make you fill your jeans
In the store, in the store
There are beans, beans that make you fill your jeans
In the quartermaster's store*

RUTH

Darling, Since Japan is still terrorizing China, I've work to do! I'm enclosing a leaflet put out by the league. When I read the first paragraph, I burst out with a howl of laughter. My first reaction was, we girls will have to go naked. Life is hardly worth the living.

Johnny asked me what all the mirth was about. I told him. Whereupon he grew very stern and demanded that I recognize the seriousness of a boycott against Japan. If I thought a boycott against silk stockings was something to laugh about, I ought to read the latest copy of *Life* magazine explaining that no boycott movement could be successful unless women gave up wearing silk stockings. And he withdrew into his office in a huff.

I followed him to explain I had no difficulty with him or with *Life* magazine. My outburst had been entirely due to the sophomoric presentation. The same idea could have been put across without making the league a laughingstock with slogans no one except hardened Bolsheviks would carry out.

The leaflet could have started simply with why a boycott was necessary. Then, every time you go into a store to buy silk stockings, silk underwear, silk scarves, ask your salesgirl, *does the silk come from Japan?* When she says yes, go to the store manager.

Complain and protest. Insist that he put out a more varied display of cotton, lisle and rayon garments. In this way a popular revolt against Japanese goods can be created. And you can feel instrumental in creating the latest and most truly up-to-date styles.

Johnny's eyes twinkled as he said, *it means a sacrifice for the men, too!* He patted my shoulder and assured me he agreed with every word I said.

The fuss I made involved me in an interesting assignment to draw up an information bulletin to be sent to all progressive organizations on what a boycott means in practical terms. All on the *Do you know? — How much the US imports from Japan? How much comes from silks? What that means in terms of ammunition? What substitutes can be used? What can be done about making the substitutes popular?*

It means some research. But mostly I intend to do a lot of window shopping. Say, can't you just see me, Madame Ruth, Style Creator.

*DON'T BUY ANYTHING JAPANESE
(TUNE: BAI MIR BISTU SHEIN)*

*If you'd be in style
Wear hose made of lisle
Don't buy anything Japanese
Lisle's three times as strong
Wears three times as long
Don't buy anything Japanese*

*The fascist forces wage war in conspiracy
If we refuse to trade with them
We'll save democracy
That's why China begs
Keep silk off your legs
Don't buy anything Japanese*

GEORGE

Right now hospital life is a brief strange interlude. Bencasim is a beautiful sea resort with palm trees, white sand and palatial villas that formerly belonged to the idle rich. As I write this I face the Mediterranean and straight out about 150 miles is Mallorca, now

fascist, where Mussolini has 200,000 Italian troops ready to land at Castellon, 10 miles south of here in an attempt to drive 75 miles to Teruel. This would cut off Spain from France. This would mean world war.

In spite of this, the place is an oasis of peace, quiet and beauty. I find myself every now and then making love to a person 4,000 miles away. I walk along the beach and talk out loud to her as if she were present. I wait for her answers to my queries and of course, know exactly what she will say. So you see my dear, when I come home and talk to you with a faraway look in my eyes, you will understand -- it's only from force of habit.

RUTH

Something nice happened late Sunday afternoon. I scoured the neighborhood trying to find a copy of the *Sunday Times*. Finally I located a dinky stand on the corner of Avenue A and 15th Street. Two boys, about 17 years old, were in charge. There were three copies of the *Times* on display, but because of the day-long drizzle, they were wet and torn. *Don't you have a clean one?* I asked.

Naw. All sold out. Ya gotta take what you kin get, said one of the boys.

The other looked at me, then said menacingly, *Give it to her!*

Aw, what's the matter, you cracked, the first one said. But he reached into a box and picked out a solitary dry newspaper.

The second guy grinned until his teeth almost fell out. *Say you, mug,* he said to his friend. *can't you see, she's wearing the Liberty Bell? Them kind can have anything we got.*

I was wearing the pin put out by the Friends of the Lincoln Battalion. Now isn't that nice?

ABRAHAM LINCOLN WALKS AGAIN

*The armies of progress are marching
At the fascists they are hurled
A government of the people
Shall not perish from the world*

George and Ruth: Songs and Letters of the Spanish Civil War

*Abraham Lincoln walks again
Abraham Lincoln marches
Abraham Lincoln lives again
Up tall he stands and his great big hands
Hold a gun, No pasaran!*

*Abraham Lincoln walks again
Abraham Lincoln marches
Abraham Lincoln lives again
For liberty and democracy
Human rights, for these he fights*

*In the midst of the battle you will find him
And his fists break the fascist chain
With the Lincoln Battalion behind him
He fights for the freedom of Spain*

*Abraham Lincoln walks again
Abraham Lincoln marches
Abraham Lincoln lives again
His voice rings out to the echoing shout
We shall pass, yes we shall pass!*

RUTH

George, I was hurrying home very late last night along First Avenue. The street was pitch black and entirely deserted. I was more than a little frightened and tense. Suddenly I thought – gee, I wouldn't be a bit scared if I were walking with you. The strangest thing happened. Not only did I lose my silly fright, but suddenly the whole street came to life. Every store, every shop, seemed to have a character of its own. I was suddenly delighted by the queer, almost unreal array of names on the store windows — Greek next to Polish next to Finnish next to German next to English next to Jewish.

I realized what a vast and thickly populated city New York is. When you're caught in a subway jam, or crawl along 14th Street on a Saturday afternoon shopping rush – why you just take the mob for granted. But when at night you see empty block after empty block of dingy streets with grocery stores, fruit, fish, meat markets, bakeries – all crowded together. When you reflect on how many thousands of times these blocks are

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replicated, why, then you feel the millions of people of all ages and nationalities who, somewhere, in the sleeping city, provide the basis for metropolitan life.

Do you know what, George? You are a great comfort to me.

GEORGE

Dear Ruth, I was interrupted in my writing by a strange procession which filed by me. It was the funeral of the German comrade who died yesterday. Everything was done to save him. Blood donors were called for and I volunteered – the doctor took one look at my cheekbones and said no. But what a contribution of blood he must have gotten – Spanish, American, French. The comrade who was dead was an anti-fascist under Hitler. He came to Spain to continue his bitter struggle against the fascists who tortured him and his family. He was wounded here three times. Each time going back into the lines. You know, we get hardened out here to the thought of death and suffering – yet you can't help feeling that choking feeling that makes you want to cry and shout and curse.

HANS BEIMLER

*Vor Madrid im Schützengraben
In der Stunde der Gefahr
Mit den eisernen Brigaden
Sein Herz voll Hass geladen
Stand Hans, der Kommissar
Stand Hans, der Kommissar*

*In Madrid's outlying trenches
In the hour of danger grim
With the international shock brigades
His heart with hatred all ablaze
Stood Hans, the commissar
Stood Hans, the commissar*

*Because he fought for freedom
He was forced to leave his home
Near the blood-stained Manzanares
Where he led the fight to hold Madrid
Died Hans, the commissar*

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Died Hans, the commissar

*A bullet came a-flying
From his fascist fatherland
The shot struck home, the aim was true
The rifle barrel well-made, too
A German army gun
A German army gun*

*With heart and hand I pledge you
While I load my gun again
You will never be forgotten
Nor the enemy forgiven
Hans Beimler, our commissar
Hans Beimler, our commissar*

GEORGE

We don't cry here, but I had difficulty keeping my eyes dry. As the funeral passed each villa every comrade who could possibly walk fell into line. Men on crutches, using canes, arms in slings, heads bandaged. And as I marched along, I couldn't help thinking of my comrades who had been killed beside me that day. We couldn't give them a funeral and this became their funeral. At the cemetery, three languages were spoken – French, Spanish and German, and I understood all three. I felt such a spirit of internationalism as I never felt before. A volley of three shots by the assault guards. Then we sang *The Internationale* in Italian, French, German, Spanish, English and Czech.

THE INTERNATIONALE

*Debout les damnés de la terre, Debout les forçats de la faim
La raison tonne en son cratère, C'est l'éruption de la fin
Du passé faisons table rase, Foules, esclaves, debout, debout
Le monde va changer de base, Nous ne sommes rien, soyons tout*

*C'est la lutte finale, Groupons-nous, et demain
L'Internationale Sera le genre humain
C'est la lutte finale, Groupons-nous, et demain
L'Internationale Sera le genre humain*

*Arise, you prisoners of starvation! Arise, you wretched of the earth!
For justice thunders condemnation. A better world's in birth
No more tradition's chains shall bind us
Arise, you slaves, no more in thrall!
The earth shall rise on new foundations
We have been naught, we shall be all*

*'Tis the final conflict; Let each stand in their place
The international working class, Shall be the human race
'Tis the final conflict; Let each stand in their place
The international working class Shall be the human race*

END ACT 1

ACT 2

FREIHEIT

*Spaniens Himmel breitet seine Sterne
Über unsre Schützengräben aus
Und der Morgen grüsst schon aus der Ferne
Bald geht es zum neuen Kampf hinaus*

*Die Heimat ist weit
Doch wir sind Bereit
Wir kämpfen und siegen für dich
Freiheit!*

*Spanish heavens spread their brilliant starlight
High above our trenches in the plain
From the distance morning comes to greet us
Calling us to battle once again*

*Far off is our land
Yet ready we stand
We're fighting and winning for you
Freiheit!*

*We'll not yield a foot to Franco's fascists
Even though the bullets fall like sleet
With us stand those peerless men, our comrades
And for us there can be no retreat*

*Beat the drums, ready the bayonets, charge!
Forward march. Victory our reward
With our scarlet banner, smash their column
Thaelmann Battalion, ready, forward march!*

*Far off is our land
Yet ready we stand
We're fighting and winning for you
Freiheit!*

*Die Heimat ist weit
Doch wir sind Bereit
Wir kämpfen und siegen für dich
Freiheit!*

RUTH

Dear George, It's the first day of Spring. I feel delicious. That feeling you get when you've just taken a bath and washed your hair and every stitch of clothes you are wearing is freshly laundered. And you're wearing a crisp starched blouse. And the sun is shining down on you. It's hard to work, it's hard to think. The week behind you seems unreal. And you aren't really prepared for the clamor of the week ahead. A hazy, lazy, lovely feeling. I want to walk in slow swishes, through tall grasses. And then stand on top of a great hill and laugh my head off. And then I want to turn around and find you there, laughing, too. And then, we'd talk of vague things. Like, how small the people below look and do you think they can see us, too? And what do you suppose it would be like to work on a farm?

Then you take off your lumber jacket and I sit down on it and you stretch out and put your head on my lap and we look up at the sky and say some more vague things. Then one of my legs cramps. But I don't say anything, only shift around and you say, are you comfortable? And I say, sure, are you? And then, I straighten out your eyebrows, or something.

GEORGE

Darling, Officers Training School is a pretty tough business. From the time we get up at 5:15 AM to bedtime there's not a moment to spare. It's just as tough a grind – in fact tougher than I ever faced when I was going to college at Cooper Union. Half the day is lectures in theory. The other half is divided between field work, firing, mapping, stripping and cleaning machine guns and rifles, parade, mess, political education, work and shining my shoes. Don't laugh when I mention shining my shoes. It's very important in the army and entirely underestimated.

THE UNITED FRONT (EXCERPT)

*So left, two, three
So left, two, three
To the work that we must do
March on in the workers' united front
For you are a worker, too*

*And just because he's human
A man would like a little bite to eat
He won't get full on a lot of talk
That won't give him bread and meat*

(in Spanish)

*Pues: un, dos, tres
Pues: un, dos, tres
Compañero, en tu lugar
Porque eres del pueblo afiliate ya
En el frente popular*

GEORGE

The army is taking on the form and shape of a real army. Discipline is today the central factor in our army, that means discipline in work, obeying commands and in personal appearance. So we future officers have to be model soldiers in every respect. It's not so easy to change life-long habits but it's got to be done. We're learning real stuff here. Maybe when we get home we'll become ROTC instructors. I understand that the US Army is proud of the Americans fighting in Spain.

THE UNITED FRONT (EXCERPT CONTINUED)

(in Yiddish)

*Tsu eyns, tsvey, dray
Tsu eyns, tsvey, dray
Af arbet in veg zikh geloszt
Yeder trot hot zayn klang, yeder veg zayn gezang
Ven du veyst vu du geyst un far vos*

(in French)

George and Ruth: Songs and Letters of the Spanish Civil War

*Marchons au pas
Marchons au pas
Camarades, vers notre front
Range-toi dans le front de tous les ouvriers
Avec tous tes frères étrangers*

RUTH

Now even the miraculous weather can't keep my mind from planning the meetings for the coming week. And what a week it's going to be! Brooklyn College, NYU, City Main and City 23rd will all have a one-hour student strike at 11 AM. Hunter and Columbia will have noon hour demonstrations. All the evening schools will have torch light parades to celebrate their stoppages.

These demonstrations are being led by the American Student Union with endorsements by most of the student councils. And the school newspapers promise special editions. The strikes and demonstrations align around five main points, The US must

1. participate in a world conference of peace-loving nations
2. lift the embargo on Loyalist Spain
3. withdraw Hitler's troops from Austria
4. halt murderous attacks on Catholics and Jews
5. boycott Japanese goods

Someone has arranged for an airplane to fly over the demonstrations with a 60-foot streamer: *Stop Hitler and Save Peace.*

THE UNITED FRONT (EXCERPT CONTINUED)

*So left, two, three
So left, two, three
To the work that we must do
March on in the workers' united front
For you are a worker too*

GEORGE

Ruth, If you promise you won't tell a soul, I'll tell you something that otherwise you won't know. I just found out that I was cited for bravery for dressing a wounded comrade under fire. Now I don't think I deserve it because there are so many things done under fire that are just as brave and braver – many of them go unnoticed and it makes you feel kinda silly when so many guys you know have done better than you. So don't spread this part of my letter around to anybody, please.

Remember how I used to bawl you out for smoking stubs? Well, well, the tables are turned. Now we have a system of butts. If you see a guy with a cigarette you yell *butts*. If someone else sees it first, you yell, *butts on butts*. Butch tried this one out at our party last Saturday night. He dropped 1/2 a cigarette (an overgrown butt) while someone was singing and the whole mob rushed to get the butt. But Butch was faster and had it in his mouth again with a scramble of guys still on the floor.

So you can go on smoking if you send us the butts.

RUTH

I went to a huge rally for the release of Tom Mooney, still in prison for suspected involvement, and therefore, convicted of the Market Street bombing. Unproven, but blame the union organizer is what they do. His case is coming before the Supreme Court.

It was a swell gathering. I'm sending you the *Times'* clippings which don't half do it justice. LaGuardia brought the house down with a regular arm-waving oration. It was a very sincerely friendly and ardent meeting. Everyone roared at the stalest jokes. Everyone applauded every other sentence of each speaker. The speakers' opening remarks were interesting. They varied from *Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen*, to *Fellow Citizens*, to *Fellow Workers*.

When the journalist Heywood Broun spoke, he drawled out, *Just everybody! We need Tom. He's not only a symbol, he's a power in his own right. Why once when I gave a*

half-promise to go to California and speak at a Mooney rally, and I didn't show up, Mooney called me up on the phone from San Quentin, and boys, he bawled the daylights out of me. He sure took my pants down. And if he can be like that over the telephone, can you imagine what he'd be like leading the picket line at the Brooklyn Daily Eagle? We newspaper men need Tom, right now!

Everyone feels very confident that Mooney will soon be free.

MR. TOM MOONEY IS FREE (EXCERPT)

Mister Tom Mooney is Free!

Mister Tom Mooney is Free!

Done got a pardon from that old jail house warden

Governor Culbert Olsen's decree

So it's open up your cold jailhouse door

Open up your cold jailhouse door

Cold clammy walls of the San Quentin halls

Can't hold Tom Mooney's people any more

GEORGE

Well Kid, We got all your packages yesterday and the day before, Johnny, Joe Taylor, Pete Kelly, myself. I got the tobacco, coffee, salmon, Hershey's kisses, chewing gum and the blue leather jacket. It's just like the woman in you to think of a color to match my eyes. We usually think of colors to match the ground. But everyone likes the jacket and is probably thinking of a hundred and one different ways of organizing it from me. At any rate I can expect a lot of guys to follow me around in the next action. This is always the standard joke in these parts.

The thing that amazes the boys around here most is this whole string of guys who get packages from one Ruth Watt. This strange phenomenon gives rise to all sorts of speculative wisecracks. Your packages are appreciated so much that Milt has started to call you *our wife*. Most of the stuff we receive from home is immediately divided among

the fellows, but still it makes the man who receives a package directly feel good. So I'm conveying all their thanks to you, my dear.

RUTH

Dear George, When I got to the office I found the package you sent me from Valencia. How well you know the things I love. That textbook. Those fairy tales. Really I'm speechless and I love you until I ache. I feel a little at a loss about where and how to write you. I feel sort of foolish knowing that by the time letters get to you, the letters I have written to you in training camp are received in reserve position; when written to reserve position, you get them in the hospital; when written to the hospital, you are in Valencia; to Valencia, and you are in training camp. Honest, it makes me dizzy.

And I know you're changing and growing daily. How can my letters meet those changes in you? We'll have to get to know each other all over again when you get home. It could be loads of fun. But I confess, I'm a little scared. You don't suppose you'll stop loving me or something, do you?

GEORGE

Darling, I believe everything now! Hairbreadth Harry, Nick Carter, Baron Munchausen, there isn't one of them has had the hairbreadth escapes some of us have had in the last couple of days. A group of us were surrounded by fascists. We were behind fascist lines for three days, fighting our way through, machine gunned, shelled by artillery, bombed from the air, caught by fascist patrols, attacked twice by cavalry (which we repulsed), and the climax, swimming across the Ebro River. Lucky I can swim. There were three of us together, naked and wet except for our hats in which we kept our military books and wallets. We walked for a couple of hours over rocks (little rocks, the kind that cut your feet) and through shrubs until we hit the road and ran into the Brigade where Herbie Matthews and Ernie Hemingway met us and got that story you read in the papers.

For the next 4 or 5 days the boys kept coming in. Each time another comrade arrived there was rejoicing. *So you came through you bastard. No fascist son-of-a-bitch could*

ever get you. Now our battalion is almost full strength again, the morale, the highest I've ever seen in Spain.

This is May 21st and excellent fighting weather. Cold wind and hot sun. By the time you get this, the newspapers will probably be reporting great victories for Loyalist Spain. Almost two years of war and still the spirit is even higher. All of Spain is singing songs of struggle and victory. Just listen to us!

VENGA JALEO

*El diez y ocho día de Julio
En el patio de un convento
En pueblo madrileño
Fondó el quinto regimiento*

*Venga jaleo, jaleo
Sueno de una metralladora
Y Franco se va' paseo
Y Franco se va' paseo*

*On the eighteenth of July
In a lovely Spanish patio
Madrid's anti-fascist heroes
Formed the Quinto Regimiento*

*Join in the struggle, the struggle
Hear that avenging machine gun
It will be the end of Franco
It will be the end of Franco*

*In the four heroic battalions
Madrid so bravely defending
Fighting in Spain's fiercest battles
Are the bravest of every village*

*Venga jaleo, jaleo
Sueno de una metralladora
Y Franco se va' paseo*

George and Ruth: Songs and Letters of the Spanish Civil War

Y Franco se va' paseo

*With the quinto, quinto, quinto
With the Quinto Regimiento
For the front, madre, I'm leaving
For I, too, would kill the Fascists*

*Venga jaleo, jaleo
Sueno de una metralladora
y Franco se va' paseo
y Fran-co se va' paseo*

GEORGE

Well kid, I'm in top form except for a sprained ankle and some small bits of shrapnel in my hand. I've just been entrusted with the greatest responsibility I've ever held. I'm now the Political Commissar of the Lincoln Battalion.

I wanted to give Johnny something to take back to you, but honestly there wasn't a thing on me. When I swam the river every stitch of clothes and possessions except my military book and wallet (which had no money) and my beret where I carried these things, were gone with the current. So I gave Johnny an International Brigade emblem for you. I also sent along one of our indispensable rope lighters for cigarettes, very useful at the front. I'm sure you'll be the center of attention when you pull the long rope out of your purse and begin to work the wheel. The first six weeks you have it, it should take you no more than 15 minutes to light each time. Let me know how it works.

RUTH

Johnny came home and gave me your gifts.

Wheeeeeee Whooooooo Whew.

You said that for the first 6 weeks, it would take me 15 minutes to light that trench lighter. Darling, you flatter me. In the three solid hours, I lit the darn thing three times, and covered the palm of my hand with blisters. (To my eternal credit, though, I think it

should be stated that, the last time I did it in twenty-one and a half minutes flat.) Johnny gave it to me just before the evening session of the state convention. I didn't realize it, but it made a *disrupter* out of me. There I sat quietly engrossed in lighting my cigarette from the lighter. Suddenly someone two tables away threw me a pack of matches. Then someone from the balcony threw a whole box of them. Then in front of me, behind me and to the sides of me, delegates offered me a light. Finally, a vet came over and lit that rope in one stroke. Gee whiz!

GEORGE

I knew you would like the rope lighter. It's much better than matches. Hell, matches light on the first strike, usually. Rope lighters require a little skill and patience. They can be very nicely tied about the neck, or waist, if the rope is long enough.

RUTH

About the rope lighter, do you know I'm beginning to agree with you, that as a practical lighter, it is a very superior article. I have finally learned how to light it with one stroke. This is how I do it. Daintily, I coil it about my waist. Coyly I then slip it around my throat. Slippily I slide it through my bracelet. I pick up the end with my left hand, and placing it precisely between my thumb and forefinger, I hold it up to the window. I gauge the distance with the utmost care. And finally and flourishingly, with my right hand, I strike a match. Bingo! It's lit with one stroke!

Remember that letter you wrote to New Utrecht High School thanking them for the green scarf? Well, it created a sensation. Hy Greenspan read it in his class. You could have heard a pin drop. It spread like wildfire. *Can you imagine*, the word got around, *Three graduates of New Utrecht in the leadership of the Lincoln Battalion! Boy oh boy! Did you hear that George Watt said he learned to swim at Utrecht and that's how come he could swim across the Ebro?* It's scheduled to be read in every English and History class in the school.

I couldn't help getting excited seeing the picture of Milt and Hemmingway (and half of you). Hemmingway was always one of my favorite authors. Many years ago, I read *The Sun Also Rises*, and almost all his other books. It took me quite some time to untwist

myself from the ravel he left me in. I've been afraid to reread any of his books. Afraid if I had to judge them by present critical standards, I'd have to relegate them to the limbo of many former treasures. But just a few weeks ago I read his latest book, *To Have and Have Not*. I was tremendously relieved. It was a fine book.

GEORGE

Bill Wheeler is back in Spain. The first thing he says is, *It's great to be in Spain again.*

Dear Ruth, Please tell everyone to stop writing letters to the boys here to come home, as if we had some prison sentence and our time was up. People back home need to appreciate the seriousness of the situation here. There can be no going home for anyone here until victory of Spain is guaranteed. Right now we can't think of home. We've got enough to think about the homes in Spain being destroyed by the fascists. The homes in the states are still pretty safe from bombardments.

RUTH

George, There's something I've wanted to talk to you about for a long time. I've had many conversations up at the league office with the mothers, fathers, wives, sisters, brothers, uncles, aunts, cousins, and sweethearts of fellows in Spain. I shuddered when one of them told me they had written telling the boys they should return home. I tried to explain very patiently, why it was no use, why it's wrong and bad and that the fellows don't like getting those letters. I think it did some good, but I'm troubled by it.

I can certainly sympathize with the feelings of most of these people. But if they say those things in letters (which I hope they stop doing) they should be told bluntly: that sort of stuff is worse for morale than Franco propaganda.

THE PEAT BOG SOLDIERS (EXCERPT)

*But for us there is no complaining
Winter will in time be past
One day we shall cry rejoicing
Homeland dear, you're mine at last*

*Then will the peat bog soldiers
March no more with their spades to the bog
Then will the peat bog soldiers
March no more with their spades to the bog*

GEORGE

I just got your package and two cablegrams. The cables were a shock and a thrill. I was very pleased to get them. Somehow the thought of you and me in Paris is something I could only dream about in my most dreamy mood. Yet I am about to cable you the following: *Take it easy comrade. Political Commissars are the last to leave.* In addition to that, our battalion's still in the lines. As long as we are here, I cannot see my way through to foreign leaves or repatriation. We still have a job to perform. When that job is over and I'm sure the time is very short, we will be able to leave (not only for a leave but for home). I'll let you know when the time comes.

Talk of the future of the International Brigade is quite widespread. There's lots of speculation and rumors. You can see how much courage it takes for the men who know all this and whose minds have already begun to turn across the ocean, to stay and fight. Yet everyone is working and prepared to fight, just as before.

RUTH

Darling, This is what I do on weekends whenever I get sort of fed up. Saturday night, instead of going out somewhere, I come home, read *Collier's* magazine, wash my hair, turn on the radio, curl up in my bathrobe (my wine dotted one, remember?) and soon, fall asleep. Around midnight, I wake up, my toes feel cold – crawl under the blanket, explain all my troubles to you, and then, fall asleep.

Sunday – the radio I forgot to turn off, wakes me. Get up early – clean the house; wash clothes; gossip with Adline; read the paper; iron clothes. Most of the day is gone. Make supper and then, the most important thing of all. Other factors of such a weekend may

vary, this one never does. I get out all your letters and gradually, as I go from beginning to end, I begin to thaw and my heart starts singing and my head clears up.

GEORGE

There's no need telling you about the momentous decision made by Prime Minister Negrin and the Spanish Government. That they are able to dispense with our services is only further proof of our inevitable victory, of the strength of our army. Our battalion was in the front lines until the very last moment. You can't know how proud the fellows here are to be the last Americans to leave the front in Spain. The last two months were the hardest two months of fighting this war has seen to date. I'll tell you all about it when I get home.

BELOVED COMRADE (EXCERPT)

*To you, Beloved Comrade, We make this solemn vow
The fight will go on, The fight will still go on, until we win*

RUTH

It was good to hear from you. At the end of the letter you wrote, *Salud y Victoria y Ruthia*, you darling. But tell me, who is this dame, Victoria?

When I was a little girl I used to be frightened by the sorrowful faces of the nuns I passed on the street. But hey, now I can appreciate at least one reason for it. Say you, hurry up home. Abstention has grown wearier!

GEORGE

This should be me instead of this letter. But just as the rest of the boys were going home, I got the gripe and was sent to the hospital. I'm perfectly well now. I walk around the hospital and town and feel all my strength coming back. But the doctors say I am still not strong enough to make the mad dash through France and withstand the rigorous winter ocean voyage. So wait another week, which is what I have to do. You have no idea how the minutes and hours weigh upon me. I've been away from home

and you for a year and a half now. There aren't many veterans who've been away that long. But if I can't make it home for Christmas and New Years (which it's certain I can't) I'll surely make it home in time for our second wedding anniversary and that's something! Then we'll celebrate.

I love you so much, so hurry up and wait for me.

RUTH

I saw the film *Blockade* yesterday. I don't know if you've heard of it yet. It's really a remarkable thing to come out of Hollywood. It's supposed to be a non-partisan indictment of the bombardment of civilians, of the destruction of peaceful homes. In the course of telling the story of a peasant boy, the film shows why people continue to resist, what the land and liberty mean to them. There is a powerful humanitarian appeal in the picture of how innocent inhabitants of a town suffer under an unfair blockade, but continue to resist. Some of the implications for the world as a whole are brought out by a sympathetic foreign newspaperman. But the part that hit home most, as it was meant to do, were the closing lines.

In somewhat the approved Hollywood fashion, the hero saves the food ship and exposes the traitors. The military commandant thanks him and promises him and his girl a leave as soon as possible, saying, *Maybe you can find a little peace and happiness.*

Peace? replies the boy, *How can there be peace for anyone while our land and people are being destroyed by murderers?* Then he turns directly to the audience as the curtains close, and through clenched teeth says, *The world can stop it. Where is the conscience of the world?*

JARAMA VALLEY

*There's a valley in Spain called Jarama
It's a place that we all know so well
It was there that we gave of our manhood
Where so many of our brave comrades fell*

*We are proud of the Lincoln Battalion
And the fight for Madrid that it made
There we fought like true sons of the people
As part of the Fifteenth Brigade*

*Now we're far from that valley of sorrow
But its memory we ne'er will forget
So before we conclude this reunion
Let us honor our glorious dead*

*There's a valley in Spain called Jarama
It's a place that we all know so well
It was there that we gave of our manhood
Where so many of our brave comrades fell*

THE END