

Madrid
January, 1959

Dear Mr. Ferrater Mora:

You will probably consider it quite idiotic to send along a holiday greeting in mid-January. However I did want you to know that your card, neatly addressed, has been lying on my desk since mid-October .

I also put off writing because I knew that you would be interested in the current situation in Spain and since that is so nebulous a subject, I really had to wait a few months more. I don't see it clearly now, either, but these are my few impressions. There is less political interest than there was a year ago, more apathy if that be possible; los del Opus continue to be the eminencia gris of anything and everything. The curious thing about the latter fact is that the Jesuits seem to be gaining prestige by comparison for 'people' say, 'at least the Jesuits. . .' and find some saving grace to compare them favorably with Opus.

There have been a lot of arrests this year. The cousin of a good friend was arrested in January, the finace of another cousin of the same friend in the late spring; they are students or just out of college. They were not released until December and were, all in all, quite well treated. There was another group of people arrested in late November or mid-December and I have heard very little comment on them. The pattern seems quite clear: to arrest and innervate the various groups by taking away their most active leaders who, when released, are discouraged more than anything else.

A young boy here who is writing his doctoral thesis on the Falange before 1939 has seen a lot of Dionisio Ridruejo and he tells me that Ridruejo says that he is discouraged and disgusted, that the group of people who really care about politics is so minute it is not worth cultivating.

The greatest talk here, of course, has been about the Bank scandal and the dam breakthrough in the Zamora province. The foreign broadcasts and newspapers were so full of the story of the Swiss Bank in Barcelona and the national bank that was deliberating playing with the peseta on the international market that finally there were some few scanty reports in the newspaper. Everyone says that the father of the Marques de Villaverde is involved (he is, of course, a banker) but I am not quite sure of that. I tend to agree with someone who said in my presence recently that everything used to be blamed on Serrano Suner, now everything is blamed on the Marques de Villaverde and I think there may be some truth in that.

Perhaps the reason that I doubt it is that I have been surprised at the unreliability of the rumor channel. In the case of the flood

Serrano spoke in November for the first time in years - the place was packed, expectations high - and he said absolutely nothing.

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at Ribadelago I know that they were not reliable because it is my secretary's husband who is the director of Moncabril (and thus ultimately responsible) and because she herself went up there after the accident. Many people have assured me that the news was held back and this is not true; it came too late for the morning papers but it was announced on the radio at mid-day. And then the wild tales of German engineers being brought in because they could not find the leak, and the like, are rampant. I have asked myself often in these last few days when the paper was filled with the news of this tragedy-- pictures, gifts, benefit bull fights, trucks of American goods, messages of condolence-- if this kind of publicity were not purposeful; it seems out of proportion to the vast amount of poverty and suffering in Spain and I've wondered if it hadn't been used as means of letting off some of the steam in Spain. (For instance, one of the pictures was of three haggard old women with their black shawls huddled together, looking sad; but that picture could have been taken last year or ten years ago for that is just the way those women look). As Elisa says, the tragedy involves those who are dead or better, those who mourn for them, and equally the people who must face the responsibility; the people who are still in Ribadelago are going to have a village such as they have never had before.

Pedro Lain Entralgo is going to give a series of lectures here in the Institute (although not for the International Institute directly but for the Asociación de Diplomados, i.e. of the old Instituto Escuela). I thought you might be interested in the titles: the series is entitled, El encuentro con el prójimo and consists of five lectures:

El hecho básico; la aparición del "otro"

El "otro" como objeto

El "otro" como persona

El "otro" como prójimo

La vida en proximidad a través de un ejemplo:
la relación médico-enfermo.

If you are interested I shall be glad to send along a few words of summary. By the way, I have heard that Lain is having a difficult time not only because of his brother who has come back from Russia but because of his nephew who preferred to remain there.

As for my work I find it stimulating, at times simply fatiguing. Far too much of my time is devoted to a hard battle with maids and workmen who must be. . . but then you know that story, I am sure. Perhaps my greatest pleasure is working with the directors of Estudio, with Jimena Menendez Pidal, Angeles Gasset and Carmen del Diestro; I like the atmosphere in the school, the determination to be objective and to avoid any tone of extremism or martyrdom. (It was really marvelous to see the way they adjusted to the ministerial order of separate education; they divided the classes in half and in many of the classes the teacher stands in a doorway between the two rooms giving them the same class. They tell a wonderful story of the priest who gives the catechism class

with the Estudio

who went down to the Ministry to protest to the Minister about the order and was told that it was in accordance with a new curial ruling. The priest contradicted him, said the church had come out this year against cooperative residences where men and women lived together at universities but this had nothing to do with coeducation. Whereupon the minister shouted, "All right, the pope rules in Rome and we rule here."

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for being kind to me in the exams when you really didn't need to be--after my blunder about Valle Inclan. I meant to have read The Sonnets before writing this card but somehow I haven't had the time. My class of Spanish students gave me the three Valencian novels of Blasco Ibanez and I read La Barraca and Arroz y Sartana and rather liked them for being what they are, sociological novels. Then I read an essay by Menendez Pidal on Charles' V' Imperialism and truly enjoyed that (by the way, the Charles V exhibition in Toledo was magnificent in the true sense of that tired old word; I really loved it). Now I am re-reading The Last Puritan by George Santayana. Actually I did not have much ganas, not to mention time, to start studying again after my nine months in Bryn Mawr. But I shall begin again soon. (The present Duke of Maura is very sick, perhaps gravely so; I live across the street from him and watch the house anxiously for signs of movement.)

Sincerely
Jose Lauerly

18-VIII-59.

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