

Madrid
January the 1st

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M.C.M.

Dear Professor Ferrater:

Do you feel less apologetic now-- I've waited four months to write. I love to write letters but this strange Spanish schedule of hours leaves no time for letter writing nor reading: constant activity is the keynote and you're just a flat social failure if you don't have at least three fiestas in a day. Milagros Lain, who is really amusing at times, said the other day that the cocktail party was based on movement not words-- from late April till June you talk about where you are going on your vacation, from October till December you talk about where you have been. Since this is a most limited topic of conversation you rely on the fact that someone will cross between the two conversationalists and you can begin all over again.

Actually, I am quite sorry that you did not write a little earlier for I was in Paris a few days early in July and again early in August, on my way to England.

As you now know, I did not go back to Bryn Mawr and in this Christmas season I am again faced with the problem, to go or to stay. The position has been offered to me a third year-- I should love it for I am terribly happy working with these people in the Institute (above all Jimena Menendez Pidal and Angeles Gasset who, both in their own special ways, give an example of continuous creative activity, relatively free of prejudices and those that do exist are prejudices which I share), here in this city I love so much, in a position I really consider worthwhile; and I think that the Institute would benefit by my staying in terms of continuity. But the thesis, the thesis is always about like a dowdy carabina to spoil my complete pleasure. Were it done I should have no compunctions whatsoever about a third year. But considering the situation objectively I realize how important it is for me to get the degree for professionally I cannot do anything without it; the longer I put it off, the more difficult it will be. There are two former IIGS directors still here working on their thesis and while I realize that for them it is partly an excuse to stay on, I think it would be ludicrous to join them--three of us! And I should add that the reason the thesis looms large is that I cannot find time to work on it.

I would be most interested to hear what Miss Northrop has to say about the situation here-- it is for us here, and even more for we who presume on 'inside' information, a true puzzle. Had you asked me three months ago I would have been able to tell you-- tremendous inflation, heavy layoffs (facilitated by that mythical Ley de Despida that foreign capital demands) and discontent. But prices have risen steadily, in food it has at least doubled since I first came in 1955, yet people manage to make ends meet and still have ten pesetas for coffee; there is minor unemployment. We had a lot of work done this summer in the building and in a (vain) attempt to hurry them on I spent hours talking with the workmen. They complained far more about aspects of nationalization--compulsory healthy service and the poor way it is run; the system of puntos by which a man can earn a good living just by producing one child (or more) a year. The workmen

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*You can see that I am young more conservative - it may be the influence of the fascist civil
I have as a porter: he is the most honest and most decepted man I've met. (And
just for irony's sake - do you know whom we asked for references about him in former
times? He lived? Why the Garcia Lorca's, of course, and they approved.)*

*En fin - felix año nuevo
Afectuosamente
James Lavelly*

themselves -- and these were mostly skilled workmen-- realized that the system puts ^{no} premium on effort or achievement but on seniority and these other benefits. Friends who have stores tell me that sales have fallen off sharply but I myself cannot see this-- the stores are crowded and those many go to pasear, not all nor even a majority do so. (except in super-markets where it is practically impossible to shop because grandmother to grandchild has gone to see the sights).

The political situation seems rather dull. The feverish activity of last spring, and the heightened nervous tension as homage after homage to Machado was either tamed down at the last moment or called off entirely, all this seems to have passed. The strike in June was not very dramatic-- they may have done a lot to nip it in the bud but people generally were not interested; there was a great deal of communist propaganda ^{in favor of the strike} and people generally shied off from that. There were arrests as there were in connection with work layoffs in San Sebastian and Barcelona recently but they were not exciting although there was some attempt to dramatize them by a group of intellectuals.

One amusing story took place this June in connection with oposiciones for the catedra de psicologia or psiquiatria in Salamanca. The president of the board was Lopez Ibor and his candidate won, hands down; there are lots of opinions about this, and it is pretty generally agreed that his appointment was assured from the beginning, but a friend whose judgement I trust tells me that the candidate was also the best prepared-- he is quite a bit older, has studied more and in more countries and has published more although he is not dynamic nor does he explain well what he knows. One candidate was the son of General Rojas (whom I understand goes regularly to the Pardo and like the two good generals they are, they discuss the strategy of the war); he was, in many opinions, the best qualified but he is also the youngest. The third boy, whose name I cannot remember right now, was the strongest candidate; he had been arrested a second time this spring for bringing in socoailist? communist? propaganda from Paris. He came to the exams escorted by two Guardia Civil--say what you will, there are not many governments that permit a man under arrest for political activity to apply for an official job. But I haven't yet gotten to the point-- Jimenez Diaz was in the audience and was so angered by the rather arbitrary proceedings that he went up to Lopez Ibor afterwards and insulted him roundly; the latter was furious and said he planned to lodge a libel case against him, the former got even angrier, ran after him and threw a stone which broke the glass pane in the door. They are all friends now and the case is going to court . . .

Excuse me while I take out my soap box but: how can responsible men help to prepare young people if they give such an example of irresponsible behavior. They are distinguished men and they should be far above such things. I thought the same thing all last spring-- we had a series of lectures by Lain and an homenage to Duperear; our auditorium is small and we, as well as the ley, want to limit it to a capacity audience--but people insisted on coming in, they screamed and broke the window of the door in order to open it from the inside. And these people were the most distinguished intellectuals and professional people in Madrid. Jimena went down and talked to them for an hour and when she finished they insisted on knowing, 'why can't I come in'.

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