

Mr. George Herman  
CBS News  
2020 M St., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20036

11/9/86

Dear George,

I simply MUST drop everything else and write to thank and praise you for a truly remarkably fine, fair and honest, one of the finest if not the finest TV reporting I can remember, particularly because the subject is so controversial, your today's piece on the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. In every way, superb, a credit to you and to Kurlat for airing and leading off with it.

I wish I'd know so I could have loaned, if you'd have liked them, some of their songs, sung by ~~them~~, recorded in Madrid and sold here to raise money. Somewhere I have the album of that brigade's songs.

And how, to those who think, you will have told the world that the time must come when it must learn from its mistakes.

I think I've a few years on you and my recollections of those events are clear. I used to listen to news from Madrid on shortwave E&R and once I heard Paul Robeson broadcast from there.

In this country there was a decent amount of support from noncommunists, too. I knew a liberal lawyer in Kentucky who recruited volunteers and by the most remarkable of coincidences, my wife and I were driving with him from Pittsburgh to Chicago, where he had an hour of Sunday work, the weekend Hitler ~~was~~ attacked Poland. His car had no radio, portables then were larger than hifis today, and I held out portable out the window as we drove to keep up with the news. There also was a medical committee, to provide medicines and funds for medicines, to the government. We used to tax our poker games 5% for medical supplies, a few of us, not a communist among us. Mostly young lawyers, in fact, at least one now a wealthy industrialist.

An oddity that may amuse you as well as inform, because I believe you must have had strong feelings to create so fine a thing. When I was in OSS, still a soldier or just after getting a medical discharge, I got an ~~unusual~~ unusual request: take in one of our youngest, who had no family and was just returned from a rough job. I picked him up at the Congressional Country Club, which OSS had taken over (and something else connected with it later gave me a big rep), expecting him to be with us for a week or two. His family fled Horthy Hungary, to Spain, he alone survived, and he supposedly was the youngest officer in the Spanish government army. (We had already taken in two sisters-in-law, so we were a bit crowded.) Stanley slept on the sofa for six months.

I remember one vet who typifies the stupidities of the military ~~in~~ political things and its failure to use people as they could and should be used. For a while, just before OSS and just after I returned from Africa, I was assigned to an MP outfit that guarded the New York docks. I've forgotten that fellow's name but I can still see his face. We were together until I was reassigned to another outfit. The most useful thing he'd been able to do after he got back was, because he was a bright guy with an excellent physique, to be an anonymous sperm donor. The doctor who used him knew him and his record. Imagine an experience/combat veteran used as a guard!

Your nurse was correct. We were called "premature antifascists," and it was held against us in many ways, especially in the government after FDR died. Carl Bernstein's parents by the way, also were and also suffered. His father, when last I saw him, many years ago, operated an early laundromat.

The catholic church had a vast and powerful pro-Trotsky operation extending even into the government, high up, too. In about 1938 the Department of Justice borrowed me from the Senate, where I'd been an investigator and then was editor of the

subcommittee on free speech and rights of labor, better known as the civil-liberties committee. Brien (right) McMahon, who then headed the DJ's criminal division, was in charge of the then famous Harlan (Coubty, Ky.) conspiracy case. Although I'm not a lawyer I was to be their expert on duces tecum subpoenas, so my room was always next to the room we used as an office down there and once Brien's incoming, after opening, was mixed in with mine. There was a letter to him from a guy named Murphy, assistant- or undersecretary of State, and it was a message having to do with what a cardinal, I may be wrong but I think Spellman, wanted in pro-Franco ways. (Brien, later a Senator, fathered the atomic energy act.) This was, of course, in FDR's day. But then he once said he had to appoint an ambassador from the American people to the State Dept.

If you were too young, shortwave radio was great in those days, before CBS used it to air Murrow and his wunderkinder like Shirer. I used to get many of the European capitals and rarely the bounce off the Kennelly-Heaviside layer of an underground broadcast. Once I hear Goering ridiculed as a macaroni "Fresser." So, when I could, I listened to what I think called itself Radio Madrid. No, maybe Radio Espana.

Perhaps emotion figures in my judgement but I really think that what you just aired is the finest piece of TV reporting I've seen. It could not have been more honest. So, prepare to rush to the tall timbers as the criticisms pour in!

We don't have a VCR but if it is not too much trouble, I'd very much appreciate a <sup>scoring</sup> ~~base~~ cassette of the sound for our younger friends to hear and some of the students who come here working on thesis. (Last two in doctorates in communications, by the way.) The young people have no easy way of knowing the truth of that period.

You also made me think, and I've concluded that in what appears to be quixotic to those who <sup>of me</sup> have a lower opinion of it, what I'm now involved in is merely consistent with that bygone ~~era~~ era: I'm resisting authoritarianism, this time at home. (I got my brief filed Friday and have been catching up on the accumulation and I've just gotten a new appeals court decision which is 100% inconsistent with what it did to me in the past and I've got to draft something on it.)

With thanks, respect and appreciation,

  
Harold Weisberg