

December 31, 1960

Dear Luca--

We returned last night from our auto trip to Death Valley and LaJolla, and one of our first pleasures was to hear your voice on the tape that was waiting here for us.

I can well imagine, or at least begin to imagine, what you may have been going through in the past few months, and with you will hope that the matter of your professorship really will be irreversibly settled without too much more confusion and delay. At any rate I hope that it is not premature to congratulate you for the final outcome, and we do hope that you will be happier to have the fruits of it in 1961 than you were to be so involved in 1960. Needless to see, I am personally very much disappointed to lose the immediate prospect of your coming here -- I can hardly tell you how much so -- but this is going to be fully compensated by your own pleasure and achievement. It would always be a matter of regret that your being here would be so symptomatic of the difficulties of Italian science.

I do not know how long it will be feasible to maintain the formal, open offer, but this will be so for the time being, until I can hear further from you, and until the plans in Genetics here become firmer. It is not so much a matter of making an alternative appointment, as I have no intention of attempting this at present, but whether the salary should not be released for other needs in the medical school. The issue here is not an urgent one.

The most disturbing thing in your message was your prospect of continuing to split your time and energy between many places, Milan, Parma, Pavia, even Naples. How can you do this, or even think of it? If your professorship gives you the opportunity of settling in one place to do your work in composure, then it is a great advantage; but from what you now imply wouldn't ~~be~~ you be much better off to be an assistant at Pavia and stay there? Or Naples when the time comes if necessary? The "insecurity" of your position cannot be altogether real during at least the next few years of your vigor; at worst, there can scarcely be any doubt that there would be several positions of at least adequate calibre to choose from in the States.

As to your immediate plans, I can well understand your reluctance to divert yourself, and would certainly not want to press the question of another visit this spring. Whenever you feel yourself that you might welcome it, don't hint at it, but just tell me and I am sure we can make some arrangement at any time, perhaps somewhat better and easier if there is a few months time to plan for it. I am sure I can handle the course myself, though the students would certainly have had more advantage from your help. As to my own travelling in April, this is now rather uncertain as I have been finding it more difficult to meet my responsibilities here and am trying to minimize any distractions, even the most pleasant ones.

I listened carefully to your summary on the Interist program, and agree with your evaluation of it entirely. Certainly you should not

strain yourself now on the nitrous acid derivative at the expense of making a good start on the fluorinations. When you have a better developed chemical facility, you can always return to the problem of this universally soluble antibiotic. (So few substances show this behavior I am surprised you did not succeed in purifying it by default, so that it would just crystallize out of your extracts.) I don't know what you mean by having an effective program by the end of next year -- surely you don't mean that you cannot get further with it during these months.

Besides the fluorination, I would ~~remind~~ remind you about the penicillanic derivatives that Giovanni and I talked about, and which might well give a useful product very soon. (Gio' was going to send me more information on present knowledge of the specific structures that are active as penicillins.)

Dr. Crossley has just sent a check to finish payment for your car; I will deposit this to your account after making some calculations so that we will come out even.

With our affectionate greetings for the new year,


P.S. As I would want to respect the confidence of your message, I hope you will tell me in good time what news is not confidential, that your friends here would want to know about.