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## Internationalism in the Barrios: Hispanic-Americans and the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)

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INTERNATIONALISM IN THE BARRIOS:  
HISPANIC-AMERICANS AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR (1936-1939)

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INTERNATIONALISM IN THE BARRIOS:  
HISPANIC-AMERICANS AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR (1936-1939)

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Internationalism in the Barrios:  
Hispanic-Americans in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)

Advisor: Professor Neil Foley

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The ripples of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) had a far-reaching effect that touched Spanish speaking people outside of Spain. In the United States, Hispanic communities –which encompassed Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Mexicans, Spaniards, and others— were directly involved in anti-isolationist activities during the Spanish Civil War. Hispanics mobilized efforts to aid the Spanish Loyalists, they held demonstrations against the German and Italian intervention, they lobbied the United States government to lift the arms embargo on Spain, and some traveled to Spain to fight in the International Brigades. This paper examines how the Spanish Civil War affected the diverse Hispanic communities of Tampa, New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

Terminology, the words Hispanic and Latino in this paper refer to any citizen or resident of the United States, of any racial background and religion, with ancestry linked to Spain or any Spanish speaking country of the Americas. Chapter one focuses on the diverse “Latin” and “Hispano” communities of Tampa and New York and their efforts to mobilize aid for the Spanish Loyalists and the unique effect the war had on the Spanish immigrant community. Chapter two examines the Mexican population of Los Angeles and San Francisco and how labor unions mobilized the Hispanic community to aid the Spanish Republic and the response from

Pacific Coast maritime workers to the war. Lastly, chapter three centers on the conservative Mexican exiled press in the Southwestern United States and their response to the Spanish Civil War.

Against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War, this paper deals with issues regarding ethnicity, class, gender, and identity. It discusses racism towards Hispanics during the early days of labor activism. It examines ways in which labor unions used the conflict in Spain to rally support from their members to raise funds for relief aid. It looks at how Hispanics fought against American isolationism in the face of the growing threat of fascism abroad.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of Hispanics in the United States as actors involved in global events during American isolationism. Hispanics communities played an active part in anti-isolationist and relief aid movement for Spain throughout the Spanish Civil War. After the conflict, they turned their efforts to aid the thousands of Spanish refugees crammed into internment camps in France and joined the nation in the mobilizing for World War II.

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## INTRODUCTION

In April 1931, the Second Spanish Republic was proclaimed, which followed a landslide victory in the municipal elections that forced the abdication of King Alfonso XIII, celebrations erupted not only in Spain but also across Spanish communities in the United States. In the Spanish mutual societies of Ybor City and West Tampa, portraits of the king were unhung, and the tricolor flag of the new Republic raised as the community celebrated the arrival of democracy in Spain. Many among the Spanish community in Tampa hoped that the new Republic would address the conditions that had forced them to emigrate to the United States.

The Republic government promised to institute land reform, and decrease the political power of the Church, military, and aristocracy. The Republic implemented universal education and constructed non-religious schools throughout the country. The Constitution of 1931 established freedom of speech, freedom of association, and women's suffrage, while stripping the nobility of legal privileges and decreasing the power of the Church.<sup>1</sup> However, the victory of the Frente Popular (a coalition of left-wing parties) in the 1936 elections over the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (CEDA) created panic among the defeated right who lost hope of regaining power. Traditionalists within the army sought a military solution and prepared a

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<sup>1</sup> Gabriel Jackson, *The Spanish republic and the Civil War 1931-1939* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), 45-60.

coup under the direction of General Emilio Mola. The plan was to force the transfer of power by mobilizing the Army in the Peninsula and Africa. However, the uprising of July 17, 1936, failed after encountering unexpected resistance from the Spanish civilian population. The military coup sparked a civil war that divided Spain into Nationalist and Loyalist Republican zones. The Nazi German and Italian intervention on the side of the Nationalists turned the conflict into a battle between democracy and fascism.<sup>2</sup>

For many American liberals in the United States, the war in Spain was yet another menacing example of the spreading threat of fascism across Europe. The unexpected resistance of the Spanish people against the Nationalists raised optimism that Spain could become the “tomb of fascism.” However, the passage of a joint resolution banning the sale of arms to Spain in January 1937 by the U.S. Congress dashed the hope of a Nationalist defeat. By May, the passage of the Neutrality Act of 1937 extended the measure to include the prohibition of U.S. citizens or businesses from assisting belligerents or traveling to Spain. The United States government, fearful of foreign entanglement in another European war, decided to follow the lead of the Non-Intervention Committee in London and remain neutral in the Spanish Civil War. The U.S. embargo to Spain was the first time in history when the United States refused to sell arms to a legally elected government. This was another example of a string of isolationist U.S. government policies that followed World War I. Many historians agree that the United States refusal to provide international leadership during the interwar period significantly contributed to the worsening of the Great Depression, helped produce conditions that fostered totalitarian

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 190-230.



fascist regimes, encouraged German and Japanese aggression, and contributed to the scale of World War II.<sup>3</sup>

American liberals who sympathized with the Spanish Republic were outraged that the embargo deprived the legitimate government of Spain the supplies they needed to defend themselves, even after the headlines of the bombing of Guernica by the Luftwaffe revealed Germany's support of the Nationalist side.<sup>4</sup> They saw the embargo as an illegal action that infringed on the Spanish government's ability to defend itself and endangered American national security by fostering Nazi German and Italian aggression. While the U.S. government neglected to address its international problems and embraced isolationism, the national response to the Spanish situation was carried out by various private organizations and thousands of American combat volunteers who rose to fill the void left by the country's elected leaders. Across the United States, key organizations of various political persuasion disseminated propaganda, lobbied Washington, and raised relief aid to the Republic.<sup>5</sup> Much has been written on the American volunteers in Spain and less on the relief aid movement in the United States.<sup>6</sup> However, the historiography has not provided significant attention towards Hispanics in the

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<sup>3</sup> See Frank Costigliola, *Award Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Ideational Relations with Europe, 1919-1933* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Charles P. Kindleberger, *World in Depression 1929-1939* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973); John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

<sup>4</sup> Albany Evening News April 27, 1937; The New York Times April 28, 1937.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed overview of American aid efforts during the Spanish Civil War see Eric R. Smith, *American Relief Aid and the Spanish Civil War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> On the historiography of American volunteers in Spain see Robert Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Pegasus, 1969); Arthur Landis, *The Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (New York: Citadel Press, 1967); Victor Berch, *African Americans in the Spanish Civil War: "This Ain't Ethiopia but it'll do."* (Boston: GK Hall, 1991); Peter N. Carroll, *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Peter N. Carroll & James D. Fernandez, *Facing Fascism: New York and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Adam Hoshschild, *Spain in our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016); On the historiography of the American relief aid see Guttman Allen, *The Wound in the Heart: America and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1962); Smith, 2013.

United States involved in the American relief aid for Spain movement or among the international volunteers. In *Crusade of the Left*, historian Robert Rosenstone set out to understand the average American volunteer in Spain. He incorrectly concluded that of the various ethnic groups of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, “the only group that seem to have been missing from its ranks were Mexican Americans.”<sup>7</sup> In more recent works, neither Peter N. Carroll’s *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* or Adam Hoshschild’s *Spain in our Hearts* provide significant study on the involvement of Hispanic Americans during the Spanish Civil War.

This paper examines how the diverse Hispanic communities of Tampa, New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco responded to the Spanish Civil War. Although isolationism remained strong in American society during the interwar period, the effort to aid Spain and the call to lift the U.S. arms embargo demonstrated the beginning of American internationalism that followed in the post-World War II era.<sup>8</sup> Hispanic Americans were a part of this internationalist trend. They joined like-minded citizens across the country in opposing non-interventionist government policies, which they believed endangered national security. They stood up to defend American democratic values in the face of totalitarianism even though they were often characterized as being un-American. Hispanic communities mobilized to aid the Spanish Loyalists, they held demonstrations against the German and Italian intervention, they lobbied the United States

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<sup>7</sup> Rosenstone, 109.

<sup>8</sup> The majority of the American public supported isolationism during the 1930s. In 1937 an opinion poll concluded that 70 percent of Americans felt that entering World War I was a mistake. Another poll in 1937, found 56 percent of Americans supported staying out of another world war. By the end of 1940, 60 percent of Americans favored helping England in the war against Germany even if it risked the U.S. getting involved in war. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, only 20 percent of Americans believed that the U.S. involvement in World War I was a mistake. See Jeffrey W. Legro, “Whence American Internationalism,” *International Organization* 54, 2 (Spring, 2000): 273-274.

government to lift the arms embargo on Spain, and some traveled to Spain to fight in the International Brigades.

The first chapter of this paper focuses on the Spanish immigrant communities of Tampa and New York. Many were first and second-generation Spanish immigrants with ties to Spain. For them, the Spanish Civil War had direct consequences on their lives and identities. They organized around established mutual aid societies and clubs to form aid committees separate from the mainstream American relief effort. They collected a disproportionate amount of aid for their population size and lobbied Washington to lift the embargo. The outcome of the war facilitated the transformation of their identity from immigrant to American.<sup>9</sup>

The second chapter concentrates on Mexican-American and Mexican immigrant workers in Los Angeles and San Francisco. The Spanish Civil War came shortly after the worst years of the U.S. government's repatriation campaign that deported large numbers of both immigrants and citizens of Mexican descent during the Great Depression. The trauma of repatriation solidified their identity as Americans and fueled their demand for the recognition of their rights as citizens. Their participation in the American relief movement for Spain came at a time when they were becoming more active in labor militancy and the struggle for civil rights. Their involvement was a rejection of U.S. isolationist policies that they believed endangered national security. They defied false characterizations of being un-American and demonstrated their commitment to democracy by standing firmly against totalitarianism during the interwar period and World War II.

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<sup>9</sup> For a broader study on Spanish immigrants in the United States, see Ana Maria Varela-Lago, "Conquerors, Immigrants, Exiles: The Spanish Diaspora in the United States (1848-1948)," PhD Thesis (University of California: San Diego, 2008).

The third chapter looks at the unique position of the Mexican exiled press in the American southwest. They represented the conservative exiled elite from the Mexican revolution and published articles that criticized the government policies of Mexican President Lazaro Cardenas and his administration's support for the Spanish Republic. In contrast to the Spanish language press in New York and Tampa, the Mexican exiled press supported the Spanish Nationalists and regularly published pro-fascist propaganda during the Spanish Civil War.

## CHAPTER 1.

### THE HISPANIC COMMUNITIES OF TAMPA AND NEW YORK DURING THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

#### **The Latin Community of Tampa**

In the nineteenth century, the Cuban struggle for independence from Spain created a wave of immigration into the United States. Between 1868 and 1878, hundreds of tobacco factory owners and workers relocated their manufacturing plants into the Florida Keys to escape the destruction of the Ten Years War. By the end of the century, Florida's cigar factories expanded into Ybor and Tampa, which served as a magnet for Cuban and Spanish migrants escaping economic deprivation. In 1892 the American consul-general to Cuba, Ramon Williams, testified before a congressional committee that the Cuban people "look upon Florida as so much a part of their own country," and an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 people passed back and forth between Cuba and the United States annually.<sup>10</sup>

The fight over Cuban independence created an environment ripe for radicalism. By the 1870s, Cuba had become home to anarchists and socialists who labored in support of

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Gary Ross Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City Italians and their Latin Neighbors in Tamp, 1885-1985* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 76.

the working class. Many of these extremists were Spanish émigrés who viewed the conflict as an international and anti-imperialist conflict.<sup>11</sup> In the tobacco factories, the custom of *la lectura* assisted the spread of Anarchist ideas throughout the Cuban working class. The practice of *la lectura*, which revolved around hired readers, *los lectores*, that read to the factory workers during the work day, developed around the mid-nineteenth century. Factory owners allowed the practice so long as the workers collectively paid the lecturer and managed the selection of readings. *La lectura* consisted of a recitation of the daily newspapers, which included foreign news cables, national news, and sports, followed by a variety of literary works.<sup>12</sup> The recitation of anti-imperialist newspapers and writings instilled revolutionary ideas on the factory floors and encouraged workers to demand societal changes. The Spanish colonial government soon became besieged by demands to abolish slavery, improved working conditions, increased access to foreign trade markets, and finally independence. The prominence of *la lectura* and its association with workers cause caused it to become a political symbol of the revolutionary cause, and *los lectores* became targets of assassinations by Spanish loyalists.<sup>13</sup>

The custom of *la lectura* was one of the many cultural practices that Cuban migrants brought with them to the tobacco factories in the United States. By 1900, Tampa and Ybor City surpassed Key West in both production and immigrant population, which included Italians after 1890. *La lectura* served as a bridge between the Cuban, Spanish, and Italian immigrant populations, which created a community of ideas. Spanish became the lingua franca among the three immigrant groups which came together to form a Latin community. Debates over concepts

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>12</sup> George E. Pozzetta and Gary R. Mormino, "The Reader and the Worker: 'Los Lectores' and the Culture of Cigarmaking in Cuba and Florida," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 54, Fall, 1998), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 5.

of anarchism, socialism, syndicalism, and capitalism occurred in the factory workrooms, labor halls, and coffeehouses within the Latin community. Various Spanish language newspapers circulated in Tampa, which included *Dario de la Marina* (from Havana) and *Tierra y Libertad* (a Barcelona anarchist publication). Italian language anarchist newspapers in Tampa, such as *La Voce dello Schiavo* and *L'Alba Sociale*, were widely read among the Italian immigrant community working in the factories. Spanish and Italian editions of revolutionary propagandists, such as Leo Tolstoy, Karl Marx, Enrico Malatesta, Luigi Galleani, and Peter Kropotkin, lined the shelves of the mutual aid society libraries in Ybor. By the turn of the century, the influence of anarchist and socialist groups among the working class played a role in uniting the worker strikes of 1901 and 1910 which paralyzed Tampa's cigar industry.<sup>14</sup>

During the 1890s, Ybor City became a hotbed for the Cuba Libre movement. Revolutionaries such as Ramon Rivero y Rivero, Jose Dolores Poyo, and Fernando Figuerado, read stories of the French Revolution and Simon Bolivar to workers, organized political cells and edited *El Yara* and *La Contienda* newspapers. In the build-up to the Cuban War of Independence, Jose Marti left New York and toured Ybor City, West Tampa, and Key West delivering a series of speeches to large crowds. In May 1893, Marti was greeted by "thousands of enthusiastic people," from the Cuban community in Key West, of which "eighty to 100 men stepped out and pledged themselves to fight for Cuban freedom"<sup>15</sup> The news of the Cuban uprising of February 24, 1895, was received with excitement by the Cuban immigrant community across the United States. In Ybor City, the Cuban flag was waved and unfurled across every public and private building and residence. Three thousand residents, "wild with

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 6-8.; George E. Pozzetta, "Immigrants and Radicals in Tampa Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 57 (January, 1979) 341-6.

<sup>15</sup> The Racine Daily Journal May 03, 1893.

enthusiasm,” assembled in front of Ybor and Manrara’s factory to cheer and heed political speeches calling for support from the city’s Cuban community.<sup>16</sup>

The numerous “Cuba Libre” clubs in Florida and across the country raised funds in support of the revolutionary effort.<sup>17</sup> Cuban women in Tampa played an active role in support of the revolution, organizing fundraising fiestas, parades, raffles, and clubs. The American military involvement in the conflict, after the sinking of the USS Main in February 1898, transformed Cuba’s fight for independence into the Spanish American War. The sentiments of the Cuban community in Florida wavered from patriotic enthusiasm to the somber realization that one empire would replace another.<sup>18</sup>

Following the Spanish defeat, Cubans continued to work for change.<sup>19</sup> Many living in Florida decided to remain rather than return to the crippled economy of their liberated homeland. The end of the war of independence provided few clear answers, but the revolutionary ideas of the era remained in Florida’s Latin community after the war.<sup>20</sup> In 1903 Sicilian immigrant Angelo Massari arrived in Florida to discover that “socialism and anarchism were in vogue” in the Latin community of Ybor City. Like many Italian immigrants working in the cigar factories of Florida, Massari learned how to “read and write Spanish rather quickly.” He also “attended all

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<sup>16</sup> The Tampa Tribune February 28, 1895.

<sup>17</sup> The Houston Post September 27, 1897.; The Butte Miner December 15, 1896.; Kansas City Journal Dec 16, 1896; Buffalo Evening News Dec 15, 1896.

<sup>18</sup> Gary R. Mormino, “Tampa’s Splendid Little War: Local History and the Cuban War of Independence,” *OAH Magazine of History* 12, (Spring, 1998): 38-9.

<sup>19</sup> Maria Cristina Garcia, “Hardliners v. ‘Dialogueros’: Cuban Exile Political Groups and United States-Cuban Policy,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 17, (Summer, 1998): 6.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.



the lectures and debates that the two groups, socialist and anarchist, organized,” which he states invited “to Tampa, the greatest exponents of the two theories who were living in the North.”<sup>21</sup>

Between 1886 and 1931, workers continued to seek improved working conditions and labor strikes erupted periodically in Ybor’s cigar manufacturing industry. Jose Yglesias, an adolescent during the 1931 strike in Ybor City, mentioned that “wages were bitterly fought for,” and female workers received equal pay. He described the women as “very militant,” and mentioned that they were heavily involved in the strikes and would “beat up women scabs” who continued to work despite the strike.<sup>22</sup>

By the early 1930s, the Communist Party had made inroads in Ybor City’s working class, but never commanded significant support. *Los lectores* read *The Daily Worker* and *Socialist Call* often to factory workers, and distributed leaflets amongst the Latin community. However, the Great Depression had a devastating effect on the Latin community in Ybor City. Layoffs and seasonal unemployment weakened the cigar worker's collective strength. And *la lectura*, which played a critical role in articulating the issues to the cigar makers involved in strikes, became a target of the factory owners.<sup>23</sup> The prohibition of *la lectura* by Tampa and Ybor City’s manufacturers and the arrest of 17 *Lectores* accused of being “communist agitators,” in November 1931, ignited a massive worker strike with 7000 workers walking out of the factories.<sup>24</sup> The 1931 strike “was openly radical,” recalled Yglesias. However, the weakened stance of the workers was no match for the combined strength of the factory owners, the police

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<sup>21</sup> Angelo Massari, *The Wonderful Life of Angelo Massari: An Autobiography* (New York: Exposition Press, 1965), 91-92.

<sup>22</sup> Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 109.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.; Lopez, Armando. Interview by George Pozzetta. Ybor City Oral History Project University of South Florida. Tampa, April 24, 1980. <https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0022549/00001>

<sup>24</sup> The Tampa Tribune November 28, 1931.

and the Ku Klux Klan. Racial discrimination was already a serious problem for Ybor's Latin community before the strike and racist white Floridians would often refer to any Latin as a "Cuban nigger." The magnitude of the strike and the press coverage that it received served to encourage further racist attacks towards the Latin community from white supremacist groups. Yglesias mentioned that during the strike, cigar workers often clashed against the KKK and at times Klansmen would charge into "Labor Temple with guns, and break up meetings." However, despite the best efforts of the factory workers, the strikes failed after the police cracked down on the workers and arrested several of the strike leaders.<sup>25</sup> After the factories reopened, the owners fired many of the workers who participated in the strike and *la lectura* ceased to exist in Florida's cigar manufacturing industry.<sup>26</sup>

The Great Depression and the aftermath of the 1931 strike devastated the Latin community in Florida. The demand for expensive cigars nationwide dropped as consumers switched to cheaper cigarettes. Cigar makers that remained employed experienced reduced workweeks as short as "three days." The specific skills of the cigar makers and the local economy's sole focus on tobacco manufacturing limited the opportunities for alternative employment. Discrimination against Latins inhibited cigar makers from looking for work outside their community. "We can't go to some other places like Clearwater, because they've got signs, 'We don't like Latin people, even dogs,' " recalled Armando Lopez. The realities of living deep in the Jim Crow South during the 1930s meant that straying too far outside the Latin enclave in Ybor City ran the risk of encountering racial violence. "They used to fight with anyone that gone

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<sup>25</sup> The Tampa Tribune December 5, 1931.; Terkel, 109-11.

<sup>26</sup> Terkel, 111.

over there [Sulphur Springs] if they are Latin people.” However, Ybor’s Latin youth would often retaliate and go “over there to get [into] fights, too.”<sup>27</sup>

Despite the despair of the economic environment, the news of the Spanish army revolt in Spain and Morocco, on July 17, 1936, reinvigorated the revolutionary furor of the Latin community in Florida once again. The cry of *No Pasaran!* during the Spanish Civil War energized Ybor City much as the cause of *Cuba Libre* had done decades before during the Cuban War of Independence. By the 1930s, the Latin community in West Tampa and Ybor City numbered at 30,000, with 8,000 native Spaniards mostly from Asturias. Ybor City constituted the second-largest pro-Republican Spanish speaking population in the United States. The Spanish community working in Florida’s cigar industry were first and second-generation with direct family ties to Spain during the war.<sup>28</sup>

The response to the Spanish Civil War from the Latin community of West Tampa and Ybor City revolved around the well-established mutual aid societies and social clubs. During the 1880s and 1890s, Tampa’s immigrants formed mutual aid clubs to provide basic medical care for members in exchange for weekly dues. Also, the clubs offered social activities, gymnasiums, concerts, and theatrical performances. Generally, the clubs were founded by and opened to specific ethnic groups: The Italian Club for Italians, El Centro Español and El Centro Asturiano for Spaniards, and La Union Marti-Maceo for Afro-Cubans, Circulo Cubano for white male Cubans, and La Obrera de La Independencia for white female Cubans. Racism was generally not a major issue among the Latin community. Black and white Cuban cigar makers worked side by side, and Latin families often had a wide-ranging spectrum of skin tones. However, Florida’s

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<sup>27</sup> Armando Lopez Interview.

<sup>28</sup> Mormino and Pozzetta, 216.

segregation laws prohibited black and white-skinned Latins from public socialization, which led to the creation of multiple Cuban clubs.<sup>29</sup> However, most of the Cuban clubs were founded on Marti's revolutionary principles and did not discriminate against non-Cubans who wished to join. "Even if you are a China[ese], you can belong to the Circulo Cubano, or any others," only the club president had to be Cuban, recalled Mr. Lopez.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the national designation of the clubs, Tampa's Latin community joined together and regularly observed social interactions between the mutual societies. The third and longest-serving president of the Italian Club, Philip Licata, taught a whole generation of Ybor City children Spanish and Italian as a school teacher.<sup>31</sup> During the weekends, the Latin Clubs would regularly compete against each other in the Inter-social League. "About five or six teams there that would play [base]ball on Sundays and they were very competitive," recalled Augustine "Marty" Martinez. Every Sunday at Cuscaden Park, a crowd of "about a thousand people" from the Latin Clubs would gather to play "ball, basketball, volleyball, football, baseball, softball," to see which club team "would be the champion."<sup>32</sup> Also, Ybor's Latin youth would frequent the dances from the various clubs. "It was a perfect setup for a young boy because you know, you could go there—you didn't have to take a date, you could go there by yourself, and you could always find some girls there that were chaperoned," recalled Al Lopez. Along with his Spanish

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<sup>29</sup> Nancy Raquel Mirabal, "The Afro-Cuban Community in Ybor City and Tampa, 1886-1910," *OAH Magazine of History* 7 (Summer, 1993), 19-21.

<sup>30</sup> Armando Lopez Interview.

<sup>31</sup> Italiano, Mary. Interview by Gary Mormino. Ybor City Oral History Project University of South Florida. Tampa, April 20, 1978. <https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0022541/00001>

<sup>32</sup> Martinez, "Marty" Augustine. Interview by Catherine Cottle. Ybor City Oral History Project University of South Florida. Tampa, August 16, 2008. <https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0022538/00001>

family, he was a member of the Centro Asturiano, but he preferred to go to the Italian Club dances, which he attended “quite a lot as a young boy.”<sup>33</sup>

From the start of the Spanish Civil War, the Latin community response to the conflict was immediate. A week after the Nationalist uprising up to 150 members of the Tampa community, with Spanish, Italian, Cuban, and Brazilian backgrounds, offered themselves as volunteers to the Spanish Republican Army. However, the Spanish consul in Tampa, Paul Ubarri, announced that the Spanish government was unable to accommodate their request and had to turn down their offer of service. Yet the community's enthusiasm did not falter and *La Gaceta* newspaper, the most prominent paper of the Latin community (and published in three languages), declared that “if it were possible to go to Spain in a few hours, hundreds from Tampa would take up arms in defense of the Popular Front.” A few weeks later, leading members of the various mutual aid societies organized and founded the Comité Popular Democrático de Socorro a España de Tampa (the Tampa Popular Democratic Committee to Aid Spain) in August 1936. The Comité became the center of Ybor City's aid effort and raised \$1,400 in relief aid for the Spanish Loyalists in the first week.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the economic depression, the Latin community donated enough relief aid to rival any major city. During the war, the Comité managed to raise an estimated \$150,000 in donations through various fundraisers, picnics, sports games, and donation drives. In comparison, Tampa's Latin community raised more aid than any other pro-Loyalist community in the United States

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<sup>33</sup> Al Lopez. Interview by Gary Mormino. August 16, 2008. Tampa, Florida. Ybor City Oral History Project University of South Florida. <https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0022552/00001>

<sup>34</sup> “Spanish Loyalists Turn Down Tampa Volunteers,” “Tampans raise \$1400 Fund For Spanish People,” *The Tampa Tribune* August 16, 1936; “Chungas y no chungas,” *La Gaceta*, July 23, 1936.

outside of New York City.<sup>35</sup> Aida Azpeitia noted that this was accomplished by people who were under the worst economic conditions of their time. “These people that were giving the money weren’t making much money themselves,” Azpeitia stated. “They were barely making a living.” Yet, enthusiasm was strong enough that almost everyone in the community rallied together to raise money for the Loyalists. As Alicia Menendez stated, “all the clubs here in Tampa started to help. They started to have different kinds of benefits, plays that they put on, and picnics.”<sup>36</sup> Every month the Comité sent \$5,000 in donations, medical supplies, food, and clothing. In September 1937 a picnic that drew over 5,000 people collected enough donations to purchase four ambulances for the Spanish Red Cross. In December 1938 alone, the Latin community shipped 6,400,000 cigarettes, along with 1,600 cases of condensed milk and 2,000 pounds of clothing to Spain.<sup>37</sup>

Initially, the Comité sent monetary donations to Spain through the Spanish embassy. After realizing this violated U.S. neutrality laws, the organization disassociated with the Spanish government and worked with the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy and the Medical Bureau of the American Friend of Spanish Democracy to transport the collected aid.<sup>38</sup> However, according to historian Eric R. Smith previous racial assumptions kept Tampa’s aid efforts estranged from the mainstream American relief aid movement. After all, Tampa’s Latin community was only a few years removed from severe anti-Catholic prejudice and faced some of

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<sup>35</sup> See Erick R. Smith, *American Relief Aid and the Spanish Civil War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2013) Appendix.

<sup>36</sup> Alicia C. Menéndez. Interviewed by Ana M. Varela-Lago. March 19, 1997 Tampa, Florida. Spanish Civil War Oral History Project Oral History Program University of South Florida Tampa

Library.<http://digital.lib.usf.edu:8080/usfldcFedoraCommonsViewers/USFLDCfcOHPviewer?pid=usfldc:S64>

<sup>37</sup> “6 Million Cigarettes Sent to Loyalists By Tampa Backers,” *The Tampa Times*, December 21, 1938. ; “Tampa Workers Send Ambulances to Spain,” *The Tampa Tribune* September 26, 1937.

<sup>38</sup> *Tampa Morning Tribute*, May 12, 1937. ; Aida Azpeitia. Interviewed by Ana Varela-Lago. June 6, 1997. Tampa, Florida. Spanish Civil War Oral History Project University of South Florida Tampa Library. <https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0022555/00001>

the worst racial violence in the United States. Allen Guttman identified that pro-Loyalists writing and art displayed Spain as a primitive land of Spanish peasants overrun by the modern European military machine. For example, the American pro-Loyalists film, *The Spanish Earth*, displayed an image of primitivism in Spain by invoking nature in its title and focusing on peasant communities.<sup>39</sup>

The women of the Latin community of West Tampa and Ybor City played a prominent role in the efforts to support the Republic of Spain. A few weeks after the formation of the Comité, the women formed their own called Las Mujeres Antifacistas de Tampa. They became prominent fixtures among the demonstrators demanding the lifting of the embargo and collected thousands of goods for Spain. Latin women formed sewing groups and prepared clothing for shipment. By the end of the war, they had sent more than twenty tons of clothing and thousands of cans of milk to Spain.<sup>40</sup> In May 1937, in response to the bombing in Guernica by the Nazi Condor Legion, 5,000 women and children marched from Ybor City to West Tampa in protest. They also collected enough signatures petitioning the “ruthless killing of women and children by Franco’s forces,” that the Mayor of Tampa was forced to respond.<sup>41</sup>

Latin women were also politically active. They joined men and women from across the country in writing letters to their representatives in Washington to lift the arms embargo and repeal the neutrality law. In April 1938, Tampa’s Latin women joined over a thousand other Spanish-American women on a march to Washington to request that the State Department lift the

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<sup>39</sup> Smith, 66. ; See Guttman Allen, *The Wound in the Heart: America and the Spanish Civil War* (Free Press of Glencoe: New York, 1962); Frederick B. Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature* ( Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).

<sup>40</sup> "Orientacion," *El Internacional*, April 1, 1938.

<sup>41</sup> *The Tampa Tribune*, May 7, 1937.

U.S. embargo to Spain.<sup>42</sup> They lead efforts to boycott goods from Germany, Italy, Japan, and areas of Spain under Nationalist control. In protest of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, one Latin woman, Soledad Acebal, organized women from the cigar factory and led the effort to boycott Japanese silk stockings in Tampa through to the end of World War II.<sup>43</sup>

The children of the Latin community were also involved in fundraising activities. Several children found ways to raise money for Spain. Amalia Owens recalled, “The kids all used to get together. We used to collect newspapers and we used to collect the foil (lead foil wrappers from cigarette packs),” which they melted to make and sell “sinkers for fishing.” A childhood friend of Amalia even “stripped his mother’s lemon tree,” and sold lemonade to raise money for Spain.<sup>44</sup> Melba Pullara remembered she used to sell churros around Tampa and make “anywhere from a nickel to a dollar.”<sup>45</sup> During the election of 1938, Latin women and children took part in the Labor Day parade that drew 10,000 marchers. Children, dressed in the Spanish miliciano (militiamen) uniform and holding American flags, marched alongside their parents to call for a third term for President Roosevelt. Their banners read: “American children protest murder of mothers and children in Spain and China,” “Help Democracy Defeat Fascism,” and “Support New Deal-Defeat Fascism.”<sup>46</sup>

For the Spanish immigrant families in Ybor City and West Tampa, the war in Spain had direct consequences on their lives. Among the first and second-generation Spanish immigrants in

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<sup>42</sup> “Women Demand U.S. Lift Spain Embargo,” *The Tampa Tribune* April 5, 1938.

<sup>43</sup> Menendez Interview.

<sup>44</sup> Amalia L. Owens. Interviewed by Ana M. Varela-Lago. March 24, 1997 Tampa, Florida. Spanish Civil War Oral History Project Oral History Program University of South Florida Tampa <https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0022572/00001?search=owens>

<sup>45</sup> Melba Pullara. Interviewed by Ana M. Varela-Lago. April 18-19, 1997 Tampa, Florida. Spanish Civil War Oral History Project Oral History Program University of South Florida Tampa <https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0022579/00001?search=pullara>

<sup>46</sup> “Labor Paraders Urge Roosevelt for Third Term,” *The Tampa Tribune*, September 6, 1938.



Tampa, many had relatives in Spain who had been affected or had become victims of the war. Such as Aida, whose uncle in Spain had fought in the Republican Army before being captured and sent to a prisoner of war camp. The day before his scheduled execution, he escaped and fled to his grandmother's house in Asturias. While hiding in the woods, his grandmother "would fix him food that she didn't have...and walk the woods looking for him." Not long after, the "fascists caught her." But, instead of being imprisoned, a young man, "un Fascista," saved her life. After the war, the family realized that the man that spared their grandmother and uncle was the nephew of one of their neighbors in Tampa.<sup>47</sup>

The full mobilization of the Latin community, through the collaboration of the mutual societies, proved their commitment to defend democracy against totalitarianism. However, despite their monumental effort in raising aid and awareness, for many cigar makers, the economic depression in Ybor City became too much to handle. "People began to go off to New York to look for jobs," recalled Yglesias, including almost all his family by 1937. During the 1930s, so many from the Latin community had moved to the city that "in any cafeteria, in the kitchen, the busboys, the dishwashers, you were bound to find at least two from Ybor City." In New York, the Latin community remained together and formed the Club Tampa. "People would show up from Tampa, and you'd put them up," Yglesias recollected. The economic migration north from Ybor City and West Tampa's Latin community to New York City formed a strong relationship between the two Spanish speaking communities, which had begun decades earlier.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Aida Azpeitia Interview

<sup>48</sup> Terkel, 111.

## The Hispanos of New York

During the build-up to the Cuban War of Independence, New York City became the center of revolutionary planning and home to the leaders of the rebellion including José Martí, Máximo Gómez, and Antonio Maceo. From 1880 to 1895, José Martí lived in New York while in exile. He continued to advocate for Cuban freedom in numerous speeches and regularly published pro-independence articles in both American and Spanish language newspapers. In April 1892, Martí was able to forge unity among the various differing revolutionary factions to create the Partido Revolucionario Cubano (Cuban Revolutionary Party), which united as many different blocs as possible into one group.<sup>49</sup>

Two years earlier in Tampa, Martí had made it clear in a speech that all Cubans would participate in the revolution regardless of color. Among his greatest accomplishments in the formation of the party was standing firm on racial equality without yielding to those who called for black subordination in the revolutionary movement. In an article in *El Partido Liberal*, Martí tried to dispel racism stating, “there is no racial hatred, because there are no races... the soul, equal and eternal, emanates from bodies that are diverse in form and color. Anyone who promotes and disseminates opposition or hatred among races is committing a sin against humanity.”<sup>50</sup> During the planning, Martí had labored to enlist Antonio Maceo into a leadership position in the revolution. Martí recognized that Maceo’s participation in the revolution would prove vital in unifying all Cubans to the cause. A hero of the Ten Years’ War with mixed African and Spanish ancestry, Maceo’s prominence among the revolutionary leadership would not only bring his masterful military knowledge into the rebellion but also serve as a symbol for

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<sup>49</sup> Philip S. Foner, *Antonio Maceo: The Bronze Titan of Cuba’s Struggle for Independence* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), 150-55.

<sup>50</sup> *El Partido Liberal*, March 5, 1892.

national integration of all Cubans regardless of skin color. Mateo did join the revolution, in part due to Marti's persistence, and served as the second in command of the Cuban Army of Independence.<sup>51</sup>

However, Marti was in desperate need of financial support. During the planning phase, he made several trips to Tampa, Ybor City, and Key West to garner financial support from the Tobacco workers who donated generously. In the end, despite sophisticated planning and impassionate speeches, the fate of the revolution completely depended on the donations from the cigar makers. If they had not supported his vision of Cuban independence, Marti would have spent the remainder of his life writing poetry and articles for newspapers in New York. In November 1891, Marti delivered two influential speeches in Tampa that elevated his popularity among the pro-Cuban independence sympathizers in Florida. In Tampa, while meeting with the leaders of the Cuban Patriotic League, Marti wrote the Tampa Resolutions and the bases of the Partido Revolucionario Cubano. Then in January the following year in Ybor City, he drafted the general organizing principles of the Partido Revolucionario before its founding in New York a few months later.<sup>52</sup>

On January 29, 1895, in New York, a few weeks after the failed Fernandina Plan, Marti and his conspirators, gave the order for a massive uprising in Cuba. On February 24, fighting erupted in several locations on the island. By April, Marti returned to Cuba after sixteen years in exile to join the fighting where he died in the Battle of Dos Rios in May.<sup>53</sup> The popularity of the revolt in Cuba was not only a result of Marti and his revolutionary conspirators' efforts but also a product of the disintegration of the Cuban economy. In 1884, the United States imported 85

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<sup>51</sup> Foner, 150-55.

<sup>52</sup> Jon Sterngass, *Jose Marti* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2007), 75-77.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

percent of everything produced in Cuba, including 94 percent of the colony's sugar and molasses. President Benjamin Harris had sought to keep tariffs on Cuban sugar low during his administration. However, the Panic of 1893 forced the U.S. Congress to increase tariffs on Cuban goods to 40 percent, collapsing the trade between the two nations. The blow to the Cuban economy moved unemployed citizens to side with the rebellion in the hope of a better future as an independent nation.<sup>54</sup>

Although Marti sought American popular support for the Cuban War of Independence, he understood that U.S. military intervention ran the risk of replacing one colonial ruler with another. In 1889, Marti warned Latin America that the Pan-American Congress represented an imperialistic move by the United States to dominate the southern half of the continent politically and economically.<sup>55</sup> The day before Marti died, he wrote an unfinished letter declaring his "duty of preventing the United States from spreading through the Antilles as Cuba gains its independence," and preventing further "annexing [of] our American nations to the brutal and turbulent North which despises them... I have lived in the monster, and I know its entrails..."<sup>56</sup>

Despite Marti's efforts, the result of the Spanish-American War in 1898 expanded the United States' prominence as an imperialist power. Technically, Cuba was an independent nation after the war. Though, the United States retained significant influence over Cuba. And the former Spanish colonies of Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam became U.S. territories. However,

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>55</sup> La Nacion, November 2, 1889.

<sup>56</sup> "Jose Marti to Manuel Mercado, May 18, 1895." Letter. From historyofcuba.com, *The Jose Marti Portal*. <http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/marti/mercado.htm> (accessed April 6, 2019).

the outcome of the Spanish-American war became a milestone in the migration of Spanish speakers in the United States from Cuba and Puerto Rico.<sup>57</sup>

In 1938 New York City was home to 200,000 Hispanics and the largest pro-Republican Spanish speaking population in the United States. Puerto Ricans and Cubans accounted for the two largest Spanish speaking groups accompanied by 20,000 peninsular Spaniards. However, from the earliest days of the Spanish conflict, New York's response was organized by a collaboration between a panorama of diversity. Anarchists, socialists, communists, liberals, workers, and intellectuals of white, Jewish, Italian, Hispanic, Asian, and African American backgrounds joined the campaign to aid the Spanish Republic.<sup>58</sup>

In the United States, no other city outmatched New York in overall material and political support for the Loyalists. The city functioned as the central hub for most pro-Republican Spanish Civil War activism and subversive activities. Almost all major newspapers, magazines, and radio programs in New York supported the Republican effort of Spain. The fascist aggression towards the democratically elected government in Spain generated unprecedented cooperation between humanitarian organizations and leftist groups in the city.<sup>59</sup> The headquarters of the Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and the Communist Party of the United States were all located in New York. Also, all the major relief aid organizations assisting the Republic resided in the city. Such as the American Friends for Spanish Democracy,

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<sup>57</sup> James D. Fernandez, "Nueva York: The Spanish-Speaking Community Responds" in Peter N. Carroll & James D. Fernandez, *Facing Fascism: New York and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 88.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Jose Alejandro Ortiz-Carrion, "Los Voluntarios Puertorriqueños De La Libertad 1936-1939," in Josep Sanchez Cervello y Sevastian Agudo Blanco, *Las Brigadas Internacionales: Nuevas Perspectivas En La Historia De La Guerra Civil y del Exilio* (Tarragona: Publicacions URV, 2015), 165.

Trade Union Red Cross for Spain, the American Medical Bureau, the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, and numerous smaller humanitarian organizations.<sup>60</sup>

New York's working class were the most active supporters of the Spanish Republic. The International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), one of the largest labor unions in the United States and first to have primarily female membership, were among the most successful in gathering aid and raised thousands of dollars for medical supplies and clothing for the Spanish loyalists.<sup>61</sup> Their fundraising efforts revolved around community events. For instance, in February 1937, the ILGWU Local 22 and Local 19 women played a fundraising game of basketball in the Hippodrome in Manhattan.<sup>62</sup> A few weeks later, the ILGWU soccer squad played in a preliminaries match at Hawthorne Field along with the Centro Asturiano, Hatikvoh, and Hakoah teams to raise funds to purchase medical supplies for Spain.<sup>63</sup> By spring, in what was described as "the biggest May Day parade in the city's history," 15,000 members of the ILGWU marched alongside more than a quarter-million other paraders under showers of confetti towards union square singing the "International" and chanting "Hands off Spain! Hands off Spain!"<sup>64</sup>

Workers also struck back against Franco's supply lines. In September 1938, New Yorkers picketed outside the Norwegian consulate after Baltimore seamen walked off the Norwegian freighter *Titanian*, which they believed was carrying military supplies to Franco. The ship, loaded with "6,000 tons of nitrates and phosphates" used in military production, was destined for

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<sup>60</sup> Lisa Jackson-Schebetta, *Traveler, There is No Road: Theatre, the Spanish Civil War, and the Decolonial Imagination in the Americas* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2017), 17.

<sup>61</sup> Fraser M. Ottanelli, "The New York Left and the Spanish Civil War," in *Facing Fascism: New York & the Spanish Civil War*. 64.

<sup>62</sup> Daily Worker, January 8, 1937.

<sup>63</sup> The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Feb 19, 1937.

<sup>64</sup> The Kingston Daily Freeman, May 01, 1937.

the Nationalist controlled port of Bilbao. The workers strike alerted the FBI, which began an investigation to verify if the ship violated the U.S. neutrality law. However, the vessel slipped out of the Baltimore harbor with scab labor before federal authorities could intervene. A few days later, the Brooklyn based Scandinavian Seamen's Club of America struck the *S.S. Gudvor*, which was also carrying military supplies to the Spanish Nationalists. The United States Marshals placed the *Gudvor* under their custody after the workers demanded their wages and transportation home in Federal Court.<sup>65</sup> Maritime workers across the country also protested in other strikes in Baltimore, Port Arthur, Norfolk, and San Francisco.<sup>66</sup>

After unions, the most active groups to support the Spanish Republic were the various ethnic communities in the city, which included African-Americans, Italian-Americans, German-Americans, and Spanish-speakers. According to Young Communist Party League organizer and member of the NAACP, Howard Johnson, around 75 percent of black cultural figures had Party membership or contact with the Party during the 1930s. The involvement of the Communist Party USA in defense of the Scottsboro Boys trial in Alabama in 1932, and the Party's stance on racial justice and labor rights attracted several black intellectuals from Harlem into the Party. In 1935, African Americans in Harlem organized support of Ethiopia's war effort following the unprovoked invasion by fascist Italy. Relief aid was collected and sent through United Aid for

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<sup>65</sup> Eric R. Smith, "New York's Aid to The Spanish Republic," in *Facing Fascism: New York & the Spanish Civil War*. 48. ; Daily News September 4, 1938. ; The Baltimore Sun September 14, 1938. ; The Morning Post October 1, 1938.; The St. Louis Star and Times, September 10, 1938.

<sup>66</sup> Roy B. Hudson, *True Americans: A Tribute To American Maritime Workers Who Fought for World Democracy in the Trenches of Spain* (New York: Waterfront Section Communist Party, 1939), 10.

Ethiopia, which continued to support the Ethiopian government in exile after the Italian victory.<sup>67</sup>

During the Spanish Civil War, Benito Mussolini's involvement in Spain and association with Franco endeared the Spanish Republic's fight to the black community. In 1937, the Communist Party adopted the slogan "Ethiopia's fate is at stake on the battlefields of Spain" and urged material aid collected for Ethiopia to be sent to Spain. At first, the connection was not universally accepted within the black community and provoked criticism from black nationalist leaders. However, many black intellectuals and artists adopted this initiative. Harlem poet Langston Hughes sent his support to the American Writers and Artists' efforts in donating ambulances. Harlem churches and community organizations sponsored rallies in support of the Loyalist cause. Black medical workers from Harlem hospitals raised funds to send a fully equipped ambulance for Spain. Also, two black doctors and a female nurse volunteered in Spain.<sup>68</sup>

Among the Spanish-speaking community of New York, Puerto Ricans represented the fastest-growing group by far, followed by Cubans, Spaniards, Mexicans, and other Latin American nationalities. However, despite their country of origin, Spanish-speakers in the City formed a homogeneous community of "Hispanos" and the two Spanish language daily newspapers, *La Voz* and *La Prensa*, reflected this. *La Prensa* regularly reported on news directed at a diverse and worldly readership. A single issue would report on the war in Spain, Mexico's efforts to support the Republican government, Cuban politics, the Venezuelan economy, German

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<sup>67</sup> Howard Johnson Interview, October 17, 1979; Oral History of the American Left; OH002; Box 18; 1 Folder; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives Elmer Holmes Bobst Library 70 Washington Square South New York, NY 10012, New York University Libraries.

<sup>68</sup> Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During The Depression* (New York: Grove Press, 1983), 195-97.; Smith, 21.



intervention, the Soviet Union effort's to assist the Spanish Loyalists, China's war effort against Japan, local sporting events featuring Hispanic players, Latin clubs, and so forth.<sup>69</sup>

There were four Spanish-speaking districts or barrios in the city during the 1930s: East Harlem, Washington Heights, the Brooklyn waterfront, and the Manhattan foot of the Brooklyn Bridge. The city's Spanish-speaking community had lived in close contact before the 1930s. However, as James D. Fernandez suggests, the Spanish Civil War and community efforts to support the Loyalists may well have accelerated the formation of a distinct New York Latino identity.<sup>70</sup> For the city's Hispanos, the war in Spain was lived with immediacy. Despite being 3,000 miles away from the conflict, news from the frontlines had devastating consequences in New York's barrios. Heartbreaking newspaper articles, such as the suicide of a man in Cherry Street who ended his life after hearing his son in Spain was "recruited by the rebels," were a constant reminder of the war's proximity to the Hispano community.<sup>71</sup>

Despite the economic devastation of the Great Depression, the Hispano community raised over two million in cash and material donations during the Spanish Civil War.<sup>72</sup> Dozens of aid organizations, social clubs, mutual aid societies, and workers groups within the Spanish-speaking community collaborated to support the Spanish Republic. Groups such as, the Club Cubano Julio Antonio Mella in Washington Heights, the Grupo Antifacista del Bronx, the Frente Popular Español de Queens, Grupo Salmeron, the International Workers Order Spanish section, the Tampa Workers Club of New York, The Spanish Benevolent Society La Nation in Little Spain, and so forth, banded together to form an umbrella organization called the Sociedades Hispanas

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<sup>69</sup> La Prensa, January 2, 1937.

<sup>70</sup> James D. Fernandez, "Nueva York: The Spanish-Speaking Community Responds," in *Facing Fascism: New York & The Spanish Civil War*. 88.

<sup>71</sup> La Prensa, April 22, 1937.

<sup>72</sup> Smith, 50.

Confederadas de Ayuda a España (SHC). The coordinated collaboration among the many groups through the SHC made larger events possible, such as the July 19, 1937 rally in Madison Square Garden attended by over 20,000 supporters.<sup>73</sup>

Both Hispano newspapers often publicized fundraising events among the Spanish-speaking community. For instance, in March 1937, *La Prensa* advertised several fundraising events, including a dance held in White Plains to raise funds to purchase an ambulance for the Spanish Red Cross, organized by the women of the Comité Feminino of the Comité Antifacista Español.<sup>74</sup> Meanwhile, *La Voz* thanked Hispano vacationers at “Las Villas,” Spanish resorts in Catskills catering to the city’s Hispanic community, for participation in raffles and organizing a Spanish fiesta with the Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. While also advertising a farewell party organized by a Manhattan-based Cuban club for a Spanish woman returning to Spain after fundraising in New York.<sup>75</sup>

Within the Hispano community, women of various backgrounds played an active role in the pro-Loyalist movements in New York. The ILGWU had well over 200,000 members in the city during the late 1930s, which included many women of various ethnic backgrounds that were heavily active in labor demonstrations. Members held “Spanish Help Parties” in their homes to collect donations and they also organized benefit dances in community dancehalls. Women from the Spanish Workers Club on Madison Avenue and the Galician Center on West 4<sup>th</sup> Street gathered to sew and mend clothing for Spain. Together with the Fur Traders Union, the women of New York sent tens of thousands of garments to Spain. Throughout the city, there were 150 collection points for goods in union halls, mutual aid societies, private homes, and businesses,

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<sup>73</sup> Poughkeepsie Eagle-News, July 20, 1937.

<sup>74</sup> *La Prensa*, March 18, 1937.

<sup>75</sup> *La Voz*, July 28, 1938.

which were then transported to a warehouse in Manhattan before volunteers packed and shipped them to Spain.<sup>76</sup>

One young female activist was Judy Boudon, a Panamanian born immigrant raised in New York with family ties to Spain. She became active in the antifascist movement and radical politics in the city against her parents' wishes, who supported the Loyalist but feared for her safety. During the war, she worked as an organizer for the Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Years later, Judy recalled she "would go into the subways with the can," and "organize a whole group of Spanish kids in the neighborhood... and got them into the Friends and had parties and dances," and other fundraising activities. After the fall of the Spanish Republic, she joined the Communist Party, stating she "was determined to do all I can do to stop Hitler," and felt that the Party "were the only ones that were really trying to stop Hitler."<sup>77</sup>

Another young Hispano woman, Pearl, an African-Panamanian from the West Indies and a descendant of slaves who moved to New York at the age of seventeen, was also involved in anti-fascist activities in the city. Even though her family was devout Catholics, they remained liberal-minded and supportive of Pearl's activism. While working in a textile factory, Pearl was a club organizer for the Communist Party and was involved in several anti-Hitler and pro-Spanish democracy demonstrations. Pearl recalled that supporters of the Spanish Republic often encountered more violence from fascist sympathizers and police than other leftist demonstrators. "We were pushed around quite a bit, we got hit, we had to run in doorways," Pearl reflected years later. "The police on horses would just ride into you, and you had to run for your life, you

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<sup>76</sup> Fraser M. Ottanelli, "The New York City Left and the Spanish Civil War" in *Facing Fascism: New York & the Spanish Civil War*, 66.

<sup>77</sup> Judy Boudon, February 9, 1982; Oral History of the American Left; OH 002; Box 7; Folder 7; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives Elmer Holmes Bobst Library 70 Washington Square South New York, NY 10012, New York University Libraries.

know, and they hit you, one hit me across my back...we had a lot of that...for demonstrations against the war in Spain.”<sup>78</sup>

Although the New York based *Sociedades Hispanas Confederadas* had their membership concentrated in New York and New Jersey, the organization did collaborate with *Comité Popular Democrático de Socorro a España de Tampa*. Both organizations regularly sponsored and organized theaters, dances, and musical events to raise relief aid. Among the most popular and successful theatrical performances was the *¡Milicianos al frente!*. Ignacio Zugadi, a member of the *Comité Antifacista Español* of New York, composed the play in September 1936, along with fellow member Jose Castilla who wrote the prologue and epilogue. *¡Milicianos al frente!* premiered at the *Ateneo Español* that same month in New York with considerable success. The play depicts the heroic tale of two *milicianas* (militia women) protagonists during the opening days of the Nationalist uprising who travel to the frontline in defense of Madrid. In the play, the women transcend their traditional gender roles to defend the Republic, which is also portrayed in a feminine light as *La Niña Bonita*.<sup>79</sup>

During the first eight months, *milicianas* played an important role in the Republican war effort. Communist, anarchist, POUMist, socialist, and unaffiliated *milicianas* played a sophisticated and extensive military role in frontline combat and rearguard action alongside men equally. However, as the war progressed, the Spanish Republican government sought to diminish the role of *milicianas* in the frontline until most of them had been removed from combat in July 1937. Despite the Republican effort to erase the prominence of the *milicianas*, the *Comité*

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<sup>78</sup> Pearl, February 22, 1982; Oral History of the American Left; OH 002; Box 22; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives Elmer Holmes Bobst Library 70 Washington Square South New York, NY 10012, New York University Libraries.

<sup>79</sup> Jackson-Schebetta, 47.

Antifacista received numerous requests from affiliated organizations to read and produce the play. Between September 1936 and Spring 1937 *¡Milicianos al frente!* was performed in over fifty venues. In April 1937, Ybor's *El International* newspaper celebrated the performance of the *¡Milicianos al frente!* at the Centro Obrero and insisted on an encore. The play was performed numerous times in 1937 through the sponsorship of various pro-Republican organizations in Ybor including the Comité de Defensa Frente Popular Español (Spanish Popular Front Defense), the Comité Feminino de Socorro a España (Women's Relief Committee for Spain), the Seccion de Damas y la de Recreo de Centro Obrero (Ladies and Recreation Section of the Workers Center), and the Agrupacion Benefica de Centro Obrero (Benevolent Association of the Workers Center).<sup>80</sup>

### **The Catholic Church in Tampa and New York**

Among American Catholics, the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic and exile of King Alfonso XIII, after the municipal elections of 1931, created confusion. Some were supportive of democratic elections after the tumultuous dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera. While others were fearful of the fate of the Catholic Church in Spain. However, American Catholics had little knowledge of Spain's unpleasant history with the clergy or the plight of its masses and were ready to accept the simplistic reports of the Catholic press.<sup>81</sup> A few days after the Nationalist uprising in Spain, Father Francis X. Talbot called a meeting in Manhattan with the city's Catholic journalists to determine a common editorial position on Spain. Among those

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<sup>80</sup> Lisa Lines, "Female Combatants in the Spanish Civil War: Milicianas on the Front Lines and in the Rearguard," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 10, (May, 2009), 168-172.; Jackson-Schebetta, 46.

<sup>81</sup> J. David Valaik, "American Catholics and the Second Spanish Republic, 1911-1936," *Journal of Church and State* 10 (Winter 1968): 13-15, 27.

in attendance at the meeting were members of the Nationalist junta. For Talbot, the war was a fight against the anti-Christian propaganda and practices of the Loyalist government in Spain,” composed of “Communists, anarchists, syndicalists, and atheistic groups.”<sup>82</sup>

Anti-Communist and pro-Franco Catholic publications in New York regularly spread fascist propaganda and misinformation about the situation in Spain. For instance, *The Brookland Tablet*, edited by staunch anti-communist Patrick F. Scanlan, frequently published anti-Semitic and pro-Franco articles. The *Tablet* described the Spanish Republican government as, “the successful criminal conspiracy of a little knot of Jewish, Masonic, Socialist and Bolshevik conspirators; it is tyranny by force and fraud.”<sup>83</sup> The *Tablet* also raised relief aid for Nationalists Spain and reported over \$40,000 in collected donations for Spanish Relief Fund throughout the war. The *Tablet* also collected \$3,000 to purchase milk for the children of Barcelona and ten tons of religious article for damaged churches in Spain.<sup>84</sup>

In addition to his support of Franco, Scanlan was a vocal critic of the New Deal and steadfast supporter of Senator Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s. In 1951, the government of Francoist Spain presented Scanlan with the Cross of Isabella the Catholic, investing him as the knight commander.<sup>85</sup> Another prominent publication, *Social Justice*, published by Father Charles Coughlin, also spread fascist propaganda. Coughlin praised the Rome-Berlin axis for “serving Christendom in a peculiarly important manner,” and for standing as a “firm rampart against communism.” One article written by Coughlin resembled a speech made by Joseph Goebbels,

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<sup>82</sup> Patrick J. McNamara, “Pro-Franco Sentiment and Activities in New York City,” in *Facing Fascism: New York & The Spanish Civil War*, 95.

<sup>83</sup> “Credit Trickery For Republic,” *The Brooklyn Tablet*, August 27, 1932.

<sup>84</sup> “Spain Again Thanks Tablet,” *The Brooklyn Tablet*, May 20, 1939.

<sup>85</sup> *The New York Times*, March 29, 1983.

which attacked Jews and Communists.<sup>86</sup> However, the *Social Justice* printed its last issue in 1942 after Attorney General Beverley Biddle called an investigation into the periodical, which he described as “clearly seditious.”<sup>87</sup>

While the American Catholic Church was a major source of support for the Nationalist forces in Spain, their views did not represent the entirety of America’s religious community. The American Friends of Spanish Democracy (AFSD) was founded in New York by a group of clergymen and intellectuals under the leadership of Roger Nash Baldwin, a member of the executive committee, and Bishop Robert L. Paddock, its chairman. They organized public appeals, petitions, and letters of protest. They distributed information on the situation in Spain to counteract the effects of fascist propaganda and brought pressure on the President and Congress of the United States to end the arms embargo against the Spanish Republic. Also, the AFSD raised funds for medical aid and refugee relief, which were distributed by the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy.<sup>88</sup> American protestant groups also condemned the Nazi onslaught. For example, in Los Angeles, members of the Southern California Methodist Conference declared the totalitarian states of “Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin,” as the “greatest menace to the church today,” and applauded “the donations to war relief in Spain and China.”<sup>89</sup>

However, American supporters of the Nationalists were less numerous and less successful in fundraising compared to Loyalists sympathizers. The most spectacular event, organized by the pro-Franco American Committee for Spanish Relief, occurred on March 19, 1937, in Madison Square Garden. Fifteen thousand people attended the pageant show, but

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<sup>86</sup> *Social Justice*, September 13, 1935.

<sup>87</sup> *Social Justice*, April 3, 1939; *Press and Sun-Bulletin*, April 20, 1942

<sup>88</sup> American Friends of Spanish Democracy. Circular letter of the American friends of Spanish democracy, New York City, New York, 1937. <https://www.loc.gov/item.rbpe.1330260b/>. Also see Maria Minor, *Portrait of a Rebel: The Story of Robert Lewis Paddock, 1869-1939* (New York, Seabury Press 1965).

<sup>89</sup> “Methodists Hit Nazism,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1938.

\$25,793 of the \$30,753 collected ended up covering administration and advertising costs.<sup>90</sup>

Within New York's Hispano community, some did support the Nationalists, particularly members of the Casa de España. However, their numbers were also insignificant, and their leaders would often complain that the vast majority of Hispanos in the city were pro-Republican. One member of the Casa de España, Dr. Ramón Castroviejo, lamented, "we can count the real supporters of our movement on the fingers of two hands."<sup>91</sup>

Church attendance was not central to the Spanish speaking immigrant communities of New York and Tampa. The experience of religious oppression under the Catholic Church of Spain was one of the many reasons they decided to emigrate to the United States. Such was the case for Joe Maldonado's family, who left Spain for America just before the start of the First World War. "The reason they left Spain was because in Asturias, in the village they were in, if they didn't attend certain masses, their family...had to pay a fine," Maldonado stated. "As a matter of fact, they were so upset with the Catholic religion, back then, that when they came to Tampa, they never set foot in a Catholic church," he declared.<sup>92</sup> In Tampa, the Census of 1930 documented the contrast between club and religious participation. The Census reported that roughly 0.8 percent of Cubans, 4.7 percent of Italians, and 11.9 percent of Spaniards attended church. While, 37.1 percent of Cubans, 29.5 percent of Italians, and 54.9 percent of Spaniards were club members. Though this mainly reflected the men of the community. Among Latin women, they comprised ninety percent of church attendance in Tampa.<sup>93</sup> However, this changed after Father John J. Hosey of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Ybor city and Father Write in West

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<sup>90</sup> Merle Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1998), 399.

<sup>91</sup> Fernandez, 91.

<sup>92</sup> Joe C. Maldonado. Interview by Ana M. Varela-Lago. April 11, 1997. Tampa, Florida. Spanish Civil War Oral History Project University of South Florida. <https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0022567/00001>

<sup>93</sup> Mormino and Pozzetta, 216-217.



Tampa praised General Franco during their sermons and asked for donations for the Nationalist victims. Latin mothers responded by removing their children from Catholic schools and boycotting the church in protest.<sup>94</sup>

However, the rejection of the Catholic church did not mean the rejection of religion. Hispanos and Latins instead worshiped and prayed at home. Maldonado mentioned that his parents were of “the belief that to believe in God, you don’t have to necessarily attend church. You can pray in the corner of your house. In the closet. And that’s what...they believed in.”<sup>95</sup> These anti-church sentiments were common among first and second-generation. Delores L. Garcia remembered growing up in a household with deep resentment towards the Catholic Church while growing up in Manhattan and the Bronx. Born and raised in New York to immigrant parents from Spain and France, Garcia described similar negative experiences that pushed her parents and herself away from the church. She stated that her parents believed in God but “never went to church except for some wedding or baptism.”<sup>96</sup>

### **Nueva Yorkers and Tampeños in the International Brigades**

In the Abraham Lincoln Brigade (the American volunteer unit of the Spanish Republican Army or the XV International Brigade), New Yorkers constituted the largest percentage of American volunteers, between a fifth and a third were from or had lived in the city before traveling to Spain. The logistical position of New York as a natural point of departure for Europe

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<sup>94</sup> “Spanish American Women Ask Aid to Spain,” *Daily Worker*, April 6, 1938; “Explica su actitud el padre Hosey, de la iglesia Nuestra Senora del Perpetuo Socorro,” *La Gaceta*, August 12, 1938.

<sup>95</sup> Joe C. Maldonado Interview.

<sup>96</sup> Dolores L. Garcia. Interview by Ana M. Varela-Lago. April 17, 1997. Tampa, Florida. Spanish Civil War Oral History Project University of South Florida. <https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0022557/00001>

and the strong anti-fascist movements and recruitment of volunteers in the city contributed to this fact. Also, the ease of a quick subway ride to the harbor to start their journey to Spain made it easier for New Yorkers compared to those in the nation's heartland. However, forty-six of all forty-eight states were represented among the volunteers.<sup>97</sup>

Most of the Spanish speaking members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade came from New York and Ybor City. In Spain, they joined the most diverse military unit in American history at the time. However, their motivations were often at odds with their American counterparts, and they projected the oppression they experienced at home in the conflict. Like all the volunteers, they received no monetary compensation or guarantee of medical insurance if they were injured. They joined simply for the opportunity to fight fascism, even if it meant putting themselves at risk of criminal prosecution by the United States government. Before departing New York Harbor for Europe, they headed to a lower Manhattan Army-Navy for a uniform and equipment. The store manager lined them up single file and "shoved World War I GI issue," onto their arms. "They asked for no money," for they "had none to offer."<sup>98</sup>

Among the international volunteers in Spain, Cuba sent the most from Latin America. This solidarity among the Cuban and Spanish people translated into the Cuban communities in the United States.<sup>99</sup> In New York, many of the Cuban volunteers were members of the Julio Mella Club in Harlem. Named after the founder of Cuba's Communist party, many of the club's members were refugees from Fulgencio Batista dictatorship. One of these men and among the first American volunteers to arrive in Spain, was Rodolfo de Armas y Soto, a Cuban exile, who

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<sup>97</sup> Justin Byrne, "From Brooklyn to Belchite: New Yorkers in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade," in *Facing Fascism: New York & The Spanish Civil War*, 73.

<sup>98</sup> John Tisa, *Recalling The Good Fight: An Autobiography of the Spanish Civil War* (South Hadley: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1985), 16.

<sup>99</sup> Jackson-Schebetta, 17.

had resided in both Ybor City and New York. A member of the Julio Mella Club, Rodolfo, and his compatriots often sang anti-Batista songs and talked of Jose Marti at the club in Harlem. Standing at five foot eight with broad muscular shoulders, he was described as “always serious and in a hurry,” and seemed “intolerant and angry.” Rodolfo was “the most advanced Marxist of all the Cubans,” but was considered “the gentlest of human beings” after one got to know him. For Cubans like Rodolfo, the war in Spain represented an opportunity to fight fascism and their way of getting back at Batista. They hoped that the defeat of fascism in Europe would inevitably lead to the downfall of fascism in North and South America. Unfortunately for Rodolfo, a month after arriving in Spain, he was killed in the Battle of Jarama, alongside many Lincoln volunteers, before he could see the end of Batista’s regime.<sup>100</sup>

Another early arrival and exile living in New York was Cuban intellectual and writer Pablo de la Torriente Brau. He is regarded to be among the most important Cuban writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Spain, he worked as a correspondent for the New York magazine, *New Masses*, and the Mexican newspaper *El Machete*. For Pablo, as a Communist and a revolutionary, the revolution in Spain represented an “opportunity to live,” and to project the struggle to Cuba. As he explained in a letter to Adolfo Garcia before departing from New York, “the Cuban revolution depends on these moments in Spain because there lies the prologue; for if failure occurs there, we may expect, very soon...the grand definitive crisis in Europe.” After arriving in Spain in September 1936, he collected testimonies and wrote memorable chronical of the conflict in Barcelona and Madrid. He soon became a political commissar for the 7<sup>th</sup> Division before being killed in action during the siege of Madrid a few weeks later in December.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Tisa, 16.

<sup>101</sup> Pablo de la Torriente Brau, *Cartas Y Cronicas De España* (Havana: Centro Cultura, 2002), 24.

At the end of January 1936, the Lincoln Battalion (part of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade) had formed with the first 550 volunteers from all over the United States. When the Lincoln's underwent training in Villanueva de al Jara, they consisted of men from Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, African American, Irish and Canadian backgrounds. Naturally, the Spanish speaking volunteers from the U.S. served as translators for the battalion. Jack Shirai, a Japanese American, was a notable member among them. Serving as the battalion cook, he distinguished himself not only for his talent as a chef but also as a machine gunner. He was popular among wounded in the hospital and the Spanish villagers "who talked often of the Japanese who had come so far for them."<sup>102</sup> By the time the Lincolns finished training a few weeks later, they emerged as the most diverse military unit in American history.

However, as Puerto Rican writer Antonio Pacheco Padro wrote, the relationship between the Hispanic and "Yanquis" volunteers of the Lincoln Battalion was not entirely harmonious. During training, there were "a series of incidents between" the two groups. He mentioned the "latinos," were mainly from New York, which included Cubans, Chileans and Mexicans, some of which were members of the Spanish Workers Club and Club Chileno. He revealed that an American from Chicago slapped a drunk Cuban in the canteen. This created a chain reaction that caused a "storm of slaps between Cubans and Americans." During the fight, "the Chileans, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans sided with the boys from Cuba and the incident was about to turn into mutiny...if it had not been for the diplomatic mediations of the Canadians." After Jarama, the "latinos" in his group left the XV Brigade and joined the First Mobile Shock Brigade of El Campesino.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> The Volunteer for Liberty, January 1938.

<sup>103</sup> Antonio Pacheco Padro, *Vengo Del Jarama: Glorias Y Horrores de la Guerra* (San Juan de Puerto Rico, 1942), 60-61.

At Jarama, the first battle for the Lincoln Battalion, the untested American unit suffered heavy losses. Among those killed were two, out of six known, Native Americans volunteers. Thomas Cox, a Native from Alaska, was a member of the Canadian Communist Party and a Marine Fireman before departing for Spain. In his late-forties, Cox was among the older volunteers in the unit. John Parks, a “full-blooded Indian” from Philadelphia, was a Pennsylvania state organizer for the Unemployed Council and a leading member of the Communist Party of Eastern Pennsylvania. Although he was 23, Parks was described as looking much older with a cavity for a chest, stooped shoulders, and deep-set dark eyes with high cheekbones. A victim of the Great Depression, Parks had aged beyond his years when he arrived in Spain, and his companion aboard the *SS Champlain* felt that if he ever smiled, the “creases on his face would crack.”<sup>104</sup>

Parks and Cox’s tribal background are unknown; among the other Native Americans in the XV Brigade, one was part Sioux and another 5<sup>th</sup> generation Seneca Indian. Parks worked in textile manufacturing before joining Lincoln’s. Well-read in Marxist-Leninist theories, he was a natural leader and lectured against the capitalist system. In Spain, he was assigned as a Section leader and commissar. Lincoln veteran John Tisa recalled one of his passionate speeches, where he condemned capitalism for “thriving on the destruction of dignity of race and ethnic minorities...of the American working class.” He dedicated his life to do his “part in replacing capitalism with a humane system of socialism...where human dignity will flower and cause all life to flourish.” Parks, Cox, and a dozen others in his unit disappeared in the early morning of February 27<sup>th</sup> when their transport truck took a wrong turn into Nationalist lines. Years later,

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<sup>104</sup> Tisa, 37-38.

Lincoln veteran, Carl Geiser, discovered that they were ambushed and killed by a fascist patrol.<sup>105</sup>

The carnage of Jarama did not only produce casualties, it also created leaders. Oliver Law, whose previous military experience in the US Army and bravery under fire, as the commander of the Tom Mooney machine Gun Company, distinguished him from the rest. After the battle, Law was chosen as the next commander of the Lincoln-Washington Battalion, which were merged together after both units sustained massive casualties. Born in West Texas, he had served six years as an enlisted man in the Army before joining the Communist Party in Chicago while working as a stevedore. When an old US Army Colonel, from the Southern United States, visited the battalion in Spain, he asked Law if he was wearing a “Captain’s uniform?” Law responded, “Yes, I am, because I am a Captain. In America...I could only rise as high as a corporal, but here...I can rise according to my worth.” On July 10, 1937, at the Battle of Brunete, while courageously leading the charge up Mosquito Hill, Law was wounded by a sniper. Moments later, Law was struck a second time lying on a stretcher as he was being carried back down. Law told his men shortly before succumbing to his wounds, “I’m finished, go back for the other wounded. Tell the guys to keep up the good fight.”<sup>106</sup> Law was the first African American to command a fully integrated unit, with white troops, in American history.

In Spain, the efforts of Ybor City to support the Republic were well known. The song, *¡No Pasarán!* which was sung loudly throughout the streets of Madrid, was written by a Ybor cigar maker. Among the 2,800 members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, more than twenty were from Ybor City. Some, like Aurelio and Eladio Bolanos, were brothers who joined the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid,38. ; Carl Geiser, *Prisoners of the Good Fight: Americans Against Franco Fascism* (Westport: Lawrence Hill and Co, 1986), 12.

<sup>106</sup> Tisa, 50. ; Alvah Bessie, *The Heart of Spain* (New York: VALB, 1952), 248. ; Chicago Tribune, December 07, 1987.

International Brigade together. While others who traveled to Spain to fight fascism did so knowing they would be fighting their own family. Jose Garcia Granell, known as Pepe, knew he might have to face his brother in combat when he traveled to New York, with a group of others from Ybor, to join the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in January 1937.<sup>107</sup>

Like many who left Spain during the Monarchy, Pepe, his two oldest brothers, and father, left their native land of Asturias as teenagers to avoid military service in Morocco, leaving behind the youngest son. In Ybor, they started a new life as workers in the Tobacco industry. Anthony Granell, Pepe's nephew, remembers how generous and caring he was towards his family. Every Friday, "Pepe would come around and give all the Granells' nephews a quarter. So that, they remember Pepe." He was not politically affiliated with any party or union, but he was a novelist and a proud Spaniard who represented many who return to defend their native land.<sup>108</sup>

In June 1937, the *Mundo Grafico*, a Spanish magazine, interviewed Pepe while on leave in Madrid. He told Spanish readers that, "Ybor is the best representation of Spain in the United States," and described in detail the enormous efforts of the Latin community for the Spanish cause. He mentioned he only had two days leave and was heading back soon to avoid being punished with trench digging duty since he "preferred the rifle rather than the shovel and pick." Dreadfully, Pepe revealed that of the eleven men from Ybor City that had served alongside him in the Lincoln Battalion, "all have fallen dead or wounded." "On the ground of Spain -loved in Ybor City- they have found death," he mourned.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> "Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Spanish Civil War History and Education: Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives." Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Spanish Civil War History and Education: Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives. Accessed April 04, 2019. <http://www.alba-valb.org/>.

<sup>108</sup> Granell, Anthony. Interview by Ana Varela-Lago. Spanish Civil War Oral History Project University of South Florida. Tampa, April 12, 1997. <https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0022562/00001>

<sup>109</sup> "España fuera de España," *Mundo Grafico*, June 16, 1937.

A few months later, during the retreat of the Republican Army in the Siege of Gandesa, Pepe was captured by Francoist forces. He spent eighteen months as a prisoner of war. Pepe did eventually meet his youngest brother Oscar, who had been a Nationalist soldier in the war. However, instead of killing each other, as he feared, Oscar managed to rescue him from the prisoner of war camp. Years later, their nephew recollected, “if his brother wouldn’t have done that, they would have killed Pepe,” even as a prisoner, he was always “very outspoken...very devoted for his cause.” However, Pepe did not make it back home to Tampa. While in hiding, “he was injured, he died and was buried in Spain.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Anthony Granell Interview.



## CHAPTER 2.

### THE MEXICAN WORKING-CLASS IN CALIFORNIA AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

In California, the news of the Nationalist revolt in Spain arrived during a time of great labor unrest across numerous industrial sectors up and down the Pacific Coast. The economic devastation created in the wake of the Great Depression sparked a wave of labor militancy on a scale unseen in the state's history. During the 1930s, workers in the agricultural fields, the canneries, ship docks, garment manufacturing plants, furniture shops, and other industries, were actively engaged in widespread labor strikes. They formed multi-ethnic labor unions that represented large numbers of Mexican, Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, Black, and White workers of both sexes. Simultaneously, workers in California (and Washington, Oregon, and Alaska) were active in opposing totalitarianism abroad while they fought for improved wages and working conditions at home.

In Los Angeles and San Francisco, an array of ethnic groups in Popular Front labor unions affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), such as the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union (ILWU); the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA); the United Furniture Workers (UFW); International Ladies Garments Workers Union (ILGWU); and the Alaska Cannery Workers Union (ACWU),

among others, labored together towards a united front at home and towards the growing threat of fascism abroad. This chapter will explore the role of Mexican-Americans and migrant workers (from Mexico and the Philippines) in labor organizations during the 1930s and their involvement in labor militancy and internationalism during the Spanish Civil War.

At the turn of the twentieth century, California's agricultural economy became progressively diversified. Large-scale irrigation, land reclamations, and expanding railroad networks shifted the agricultural industry away from wheat and cereals to sugar beets, fruit, and vegetables. This made way for the rise of commercial agriculture, new communities, and consumer markets. Californian growers recruited cheap labor from a series of ethnic groups beginning in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In order of succession, they included Native Americans, Chinese, Japanese, European immigrants, Mexican, and Filipinos. However, the decline of the Native American population, the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, and the Gentlemen's Agreements with Japan increased the pull for Mexican labor by the twentieth century. Crude racial stereotypes of Mexican as peons convinced employers that they were racially suited for arduous work and low wages. By the 1920s, Mexican workers outnumbered all other ethnic or racial groups in California's agricultural industry.<sup>111</sup>

Although Anglo Americans regarded Mexicans as recent arrivals in the United States, they have been a part of a well-established community that dates back centuries. Mexicans have resided in the present-day states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas since the arrival of the Spanish missions and rancheros in the early colonial period.<sup>112</sup> However, the number of people of Mexican origin increased dramatically at the turn of the twentieth century. Before the

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<sup>111</sup> Stephanie Lewthwaite, *Race, Place, and Reform in Mexican Los Angeles A Transnational Perspective, 1890-1940* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2009), 135.

<sup>112</sup> See David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

1930s, there were few legal barriers for Mexican immigrants. The eight-dollar head tax or required literacy test established by congress in 1917 was largely unenforced on Mexican migrant workers at the behest of American agricultural and railroad companies seeking cheap labor. By the 1920s, Mexicans could be found harvesting sugar beets in Minnesota, laying railroad tracks in Kansas, packing meat in Chicago, mining coal in Oklahoma, assembling cars in Detroit, and canning fish in Alaska.<sup>113</sup>

Between 1900 and 1930, over one million Mexican immigrants arrived in the United States, many due to the economic and political turmoil of the Mexican Revolution. According to the Mexican Fact-Finding Committee report published in 1930, an estimated 250,000 Mexicans lived in Los Angeles County in 1928, approximately 11 percent of the total population. The report also found that the city of Los Angeles—with a Mexican population of 134,300—was home to “a larger population of Mexicans than any other city in the United States or even Mexico with the exception of Mexico City.” Limited employment opportunities restricted Mexicans and Mexican-Americans to unskilled work in the manufacturing, transportation, and agricultural industry with virtually no opportunity for advancement. Working conditions, particularly in the railroad industry, which required workers to sleep in railroad cars, were so strenuous that the Fact-Finding Committee claimed: “white men do not seek such employment under any condition.”<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 8-10.

<sup>114</sup> California Mexican Fact-Finding Committee, *Mexicans in California: Report Of Governor C.C. Young's Mexican Fact-Finding Committee* (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1930), 175-176, 91. ; Clementina Duron, “Mexican Women and Labor Conflict in Los Angeles: The ILGWU Dressmakers’ Strike of 1933,” *Aztlan* (Spring, 1984) 147-148.

Before the 1930s, the railroad and agricultural industry employed the majority of Mexicans in California. The arduous working environment of these industries meant that employers became dependent on Mexican migrants willing to labor under such conditions, especially during labor shortages in World War I. The demand for migratory labor remained strong during the post-war economy, and railroad and mining companies joined large growers in exerting pressure on Congress to permit relatively open Mexican immigration throughout the 1920s. By the end of the decade, Mexican workers became the largest single element in California's agricultural labor supply, comprising over 50 percent of migrant workers in the industry. Employers preferred immigrant labor not only because they were willing to work under grueling conditions for lower wages, but if they ever attempted to strike, they could be threatened with deportation (roughly 80 percent were non-citizens) or pitted against other groups of workers. The common belief that Mexican workers could not be organized did not only make them vulnerable to employer exploitation but also a target of conservative labor organizations, such as the American Federation of Labor (AFL). In 1925 the AFL strongly supported the Box Bill and the Harris Bill that sought to limit Mexican immigration to 1,575 per year.<sup>115</sup> The president of the AFL argued that restrictions on Mexican immigration were necessary to protect American workers and small farms from adverse competition. However, lobbyists from the agricultural, railroad and mining industries successfully blocked the passage of the bills by arguing that Mexican labor was "indispensable" to their industries, and they were "not radical in the slightest respect" and could be "easily controlled by those in authority."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Sponsored by Representative John Box of East Texas and Senator William Harris of Georgia.

<sup>116</sup> Linda C. Majka and Theo J. Majka, *Farm Workers, Agribusiness, And The State* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 62-65.

Before the Great Depression, anti-Mexican immigration bills remained unsuccessful due to the lobbying efforts of employers. However, it did serve as a warning for growers who realized that their labor supply was vulnerable to political uncertainty. Therefore, growers began to subsidize their workforce with Filipino laborers. Since the Philippines Islands were under the possession of the United States, Filipinos were American nationals (but not citizens) and were not subject to immigration laws. The first bulk of Filipino immigration came from the sugar cane plantations of the Hawaiian Islands. Between 1920 and 1930, the Filipino population in the United States rose from 5,600 to 56,000, most of which remained in the Pacific Coast and worked on farms and canneries. Approximately 85 percent of them were young men under the age of thirty, and many were enrolled as students in universities. Growers preferred Filipino migrants because they did not have established family ties, which allowed them the mobility they desired. Although Filipino migrant workers were not numerous enough to eclipse Mexican laborers in the agricultural industry, they did undercut other workers in some areas, notably Japanese and white workers.<sup>117</sup>

However, the market collapse in 1929 completely changed the playing field. During the worst years of the Great Depression—between 1929 and 1932—more than 13 million workers across the country lost their jobs. Immigrants were no longer the only ones willing to work in the fields. Massive job losses created a surplus of white labor willing to work under any conditions. The rise in unemployment caused the demand for Mexican and Filipino labor to drop significantly, and growers no longer lobbied for leniency towards Mexican migration. In search of a scapegoat, nativists blamed Mexicans for unemployment and began to call for their removal. In 1929 Congress passed legislation setting penalties for illegal entry for the first time. The

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 67.

following year the U.S. government no longer issued visas for common laborers. This reduced immigration by 75 percent compared to the previous five years. The U.S. Border Patrol, which was established in 1925 mainly to enforce customs and prohibition laws, was transformed from an understaffed and underfunded agency to an effective organization that greatly reduced illegal immigration.<sup>118</sup>

Disgracefully, the U.S. government did not stop at immigration reduction. They followed up with a massive repatriation campaign that lasted till the end of the 1930s. Even though the vast majority of legal immigration arrived from Europe at the time, Mexicans were the main target of removal. Between 1929 and 1939, the U.S. government deported an estimated 400,000 to 600,000 people (though other estimations place that number in the millions). Expulsions of entire families were frequent, and an estimated 63 percent of those deported were birthright citizens.<sup>119</sup> The mass scale removal of hundreds of thousands of people impacted the Mexican community in the United States for generations. U.S. officials also targeted Filipino immigration with the passage of the Philippine Islands Independence Act of 1934, which set a quota that amounted to Filipino exclusion. The Filipino Repatriation Act in 1935 offered free transportation for Filipinos living in the United States back to their home island if they agreed never to return. The program had very little success.<sup>120</sup>

For Mexican immigrants that had lived in the United States for years or even decades, repatriation was a double edge sword. After years of confronting discrimination and assimilating to American society, they were faced with the same issue after returning to Mexico. Many had

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<sup>118</sup> Balderrama & Rodriguez, 149-151.; Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures 1929-1939* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1974), 174.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Majka and Majka, 72-73.

changed during their stay in the United States. Their mode of life, including dress, speech, and manners had become Americanized. The younger generation born in the United States were educated in American schools, spoke primarily in English, and identified as American. They comprised 60 percent of all those deported. For them the trauma of being expelled from the country of their birth was especially difficult to cope. Among those who survived repatriation and remained in the United States, they renounced their Mexicanismo and embraced an American identity. Many began to move out of Mexican neighborhoods and marry outside their ethnicity. As one young second generation Mexican stated: "I am an American with a dash of Mexican heritage!" They became more active in asserting their rights as citizens and participated in labor militancy. In the interwar period, they rejected the U.S. government policy of isolationism and joined other liberal minded Americans during the Spanish relief movement and called for the lifting of the embargo on the Spanish Republic during the Spanish Civil War.<sup>121</sup>

### **California's Workers Respond to The Spanish Civil War**

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Communist Party of the USA (CP) was a driving force in unionizing Mexican agricultural labor and a catalyst in many union organizations serving minority groups. Beginning in the 1920s, the Communist Party started a campaign targeting the unionization of unorganized immigrant workers in the agricultural industry. The CP's effort was a response to the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920, which called for Party branches in advanced capitalist nations to organize large populations of oppressed rural laborers by using the Bolshevik model. In California's agricultural industry, the Party targeted

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<sup>121</sup> Rodriguez, 237-245.

immigrant workers in areas like Imperial Valley, where fifty-one growers own 83 percent of all farmland (most of whom were absentee landlords). This campaign marked the Party's first comprehensive effort to organize the Mexican-working class on a mass scale.<sup>122</sup> By the 1930s, the Party had built its second-largest statewide presence in California (after New York) with San Francisco and Los Angeles leading in party membership.<sup>123</sup>

The CP's initial strategy was to organize workers that had been ignored by the AFL under the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL), an industrial union umbrella organization founded by the Party in 1929. The TUUL played an essential role in organizing Mexican and Filipino workers into the CP aligned Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU, a mostly Mexican union). Between 1930 and 1934, the CAWIU organized several strikes. Although their successes were marginal, they shattered all false notions pushed by AFL that trade unions could not organize immigrants. However, the CP's efforts ended in failure. After the failed El Monte strike and the arrest of several union leaders, the CAWIU dissolved in 1934. The following year the TUUL was also dismantled. The CP retreated from its revolutionary rhetoric and adopted the Popular Front strategy, which emphasized a broad approach of organizing workers for various unions affiliated with the CIO (a breakaway organization that originated from the AFL).<sup>124</sup>

One of the many obstacles that the CAWIU was unable to surmount was the prejudice that existed between urban and rural labor that prevented the formation of a united front among workers across industries. Also, the CAWIU was mainly made up of Mexican field workers

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<sup>122</sup> Justin Akers Chacon, *Radicals in the Barrio: Magonistas, Socialists, Wobblies, and Communists in the Mexican American Working Class* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018), 494.

<sup>123</sup> "S.F. Gets its Second Wind in Communist Recruiting," *Western Worker*, January 4, 1937.

<sup>124</sup> Chacon, 501.



without outside resources and was isolated from the broader trade union movement outside the TUUL. However, Mexican workers, who held leadership roles in the CAWIU, forged ahead in the fight for the recognition of their rights as labors and they joined a much more successful organizing effort under the CIO. In contrast to the AFL, the CIO's commitment to unionizing on an industrial scale, instead of craft lines, facilitated the creation of industry-wide unions that encompassed a diverse membership. This made way for a rapid increase of Mexican workers in ethnically integrated trade unions. The recruitment efforts of Mexican-American leaders like Bert Corona and Luisa Moreno in the CIO also facilitated this growth.<sup>125</sup>

The remnants of the CAWIU reformed into the Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA), which was formed in Denver and chartered by the CIO. The UCAPAWA membership encompassed large numbers of Mexican workers, along with Filipino, Japanese, Black, Anglo, and other Latin Americans. Their success in attracting Mexican workers made them the fastest growing union in California by the end of the decade.<sup>126</sup> Also, the union was particularly strong with Mexican and Mexican-American women and was among the first trade unions to allow them to hold high-level offices. These women, which included influential leaders like Guatemalan born Luisa Moreno, played an important role in labor militancy.<sup>127</sup>

The creation of diverse unions, such as the UCAPAWA and others in the CIO, demonstrated that a “class-consciousness” was emerging among the American working-class. According to E.P. Thompsons, this consciousness became a “consciousness of an identity of

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<sup>125</sup> Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Fields: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 264-272.

<sup>126</sup> San Francisco News, July 07, 1940.

<sup>127</sup> See Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1987).

interests as between all these diverse groups of working people and as against the interest of other classes,” which manifested into “working-class institutions.”<sup>128</sup> However, this class consciousness was not limited to the borders of the United States. During the Spanish Civil War, the formation of Spanish aid committees across North America and Europe demonstrated a shared international solidarity expressed towards the Spanish people.<sup>129</sup> Trade unions in the United States and around the world played an active role in these organizations. The intervention of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy on the side of the Nationalists provided the pro-Republican aid drives an antifascist focal point with the goal of lifting the arms embargo the western powers placed on the Spanish government. Eric Smith argues that pro-Loyalists saw the embargo as an illegal action that infringed on the Spanish governments ability to defend itself, which they believed was imperative for avoiding a wider conflict and ensuring American security.<sup>130</sup>

Smith states that organized American aid efforts were not unprecedented. While the experience of World War I had fostered isolationism in American society, its aftermath also inspired aid efforts. After the war, Americans responded to the crises when the U.S. government underwrote massive aid to war torn Europe. American relief also aided Armenia in 1918, Russia in 1921, and Japan in 1923. While isolationism remained strong in American society during the interwar period, the effort to aid Spain and the call to lift the U.S. arms embargo demonstrated the beginning of American internationalism that followed in the post-World War II era.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 194.

<sup>129</sup> Although pro-Nationalist aid efforts existed in the United States, compared to those supporting the Loyalists, they were not as successful. However, American companies such as Ford, Studebaker, General Motors, and Texaco, who sold trucks and petroleum directly to Franco, did have a significant impact on the outcome of the war.

<sup>130</sup> Eric R. Smith, *American Relief Aid and the Spanish Civil War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2013), 4.

<sup>131</sup> The majority of the American public supported isolationism during the 1930s. In 1937 an opinion poll concluded that 70 percent of Americans felt that entering World War I was a mistake. Another poll in 1937, found 56 percent of Americans supported staying out of another world war. By the end of 1940, 60 percent of Americans favored helping England in the war against Germany even if it risked the U.S. getting involved in war. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, only 20 percent of Americans believed that the U.S. involvement in World War I was a

Mexican-Americans in the United States were a part of this internationalist trend. They joined likeminded citizens across the country in opposing non-interventionist government policies that they believed endangered national security. In the United States, the main Spanish aid organizations were Friends of Spanish Democracy, the Communist Party's American League Against War and Fascism, the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, The Medical Bureau to Aid Spanish Democracy, the Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and Labor's Red Cross.<sup>132</sup>

Among trade unionist, news reports of the rise of fascism in Europe, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, and the Spanish Civil War were a real concern. Louis Goldblatt was a witness to these anxieties among the rank-and-file and leadership of the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the CIO. Goldblatt was born in Brooklyn and raised by Jewish immigrant parents from Russia with a family history of labor activism. After graduating from UCLA, he moved to San Francisco and started working as a warehouse worker along the waterfront in the mid-1930s.<sup>133</sup> Within a few years, he quickly rose to the position of Vice-President of ILWU Warehouse Local 6 in 1937. The following year Goldblatt was elected to serve as the Secretary-Treasurer for California's branch of the CIO. While working in the leadership of both organizations, Goldblatt recalled discussions that occurred within the union concerning global affairs. "While you had all these debates on the question of industrial unionism, other debates took place on a quite higher level; Hitler, Spanish Civil War, and so forth," he said. "This went on both as individuals and as a union; we felt very

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mistake. See Jeffrey W. Legro, "Whence American Internationalism," *International Organization* 54, 2 (Spring, 2000): 273-274.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-10.

keenly that what was going on in Spain, particularly with the help that was being given [to] Franco by Mussolini and Hitler, these were forerunners of wholesale repression.”<sup>134</sup>

In California, trade unions played a central role in Spanish aid and other international efforts.<sup>135</sup> One of the leading aid organizations was Labor’s Red Cross, which was initiated by the ILGWU’s flagship office in New York. In Los Angeles, the women of the various districts of the ILGWU played an important role in organizing the regions trade unions to coordinate fundraisers for Labor’s Red Cross. In Los Angeles, there were an estimated 150 dress factories that employed about 3,000 workers. Seventy-five percent of these workers were Mexican females; the rest were Italians, Russians, Jews, and Anglos. However, prior to 1933 Mexican female garment workers remained largely unaffiliated with a labor union, much due to the prevailing belief that they could not be organized. Manufactures took advantage of this and sought to decrease costs by primarily hiring Mexican women through an open-door system, who were paid substantially less.<sup>136</sup>

However, largely due to the efforts of union organizer Rosa Pesotta, the IGLWU began a massive campaign aimed at recruiting Mexican women in 1933. These women soon became the backbone of the union in the West Coast and the driving force behind the Los Angeles Garment Workers strike of 1933 which effectively shut down the dress industry in the city. In a few years

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<sup>134</sup> Louis Goldblatt, *Louis Goldblatt: Working Class Leader in the ILWU, 1935-1977, Volume I* (Berkeley: University of California, 1980), 69, 235. Goldblatt later play an important role in the unionization of Hawaii in the years following World War II.

<sup>135</sup> While the Communist Party had members involved in several Spanish aid organizations, it was spread too thin to have complete control of the movement’s direction. Across the United States, the aid movement was comprised of liberals, intellectuals, artist, trade unionists, socialists, anarchists, communists, religious organizations, and some conservatives. See Eric R. Smith, *American Relief Aid and the Spanish Civil War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2013).

<sup>136</sup> This violated the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, which stipulated a pay rate of \$15 a week for garment workers. Employers paid 40 percent of their female employees less than \$5 a week, the majority of which were Mexican women who were hired using the open-door system. See Rodolfo Acuna, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos, 7th. ed.* (New York: Longman Publishing, 2011), 217-218

the ILGWU had organized the entire industry of Los Angeles and increased their membership to 3,000 by 1936. The fastest growing segment of the ILGWU membership came from Mexican women, who comprised three-fourths of total members in Los Angeles.<sup>137</sup>

Nationally, trade unionists raised \$20,000 and the Communist Party collected \$8,000 for Labor's Red Cross within the first two weeks of campaigning. By May 1937, Labor's Red Cross had collected more than \$125,000 in donated funds nationally, well over their initial goal of \$100,000.<sup>138</sup> In California, initial fundraising efforts were very successful across the state. By September the Communist Party of California reported that they had to raise their Party quota for Labor's Red Cross to \$1000 after donations from party members quickly surpassed their original goal of \$500. That same week in Hollywood, a gathering of 1000 people raise \$1000 for Labor's Red Cross during a symposium over "Spain's Fight for Freedom."<sup>139</sup> After a year, the national goal had been reached and the ILGWU then renamed their organization Trade Union Relief for Spain. In August 1937, the ILGWU in San Francisco called a conference to organize a committee for the cities Trade Union Relief for Spain branch and inform the participating trade unions that their next national goal was to raise \$250,000. This was to cover the construction of a hospital in Spain and to maintain a refugee camp in France housing 3,000 Spanish children. The goal was never reached.<sup>140</sup>

However, the failure to meet the national goal for Trade Union Relief did not reflect the enthusiastic support shown by union members. Among the most devoted labor union in the

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<sup>137</sup> Chacon, 512.

<sup>138</sup> Robert D. Parmet, *The Master of Seventh Avenue: David Dubinsky and the American Labor Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 137.; "Labor Defense in Drive for Aid of Spain," *Western Worker*, September 17, 1936.

<sup>139</sup> "Spain Fund Is Over The Top," *Western Worker*, September 17, 1936.

<sup>140</sup> "San Francisco Unions Map Aid To Spain," *Western Worker*, August 30, 1937.

Pacific Coast to donate to the Labor's Red Cross and Trade Union Relief for Spain were the "Alaskeros" of the newly formed Alaska Cannery Workers Union (ACWU). From the early days of the canned salmon industry in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Alaska canneries depended on immigrant labor. Most white Americans shunned the seasonal, arduous, and low-paid nature of the canning industry. The work involved sailing up the Pacific to Alaska during the summer on a cramped and unsanitary ship to work in isolated salmon canneries. During the fall they returned to work in seasonal jobs on farm factories in California, Oregon, and Washington. The industry had leaned on Chinese and Japanese migrant workers in the past. However, Filipino workers became the backbone of the industry after the Asian Exclusion Acts. Alaska canneries also targeted Mexican workers. The Alaska Packers Association recruited Latinos by running employment ads in *Hispano America*, falsely touting "excellent treatment...and sanitary conditions, aboard the ships and in the canneries."<sup>141</sup>

For decades, Alaskeros were "forced to work from ten to 16 hours a day," open shop at a rate of \$25 to \$40 dollars per month in unsanitary conditions.<sup>142</sup> However, after years of exploitation the Alaskeros formed the Alaska Cannery Workers Union in San Francisco during the summer of 1933. The union was primarily comprised of Filipino and Mexican cannery workers, but smaller numbers of Japanese, Chinese, African Americans, Anglos were also among the membership. During the early days of the union, longtime Alaskeros and founding members of the ACWU like Adrian Duhagon, Edward Camacho, and Jose Inclan began recruiting members along the waterfront of San Francisco. By the end of their first year 500

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<sup>141</sup> Eduardo Contreras, *Latinos and the Liberal City: Politics and Protest in San Francisco* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019) 51.

<sup>142</sup> "Retain A Fearless President Re-Elect Virgil Duyungan" campaign pamphlet for Mr. Duyungan's re-election as the president of the Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers Union Local 18257, ca. 1936; Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers Union, Local 7. Accession no. 3927-001, Box 9/17; University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, 4000 15th Ave NE Seattle, WA 98195-2900, University of Washington Libraries.

cannery workers had joined the union. Four years later, that number rose to over 3,000. The union swiftly set out to chip away at the contractors' power in the industry. During the 1934 General Strike in San Francisco, six hundred cannery workers of the ACWU marched towards the waterfront to protest Alaska packing companies for employing non-union workers. However, early unionizing efforts were uneasy and the ACWU defunct for a year in 1935.<sup>143</sup>

In March 1936 the ACWU resurfaced and tried to foster an "international" spirit among the industries cannery workers. In September, the union membership of the ACWU voted to donate \$250 to Labors Red Cross to aid the Spanish People. Demonstrating their militant ethos and support for labor and civil right issues they also voted to donate \$500 to the King-Ramsey-Connor Defense Fund.<sup>144</sup> The next month they collected \$560 for the Mooney Defense Fund and another \$250 for Spain.<sup>145</sup> The ACWU also condemned the Japanese invasion of China and ordered a union boycott on all goods from Japan. This fared well among Chinese-American cannery workers and encouraged further Chinese membership.<sup>146</sup> In Alaska, the ACWU sought to encourage Native Alaskan membership and dissolve the distrust that had existed, before the union was founded, between the imported workers and the Native Alaskan cannery workers by holding dances and other community events.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 62-62.

<sup>144</sup> "Canners Vote \$250 To Spain; \$500 For King," *Western Worker*, September 17, 1936. Earl King, Ernest Ramsay, and Frank Conner were three merchant seamen convicted of murder. Their sentences were later commuted by Governor Culbert Olson and Ernest Ramsay was granted a pardon.

<sup>145</sup> "Canners Collect \$560 For Mooney," *Western Worker*, October 17, 1936.; "2 Meetings Give \$750 to Spain," *Wester Worker*, October 1, 1936. Thomas J. Mooney was an American political activist and labor leader, who was convicted of the San Francisco Preparedness Day Bombing of 1916. Mooney served 22 years in prison before finally being pardoned in 1939.

<sup>146</sup> Chris Friday, *Organizing Asian-American Labor: The Pacific Coast Canned-Salmon Industry, 1870-1942* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1994) 172.

<sup>147</sup> "Union is Holding Dances in Alaska," *Western Worker*, August 5, 1937.

The ACWU was initially chartered with the AFL. However, the union's militant ethos often disagreed with the conservative AFL. The AFL's attitude towards the ACWU was unwelcoming and they even claimed the minority founded union would be unsuccessful "because of their racial composition." In search of a better environment, ACWU set their hopes on the UCAPAW and the CIO. During the regular ACWU member meeting in November 1937 the union voted 40 to 1 to affiliate with the UCAPAW and charter with CIO. "As usual," during that same meeting, the ACWU donated \$25 to the Committee to Boycott Japanese Goods; \$25 to cannery strike in Petersburg, Alaska; \$10 a month to the Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade "until [the] civil war is over in Spain." They also went of record to condemn the "misrepresentation and betrayal of Japanese labor," over Japan's invasion of China.<sup>148</sup> Through the remainder of the war, the ACWU sent delegates to trade union meeting to discuss the war in Spain and sustained an average donation of \$250.00 to the Spanish Loyalists every month.

Other Popular Front labor union that contained large segments of Mexican workers, such UCAPAWA, United Furniture Workers (UFW), and United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of American (UE) passed resolution in support of the Spanish Republic or contributed aid.<sup>149</sup> In March 1937, the Selby branch of the International Union of Mine Mill and Smelters Workers (a union with predominantly Mexican-American members. Also known as "Mine Mill")<sup>150</sup> passed a motion to send a protest to California Senator Hiram Johnson "against the false neutrality legislation which forbids the democratic Spanish government from purchasing

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<sup>148</sup> "Alaska Cannery Workers' Union News," *The Voice of The Federation*, November 18, 1937.

<sup>149</sup> Douglas Monroy, "Fence Cutters, Sedicioso, and First-Class Citizens: Mexican Radicalism in America\*" in Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas, *The Immigrant Left in the United States* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996) 30.

<sup>150</sup> The International Union of Mine Mill and Smelters Workers are best known for the Salt of the Earth strikes during the early 1950s in New Mexico's zinc mines. The 1954 award winning film titled "Salt of the Earth" was based on the events of the strike. See Ellen R. Baker, *On Strike and on Film: Mexican American Families and Blacklisted Filmmakers in Cold War America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).



arms.”<sup>151</sup> A few months later during their annual convention in Denver, Mine Mill voted unanimously to urge President Roosevelt to lift the embargo against the Spanish Republic. They also condemned the Nazi intervention in Spain and called fascism an “ugly octopus aiming to strangle all liberties and democratic rights.”<sup>152</sup> That same month in Contra Costa, a county wide organization was formed to raise funds for Spain. In attendance were representatives from unions with predominantly Mexican workers such as the Cannery Workers Union, Mine Mill, and Mexican Honorary Commission of Richmond, among others.<sup>153</sup>

In April 1939, the inaugural national convention of El Congreso de Pueblos de Habla Española (the Spanish-Speaking People's Congress) was held in downtown Los Angeles. El Congreso represented the first coordinated attempt by Mexican and Latinos of all backgrounds to build a comprehensive and combative fight for labor and civil rights within the nation’s barrios. Unions in the CIO with substantial Mexican membership, such as UCAPAWA, ILWU, Mine Mill, UFWA, and UE were the driving force of El Congreso and formed its core. The staff and members of these unions organized and attended conferences, workshops, community meeting, and rallies. Women comprised 30 percent of total membership in El Congreso and Latina leaders held influential positions.<sup>154</sup>

One of the principle organizers of El Congreso was Luisa Moreno, who cultivated national interest among multiple Spanish speaking communities during her travels across the country in the 1930s. Prior to the formation of El Congreso, Luisa had worked to organize garment workers in New York, agricultural workers in California, tobacco workers in Florida,

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<sup>151</sup> “Smeltermen Hit Embargo Against Spanish Govt,” *Western Worker*, March 4, 1937

<sup>152</sup> “Mine Workers’ convention Asks Lifting of Embargo Against Spanish Republic,” *Wester Worker*, August 19, 1937.

<sup>153</sup> “Contra Costa Aid For Spain Formed,” *Western Worker*, August 26, 1937.

<sup>154</sup> Chacon, 541-543.

cane workers in Louisiana, cotton pickers and pecan-shellers in Texas, and sugar beet workers in Colorado. She also worked as an organizer for UCAPAWA shortly after its formation and was later elected as the union's vice-president. Later in life, Bert Corona described Moreno as "a radical" who in addition to her work in labor, "was a staunch supporter of progressive causes throughout the world, including the struggle of the Republic of Spain against its fascist foes." Moreno and others like her in El Congreso (such as organizer and secretary of the congress, Josefina Fierro, a Mexican born communist with deep roots in Los Angeles), led the convention to vote in support of the Spanish Republic and to condemn the fascist powers behind the Nationalist forces of Francisco Franco during the inaugural convention. Another resolution criticized President Roosevelt's administration for maintaining an embargo against the Spanish Republic and for not protesting the German and Italian intervention.<sup>155</sup>

Various other organizations and societies in California also donated to the Spanish cause. These included those from the Italian and German-American community, who donated liberally to aid the Spanish Loyalist and other labor struggles. Among them were the German Workmen's Sick and Death Benefit Society, the German Freethinkers, and Freidenker Society of German-speaking people. The Anti-Fascist Italian Women's League also donated aid and held demonstrations in front of the Italian embassy in San Francisco.<sup>156</sup> Farm workers from the Russian Mutual Aid Society also donated generously to aid drives.<sup>157</sup> Irish-American members

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<sup>155</sup> Mario T. Garcia, *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 112, 126.

<sup>156</sup> "Aids Anti-Fascists," *Western Worker*, August 13, 1936. "Pacific Coast Tieup Shows Strength," *Voice of the Federation*, August 5, 1937.

<sup>157</sup> "Cal. Russians Aid Spain with \$190," *Western Worker*, March 25, 1937.

of the Knights of the Red Branch in San Francisco held several mass meetings that raised funds for Spain and other union concerns.<sup>158</sup>

Spanish-Americans in California were also involved in pro-Loyalist activities. For example, the Spanish Masonic Lodge regularly donated aid and the San Francisco based Accion Democrata Española sponsored several benefit banquets in the city to raise donations for Spain. These events involved prominent speakers among the Spanish-American community, such as Mrs. Antonia Nieto and Dr. Cesar Ortega, and leaders from the ACWU.<sup>159</sup> The Santa Barbra branch of the Accion Democrata held several dances and parties to raise aid for Spain, which raised \$60.16 the first month; \$129.97 the second; and \$308.35 the third.<sup>160</sup> During that same three month stretch, San Francisco as a whole raised a total of \$11,350.19 minus expenses.<sup>161</sup> In total, Accion Democrata Española raised nearly \$12,000 in aid throughout the war.<sup>162</sup> Also, everyday citizens held leadership positions, such as twenty-three-year-old Spanish-American house wife Elisa Traspuesto who was elected to serve as treasurer for Contra Costa county's aid for Spain organization.<sup>163</sup>

Also, demonstrations, boycotts, and aid drives to support the Chinese war against the Japanese invasion were also organized in California. Everyday civilians across the country refused to buy silk products imported from Japan. Trade unionists affiliated with the AFL and CIO were ordered to boycott all Japanese goods following a vote during their annual

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<sup>158</sup> "Irish Aid to Spain Will Continue," *Western Worker*, May 6, 1937.

<sup>159</sup> "00 Donated So Franco Will Not Pass- No Pasaran," *Western Worker*, January 14, 1937.

<sup>160</sup> "Spanish Aid By Mountain View People," *Western Worker*, March 1, 1937.

<sup>161</sup> "How \$11,350 Was Raised For Spain," *Western Worker*, March 18, 1937.

<sup>162</sup> Smith, Appendix.

<sup>163</sup> "Contra Costa Aid For Spain Formed," *Western Worker*, August 26, 1937.; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population, Population Schedule*, Vol.2 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 67.

conventions.<sup>164</sup> The San Francisco Bay council of The Maritime Federation of the Pacific pushed for a coast wide boycott of handling Japanese goods after maritime workers voted for a Bay area boycott.<sup>165</sup> In Los Angeles, two hundred demonstrators picketed the Japanese consulate and condemned the Japanese invasion in August 1937. That same day, two delegations from the Communist Party and Young Communist League paraded through San Francisco's Chinatown with banners in Chinese and English declaring "Hands of China," on their way to picket the Japanese consulate and present a resolution condemning the war.<sup>166</sup> Chinese-Americans were also active in raising funds to support China's war effort. In San Francisco, the local branch of the National Salvation League (NSL) raised \$10,000 in aid for the "heroic soldiers of Suiyuan Province, China," by January 1937. Across the border, the Mexican branch of the NSL raised \$3,000.<sup>167</sup>

Many organizers involved in Spanish aid activities, though not all, held leftist political views that originated from their experiences during the Great Depression. One such individual was Paula Krotser, a 21 years old living in San Francisco at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. She later professed that her experiences as a witness to the events of the 1934 Waterfront Strike radicalized her political views and changed the course of her life. "I thought all talk of class struggle was nonsense. Until the strike," she recalled. During the strike, Krotser was studying in art school and working as a waitress at a high-end restaurant near the waterfront that catered to wealthy patrons. As a first generation American, Krotser's German parents lived a quiet life and were not politically active and did not influence her. Instead, Krotser's political

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<sup>164</sup> "Rival Labor Groups Unite for Boycott of Japanese Goods," *The San Bernardino Country Sun*, October 17, 1937.

<sup>165</sup> "Thanks From China," "Thumbs Down on Jap Goods Declare MFPC Unions," *The Voice of the Federation*, November 4, 1937.

<sup>166</sup> "Picket Japanese Consulate," *Western Worker*, August 19, 1937.

<sup>167</sup> "S.F. Chinese Raise \$10,000 For Heroic Suiyan Soldiers," *Western Worker*, January 4, 1937.; "San Francisco's Chinese Rally to Aid Homeland," *Western Worker*, August 30, 1937.

awakening originated from her exposure to San Francisco's elites who frequented the restaurant she worked in. "These same nice people who were so polite and loving to me would come in and talk among themselves and to me, saying that the longshoremen ought to be lined up against a wall and machine-gunned," she evoked. "I learned that there really was such a thing as class struggle...and that people needed to organize and defend themselves."<sup>168</sup>

Krotser then joined the Communist Party and worked as an organizer, planning events and fundraisers for various causes. "The biggest accomplishment of that period of my work was a picnic in Marin County at Paradise Cove with hundreds of people coming and the unions participating," she said. "We raised money for...the American League Against War and Fascism. We were, I suppose what were later called, premature anti-fascists." She mentioned that activities in Marin County were "largely confined to education and raising money for the Spanish cause." As the war intensified, the collection of medical aid became the top priority for organizers. "We had some fine money-raising concerts, picnics and activities of that sort in order to send ambulances and medical supplies over there." Spanish doctors were members of the elite and they "hated the International Brigade even more than they hated the republican side," she reflected.<sup>169</sup>

For union members and their families, organizing and attending the various aid events became a fixture in their lives. Goldblatt described this feeling among union members affiliated with the CIO at the time. "The cause dinners and cause dances made up a very large part of our social life," he said. "I think this was true of everybody on the left. There was always something

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<sup>168</sup> Paula Homberger Krotser, *Paula Krotser: A Radical Change: Oral Memoirs from 1934 describing the San Francisco General Strike and Subsequent Membership in the Communist Party Oral History Transcript* (Unpublished, 1986), 3.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18.

going on [in] support for Loyalist Spain during that period; the constant meeting in support of Tom Mooney. PW (The Peoples' World, a Communist newspaper) parties were frequent.” However, for some trade unionists, Goldblatt mentioned, donating aid was not enough. “Some close friends of mine on the waterfront decided to go to Spain. One awfully good guy I had been close to, Jack Egan, he went to Spain; the last they saw of him was when he decided to go after a tank with a hand grenade in each hand; that was the last of him and the tank.” For maritime workers on the waterfronts of the United States, the Spanish Civil War held a much more personal meaning. Not only were maritime workers active in rising aid for the Spanish Loyalist at home, they also formed a large contingent of American volunteers in Spain.<sup>170</sup>

### **The Waterfront Strike of 1934 and the ILWU**

During the Spanish Civil War, American longshoremen and maritime workers were arguably among the most devoted group to support the Spanish Loyalists. At home, maritime workers donated aid to the Spanish Loyalists; they refused to work on German and Italian ships; they refused to sail to Nationalists ports in Spain and picketed the German and Italian consuls. The National Maritime Union passed resolutions condemning the U.S. embargo to Spain and shut down ports coast wide in protest of German and Italian intervention. Abroad, maritime workers formed the largest contingent of American volunteers in Spain and earned distinction as one of the most effective fighting men in combat. Maritime workers commitment to labor activism and international causes was a direct product of their struggle to organize during the 1920s and 1930s.

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 236, 248.

Following the end of World War I, longshoremen on western ports were either unorganized or in company-controlled unions after a series of failed strikes. In San Francisco, one of the largest ports on the Pacific Coast at the time, the Riggers and Stevedores Union (R&S) functioned as one of the most powerful unions in the city at the turn of the century. However, in 1914 employers organized under the Waterfront Employers' Union (WEU) and successfully put down the June-July strike that year organized by the R&S. In September 1919 R&S tried again. However, this time the WEU responded with violence, leading to the death of a striker and the R&S. In December the WEU entered an agreement with the employer created Longshoremen's Association of San Francisco and the Bay District, nicknamed the Blue Book Union after the blue membership books each longshoreman needed to work. The Longshoremen's Association was an entirely company-controlled union with no ties to the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) in New York, the most important longshoremen union in the United States at the time.<sup>171</sup>

Open shop became the standard hiring practice during the 1920s despite the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) efforts to organize longshoremen through their Marine Transport Workers Union. The Communist Party also attempted to organize maritime workers on the West Coast through their own union, the Maritime Workers Industrial Union (MWIU), without much success. Unorganized, longshoremen were forced to grind through the shape-up system and ask for work every morning. At dawn, workers would line up before the straw bosses, who were hired private contractors, and hold up their blue books (which they received after paying dues to the employer run Blue Book Union) and hope to be picked for work that day. Kickbacks to straw

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<sup>171</sup> Kevin Starr, *Endangered Dreams: The Great Depression in California* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 85-86.

bosses in exchange for work selection were common. The humiliation of the shape-up epitomized the rollback of union power that continued after several strikes were violently put down by the employers throughout 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>172</sup>

The absence of a union also left maritime workers vulnerable to racial discrimination from employers. Henry Gaitan, a Mexican-American longshoreman from Local 13 in Los Angeles, recalled instances of worker exploitation by employers and long arduous shifts he was forced to endure prior to the unionization of longshoremen in the West Coast. “I’d worked thirty hours. I was making sixty cents an hour, no overtime,” he reminisced. Gaitan described the disproportionate difficulty Mexican workers had attaining and retaining employment as longshoremen in comparison to their white counterparts. “If you had a nice-looking sister, and liquor, and a wife that would put out, you’d have a job,” he said. Once employed, Mexican longshoremen faced constant racial discrimination by their employer and were banned from certain jobs. “I had a lot of trouble because I was one of the first Mexicans to drive a lift,” he recollected. “At that time the winch drivers had to be Scandinavian or German. As a Mexican, you weren’t allowed on the winch handles.” Also, employers pit different ethnic groups in competition against each other in order to force them to work more diligently or fear being fired. “The company used to hire Italians over here, then a group of Mexicans over here, then a group of something else, and then they’d say, look, those guys can do better than you guys.”<sup>173</sup>

During early unionizing efforts, racial tension existed among maritime workers and the actions of employers fueled the flames further. In the bitter labor wars of 1916 and 1919,

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 86-87.; Todd Chretien, “The Communist Party, the unions, and the San Francisco General Strike,” *International Socialist Review* 84, no. 1 (June, 2012).

<sup>173</sup> Henry Gaitan, June 16, 1988; International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union (ILWU), Local 13 Oral History Project Collection, 1980-19944; Series II; Box 1; Folder 4; Oviatt Library Special Collections and Archives, California State University Northridge, Los Angeles, CA.



employers imported hundreds of African-Americans strikebreakers to the waterfront from Midwestern cities such as New Orleans, Saint Louis, and Kansas City. The presence of black strikebreakers became a major motif of the conflict and attracted retaliatory attacks from white strikers. The defeat of the R&S union, which was exclusive to white members, allowed some African-American maritime workers to keep their jobs after the strikes. Though, only a few were able to find steady work during the open shop era. The Census Bureau recorded only 57 black longshoremen in San Francisco and Oakland in 1930 (compared to 3,375 whites). However, racial equality was pushed towards the forefront by Communist Party members, including those involved in the formation of the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union (ILWU) in 1937, who were determined to end the era of white supremacy. After the formation of the ILWU, the rate of African-Americans employed as longshoremen and warehouse workers on the Pacific Coast increased steadily and by 1947 roughly 11,000 out of 50,000 workers were black.<sup>174</sup>

However, racism towards longshoremen were not confined within the industry. White supremacist groups also terrorize black and immigrant longshoremen and members of the IWW along the Los Angeles waterfront. Frank Sundstedt, a longshoreman from Local 13, remembered “the KKK burning crosses on the hillsides and in front of people’s homes.” Sundstedt recalled that “a number of longshoremen were taken out by the KKK into the Santa Ana Canyon and tarred and feathered just for being trade unionists.” Sundstedt sister was hospitalized for burns and bed ridden for several months after the Klan attacked a social family gathering of IWW members at a home. “They threw pipes and broke the glass at the doors and came in,” he stated.

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<sup>174</sup> Bruce Nelson, *Divided We Stand: American Workers and the Struggle for Black Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 90-96.

“They went into the kitchen and dumped this hot coffee on my sister.... My sister had to learn to walk all over again.”<sup>175</sup>

However, the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act in 1933 encouraged the ILA to open local offices in San Francisco and other ports on the West Coast. Section 7(a) of the Recovery Act granted employees “the right to organize and bargain collectively through the representatives of their own choosing,” and barred employers from requiring workers to join a company union or prohibit workers from joining a union of their choice. Longshoremen flocked to the ILA and discarded their blue books. The Longshoremen’s Association experienced a quick decline as more workers joined the ILA in protest after a series of failed retaliations by the Matson company, the largest employer on the waterfront, which had fired or banned workers who joined the ILA.<sup>176</sup>

The ILA in San Francisco was initially run by a more conservative leadership appointed by the New York office and they favored a policy of accommodation with the employers. However, they did not remain in power long and the ILA shifted to a more militant position in large part due to the influence of the Albion Hall Group (AHG). The AHG, a militant circle of longshoremen with ties to the communist party, gained momentum through their subversive newsletter, the *Waterfront Worker*, which repeatedly pushed for more aggressive action. Following these calls, longshoremen began initiating slowdowns and other job actions along the

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<sup>175</sup> Harvey Schwartz, *Solidarity stories: an oral history of the ILWU* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 64.

<sup>176</sup> "Transcript of National Industrial Recovery Act (1933)." Our Documents - Transcript of National Industrial Recovery Act (1933). Accessed August 01, 2019. <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=66&page=transcript>.

San Francisco waterfront during the summer of 1933. These actions spread among the workers as more longshoremen became encouraged by reports of their success.<sup>177</sup>

The AHG strategic aim was to establish a democratic union structure with an active militant presence on the job. Also, the AHG called for ILA officials to be locally elected from the various docks and serve for no longer than one-year term. This was designed to keep the union in the hands of the workers and prevent the monopolization of power among few influential officials with the frequent rotation of leadership. According to historian Bruce Nelson, the AHG adopted much of the Communist Party's MWIU's program while avoiding its sectarian trappings. The *Waterfront Worker's* organizing campaign for the development activist core groups and essentially informal dock committees were directly influenced by the MWIU.<sup>178</sup>

Conservatives maintained control of the ILA's leadership despite the increasing opposition within the union. Nonetheless, the growing strength of the militant wing of the union was revealed after a radical program calling for a coastwide contract, union-controlled hiring hall, and an industry wide waterfront federation was approved during the union convention in San Francisco in late February 1934. Also, a resolution in support of the Scottsboro Boys and Tom Mooney and against the loading or unloading of any ship flying the Nazi flag was also passed. However, after conservative leaders in the ILA bowed to the so called "gentlemen's agreement" during negotiations, orchestrated by the Roosevelt-appointed mediation board, the ILA's rank and file responded with scalding criticism. The rejection of the deal by union

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<sup>177</sup> Bruce Nelson, *Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990) 123-124.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

members lead to the fall of the conservative leadership within the ILA and set the stage for the pivotal Waterfront Strike of 1934.<sup>179</sup>

On May 9<sup>th</sup> longshoremen all along the West Coast walked off the job. A few days later sailors joined the strike and teamsters refused to handle scab cargo. Except for Los Angeles, all major docks along a 2000-mile coast line were completely shut down, including Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, San Francisco, San Pedro, and San Diego. The strikers demanded a closed shop, a coastwide contract and a union run hiring hall. Employers refused. Early efforts by the Roosevelt administration to broker a deal between the strikers and employers failed and the confrontation quickly deteriorated into violence. Fights broke out between police and strikers on July 3<sup>rd</sup> after 700 policemen attempted to open the port of San Francisco by force. Two days later, a day known as “Bloody Thursday,” violence exploded on a scale “reminiscent of World War battles.” Hand to hand melee erupted along the five-mile waterfront amidst police gun fire and tear gas bombs. One police officer was reported to have emptied his shotgun directly into the crowd before drawing his pistol and discharging it as well. The fighting was so intense that Governor Frank Merriam ordered the mobilization of two thousand national guardsmen to safeguard state-owned property and erect barbed wire near the waterfront. In the end 32 people were shot and hundreds were injured. Two strikers were killed.<sup>180</sup>

Ray Salcido, a Mexican immigrant from Chihuahua, was on the waterfront among the strikers on that fateful day. Before moving to California in the 1920s, Ray had worked in the mines of Arizona as a teenager and had gained first-hand experience in combating strikebreakers during the miner strikes. In San Francisco, his uncle helped him get a job in a lumberyard for

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 128.; Starr, 91.; “2,000 Troops Ordered into Bloody Area” The Daily American July 6, 1934.; San Francisco Chronicle, July 6, 1934.

Patton Blinn Lumber Company on the waterfront. He mentioned that his co-workers in the lumberyard “were mostly Mexicans,” and “they had to work hard there to keep pace.” During the strike he was involved in combating the strikebreakers. “They wanted to start working, so we got sticks. Then the police came. We couldn’t run fast enough because there was too many policemen,” he recalled. He mentioned being with one of the two strikers that were killed that day. “I was with Dick Parker when he was killed. Him and I was together around the tent where they had the strike breakers inside. He said, ‘Ray, I’m shot.’ Then I picked him up and got him out of the tent,” he lamented.<sup>181</sup>

The next day, thousands of strikers, their families, and sympathizers took part in a funeral procession down Market Street in memoriam of the dead strikers. The procession galvanized support for the longshoremen among the citizens of San Francisco and marked the turning point for the general strike that followed. On July 19, the general strike began with 150,000 workers across multiple industries in the Bay Area stopped working. The chief of police labeled the strike as “a dress rehearsal by the Communists towards world revolution,” and arrested several hundreds of strikers. They also raided the offices of various organizations involved in the strike.<sup>182</sup> Among them were the Mexican agricultural workers of the CAWIU who supported the strike. On July 20, police aided by a group of vigilantes raided the CAWIU headquarters, library, and school in Sacramento, and arrested eighteen of the leaders on criminal syndicalism charges.<sup>183</sup>

The general strike demonstrated the strength of unionized labor and encouraged workers in unorganized industries to unionize. After three days the strike ended. For longshoremen the

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<sup>181</sup> Schwartz, 75-76.

<sup>182</sup> “State Reds Mass Forces for New War,” Oakland Tribune August 2, 1934.

<sup>183</sup> Majka and Majka, 86.

end of the strike produced most of their demands regarding hours and wages from employers during arbitration. The demands workers did not win outright were gained through several small strikes and worker stoppages that followed which included winning over the power of the hiring halls. By the summer of 1937, members of the ILA in the Pacific Coast held a referendum and overwhelmingly voted to leave the conservative AFL. Instead, the longshoremen choose to associate with the CIO, whose programs on industrial unionism, opposition to discrimination, and support for minimum wage matched their own views. Most locals in the Pacific Coast left the ILA and founded their own union chartered by the CIO, named the International Longshoremen's and Warehouse Union (ILWU), which took firm root among longshoremen and became one of the nation's strongest unions.<sup>184</sup>

The strong Communist influence in the ILWU's leadership, which included Harry Bridges (a Communist Party member and the first president of the ILWU), steered the union to employ African American and Mexican organizers to launch efforts into the racially segmented warehouse districts, and among the separate clusters of ship-builders, cooks, firemen, fishermen, machinists, and other waterfront workers along the West Coast port cities. As part of the push inland in Los Angeles, the ILWU recruited Mexican organizers to expand into the warehouses in the Mexican barrio. Mexican-American organizers such as Bert Corona and William Trujillo were instrumental in building up the Mexican membership of ILWU Local 1-26 in Los Angeles. In April 1938, at the first annual convention of the ILWU, Local 1-26 reported that its membership had more than doubled in less than a year from 700 to over 1,300 predominantly

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<sup>184</sup> Mike Quin, *The Big Strike* (Olema: Olema Publishing Company, 1949), 173.; Adam Hochschild, *Spain in Our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 9.

Mexican workers. By the end of the decade the number of membership rose again to over 1,500.<sup>185</sup>

### **The Waterfront Goes to War**

During the Spanish Civil War, American maritime workers were swift to organize a response in support of the Spanish Loyalists. The Spanish war came at a time when longshoremen had already been engaged in struggles against oppression at home and abroad for years. At home, dock workers had been involved in a series of violent labor strikes against the oppressive practices of the maritime industry. Simultaneously, the ILA/ILWU had also been active in organizing demonstrations against Nazi Germany, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. For example, in March 1935 more than 4,000 longshoremen and maritime workers shut down the San Francisco waterfront in a half hour stoppage to protest the arrival of the Nazi battle cruiser *Karlsruhe*. Their action was intended to show San Francisco Mayor Angelo "Rossi and William Randolph Hearst that the American working class will tolerate no Hitlers in America." Some of the protesters in pier 37 were disbursed by police during the strike to accommodate the welcoming committee that greeted the Nazi naval officers which included the Mayor and other prominent capitalists in the Bay area.<sup>186</sup>

However, for American maritime workers the war in Spain held a much more personal meaning. They were politicized by the ideological currents of the 1930s in ways that other workers in the United States were not. Longshoreman that worked on large American passenger

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<sup>185</sup> Chacon, 533.

<sup>186</sup> "Rossi Will Welcome Emissaries of the Butcher Hitler," *Western Worker*, March 4, 1935; "S.F. Welcomes Arrival of German Cruiser Karlsruhe," *The Stanford Daily*, March 4, 1935.

ships that sailed to German ports had contact with Nazified German crew members, who warned them to “salute when someone said Heil Hitler,” or risk arrest when they sailed to Germany. Also, during the rank-and-file strikes of 1936 and 1937, which led to the creation of the National Maritime Union, Nazi sympathizers comprised a large element of strikebreakers who kept the vessels sailing during the strikes. When the men returned to the ships, pitch battles erupted between the strikers and scabs. Joe Stack recalled that when he returned to his vessel on the Hamburg run, the “out and out Nazis” attacked them with baseball bats, hammers, and other weapons, sending nineteen men to the infirmary.<sup>187</sup>

At sea, sailors that worked onboard American ships that sailed to German ports experienced fascisms first hand. William Gill, an American seaman, was beaten and imprisoned for several days after whistling the “Internationale” and making derogatory remarks about Hitler while returning to his ship after a night of drinking in Hamburg. Another American sailor, Lawrence Simpson, suffered a worse fate. While docked in Hamburg harbor, Simpson was arrested after “a Nazi agent visited the ship,” the U.S. liner *Manhattan*, and discovered a letter in his locker that described Nazism as inferior and called Hitler “a madman.” A German court convicted Simpson of being a communist and sentence him to hard labor in a concentration camp. The U.S. State Department refused to respond to the case even though Simpson was detained on an American ship, which is considered U.S. territory.<sup>188</sup> Instead, his fellow union members were left to protest on their own and take diplomatic action themselves. For example, in San Francisco, were forty members of the Sailor Union of the Pacific visited German Consul

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<sup>187</sup> Nelson, 29-30.

<sup>188</sup> “Nazi Farce ‘Trail’ Railroads Simpson,” *Western Worker*, October 1, 1936.



August Ponscha and “demanded the release of Lawrence Simpson,” to no avail.<sup>189</sup> Seamen held work stoppages to protest the lack of action from the State Department.<sup>190</sup>

Simpson’s release came after eighteen months of imprisonment, and thousands of postcards and resolutions were sent to the German embassy in Washington D.C.<sup>191</sup> Maritime union newspapers highly publicized his case in the United States and contributed to the fuming tension among maritime workers. This tension boiled over into the raid on the German liner *Bremen* docked in New York City harbor in July 1935. In Boston Tea Party style, a group of American sailors infiltrated the vessel and cut loose the Nazi flag off the bow and hurled it into the Hudson while the ship was filled with hundreds of people attending a party, which included members of the Morgan and Rockefeller dynasties, President Roosevelt’s granddaughter, and Hollywood elites.<sup>192</sup>

After the outbreak of war in Spain, maritime workers continued the struggle they had been waging against totalitarianism. Early demonstrations against the Nazi intervention in Spain were organized on a local level, some of which were put down by police. Such as in San Francisco, where six maritime workers were arrested, put on trial, and sentenced to 25 days in prison for picketing the German consulate in January 1937.<sup>193</sup> On board ships, crew members donated money to aid the Spanish Loyalists and the Abraham Lincoln Brigade throughout the war. On one ship, the S.S. *President Pierce*, 24 sailors (six of which had Spanish surnames) donated an average of a dollar each and expressed “solidarity for our union brothers fighting in

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<sup>189</sup> “*Sailors Visit Nazi Consul for Simpson*,” *Western Worker*, August 10, 1936.

<sup>190</sup> “*Protest Simpson Case*,” *The Voice of the Federation*, October 1, 1936.

<sup>191</sup> “*Simpson Returns*,” *Western Worker*, January 4, 1937

<sup>192</sup> Nelson, 29.; *Green Bay Press-Gazette* September 19, 1936.; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* September 26, 1936.; “*Sentence Pickets TO 25 Day Terms*,” *Western Worker*, March 29, 1937.

<sup>193</sup> “*10 Jailed As Spain Pickets*,” *Western Worker*, January 14, 1937.; “*Anti-Nazi Pickets On Trial March 9*,” *Western Worker*, March 8, 1937.

Spain, and the noble cause of democracy which they are so valiantly defending.” They also claimed to be “fighting for the same principles daily aboard ships and believe that the Fascist world offensive must be stopped.”<sup>194</sup> In June 1937, the National Maritime Union (NMU) fell in line with their union members and voted to organize the nation’s waterfronts in support of the Spanish Republic through coordinated demonstrations and aid drives for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. The NMU also called for the lifting of the U.S. embargo on the Spanish government.<sup>195</sup> These actions by the NWU came in light of the numerous news reports of American maritime workers who traveled to Europe and volunteered to defend the Spanish Republic in the early days of the war. Their stories became well known among union members on the waterfronts through maritime newspapers such as, *The Voice of the Federation* (published by the Maritime Federation of the Pacific Coast), which published stories and letters from the American volunteers in combat or the medical services in Spain regularly.

On the afternoon of August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1937, maritime workers on the Pacific Coast demonstrated their most significant show of solidarity with the Spanish Loyalists. At approximately 2 p.m., an estimated 30,000 maritime workers of the Maritime Federation of the Pacific stopped work for half an hour all along the Pacific Coast from San Diego to Canada, while the remaining 10,000 members of the federation were at sea. The third annual Maritime Federation Convention organized the strike to “show the world that they protest the invasion of Spain by Hitler and Mussolini, and prove the solidarity of the maritime workers with the underground trade unionist in fascist counties.”<sup>196</sup> The teamsters also stopped their trucks on the

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<sup>194</sup> “Funds For Democracy,” *The Voice of the Federation*, July 21, 1938. Six of the twenty-four men had Spanish surnames.

<sup>195</sup> “N.W.U. Behind Move to Help Spanish Army,” *The Voice of the Federation*, June 17, 1937.

<sup>196</sup> “40,000 In West Act As A Unit To Aid Spain,” *Western Worker* August 2, 1937.

waterfront and joined the picket lines on the piers. In San Francisco, 10,000 longshoremen stopped working while a delegation of a hundred maritime workers picketed the German consulate and filed a resolution in protest of Nazi intervention in Spain. Members of the Anti-Fascist Italian Women's League dressed in black paraded in front of the Italian consulate with a sign reading: "We mourn the loss of the Spanish children killed by Fascist Italian bombs."<sup>197</sup>

During their fourth annual convention on June 17, 1938, the Maritime Federation of the Pacific Coast passed Resolution No. 65. It stated that the Federation believes "the effect of the embargo against Spain has been to injure the established people's government of a friendly nation, to weaken the authority of international law, to aid fascist insurrection and to assist foreign aggression by the International Fascist bloc in Spain." The Federation then declared the lifting of the embargo to be "essential to the achievement of world peace," and demanded the "immediate revocation of the embargo against the duly elected democratic government of the Republic of Spain."<sup>198</sup> In July, at the annual commemoration of the lives lost during the 1934 Waterfront Strike, vice-president Revels Cayton of District Council No. 2 memorialized the lives lost on Bloody Thursday along with "those other brothers from the ranks of maritime labor who have given up their lives that Democracy may live in Spain."<sup>199</sup>

In Spain, longshoremen constituted a sizable contingent of the American volunteers of Abraham Lincoln Brigade (XV International Brigade). Among the thousands of volunteers, two hundred and fifty maritime workers were recruited from the New York waterfront alone and

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<sup>197</sup> "Maritime Fed in Solidarity Act For Spain," *Western Worker* August 5, 1937.; "Pacific Coast Tieup Shows Strength," *The Voice of the Federation*, August 5, 1937.

<sup>198</sup> "Federation Resolutions," *The Voice of the Federation*, August 25, 1938.

<sup>199</sup> "Fittingly We Commemorate Dead By Fighting For Unity, Cayton Tells Rank and File," *The Voice of the Federation*, July 7, 1938.

another three hundred from other port cities.<sup>200</sup> Among the most notable was Billy Bailey, the man who ripped the Nazi flag off the German streamliner *Bremen* while it was docked in New York Harbor. In Spain, during the Battle of Belchite, he captured a red and yellow fascist banner and sent it to the Maritime Federation of the Pacific in San Francisco.<sup>201</sup>

Pacific Coast longshoremen were among the first Americans to arrive in Spain. Initially, the maritime workers christened the second American battalion, the Tom Mooney Battalion, named after the militant working-class leader in San Francisco. However, the unit was renamed, the George Washington Battalion, after the Communist Party in New York claimed the name was too provocative. But the longshoremen did succeed in naming their machine-gun company, the Tom Mooney Company. The company became one of the most effective units in the American brigade. Abraham Neufeldt, a machine-gunner in the Tom Mooney Company and member of the Alaska Cannery Workers Union, wrote a letter to the ACWU where he mentioned that his unit had “a very large representation of fighters against fascism from the Maritime Federation, especially from San Francisco.” He went on to mention that his decision to go to war did not come lightly. His motivations were well thought through and constructed by his readings of “Thomas Pain, Ingersoll, Jack London, Debs,” as well as Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, and Joseph Stalin. Also, he described the main motivations of the volunteers were “not only to save Spanish democracy, but to crush fascism and capitalism,” and “for the establishment of proletarian democracy.”<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Roy B. Hudson, *True Americans: A Tribute to American Maritime Workers Who Fought for World Democracy in the Trenches of Spain* (New York: Waterfront Section Communist Party of New York, 1939), 8-11.

<sup>201</sup> “Bill Bailey,” *The Volunteer*, Spring 1995.

<sup>202</sup> “Tom Mooney Battalion Formed by S.F. Men Who Are Fighting For Spain,” *Voice of the Federation*, June 10, 1937.; Hochschild, 135.

Hispanic maritime workers were also active in pro-Loyalist activities on the waterfront and among the volunteers in Spain. In San Francisco, maritime worker and member of the Ship Scalers Union, Pete Garcia, gave speeches in support of the Spanish Republic during rallies organized by the S.F. Peninsula branch of the American League Against War and Fascism.<sup>203</sup> In Los Angeles, Mexican-American maritime worker Henry Gaitan claimed that the fishermen that recruited him into the ILA, Manuel Lopez, “belonged to a Spanish group in Wilmington,” which was involved in organizing volunteers for “the Abraham Lincoln Brigade that fought in Spain.”<sup>204</sup> ILWU Mexican-American leader Bert Corona recalled going to “forums in support of Republican Spain, against Hitler, on Latin America, and on defending Jews in Nazi Germany,” during what he described as his “political education,” in the late 1930s. He mentioned that various organizations sponsored these forums and that “the Committee in Support of Republican Spain received support from many ethnic groups,” with the largest support coming from the Communist Party and Socialist Party.<sup>205</sup>

Nick Ramirez, a Mexican-American maritime worker, was among those involved in organizing pro-Loyalists activities in Los Angeles before leaving for Spain and fighting in the International Brigades. “We were very good friends,” Corona stated. He mentioned that Ramirez was a “Communist” who was raised by a radical leftist father that named him Nicolas Lenin Ramirez. Before going to Spain, “Nick had been active in labor struggles in southern California,” and was on “friendly terms with older radicals such as Ethel Duffy-Turner, Alma Reed, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and earlier adherents of the cause of Ricardo Flores Magón.” Ramirez did not join the American volunteers of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, instead he traveled to Spain via

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<sup>203</sup> “Mass Meeting,” *Western Worker*, September 17, 1936.

<sup>204</sup> Schwartz, 76.

<sup>205</sup> Garcia, 94.

Mexico and joined the Benito Juarez Brigade, which was comprised of Mexican nationals. After returning to the United States, Ramirez had a difficult time adjusting back to civilian life. “When he returned from Spain, he was a very sick person. He tried to work on the docks, but his illness prevented him from doing so. He later died in northern California,” Corona lamented.<sup>206</sup>

Hispanic maritime workers from ports outside of California also found their way to Spain. Such as Edward Pacheco, a Mexican-American who was born in Houston. He served in the medical services in Spain and was a member of the National Maritime Union. He resided in Brooklyn and worked on the New York waterfront before departing for Europe in July 1937. In Spain, Pacheco served in the 45<sup>th</sup> International Division as an ambulance driver during the Zaragoza offensive and the Battle of the Ebro.<sup>207</sup> Another volunteer, Julius Rodriguez, was a black Latin from Tampa who worked as a fireman in the west coast and was a member of the Communist Party.<sup>208</sup> His fluency in Spanish elevated him to attend Officers’ Training School in Spain between May and June 1937. He served as an officer in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and fought in the Brunete Campaign before leaving the front lines to work as an ambulance driver. He was among the last Americans to leave Spain and returned to the United States in February 1939. During World War II he worked as a Civilian Defense Worker in the Kaiser Shipyards in Portland, where he led African-American shipyard workers.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>207</sup> Galveston Daily News, December 04, 1986.

<sup>208</sup> Julius Rodriguez’s racial background remains unknown. All that is know is that he was born in Tampa Florida on July 4, 1909. Also, he was fluent in Spanish and believed to be of African descent, possibly Afro-Cuban.

<sup>209</sup> Hudson, 13. Chris Brooks, “Julius Rodriguez Biography,” ALBA-VALB.org. <http://www.alba-valb.org/volunteers/julius-rodriguez> (accessed August 25, 2019).

## CHAPTER 3.

### THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN PRESS AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

During the Spanish Civil War, the Mexican-American press in the Southwest stood apart from their Spanish language counterparts on the East Coast. Unlike the Tampa based *La Gaceta* or New York's *La Prensa* and *La Voz*, the Mexican exiled press was much more conservative and church-oriented. During the Spanish conflict, the Mexican expatriated press overwhelmingly leaned in favor of the Spanish Nationalists and was critical of Mexico's involvement in the Spanish Civil War. The circumstances surrounding the stark difference between the Mexican exiled press and other Spanish language immigrant publications in the Eastern Seaboard are derived from the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

In the years leading to the Mexican Revolution, the Mexican expatriated press in the United States was a liberal institution enmeshed in revolutionary ideas. During the regime of Mexican President Porfirio Díaz, the open border between the U.S. and Mexico allowed the revolutionary press to seek refuge in the relative safety of the United States. Liberal writers and editors that were forced into exile for their opposition to the Díaz regime resettle and published in the Mexican-American communities north of the border. Between 1885 and 1910, several Mexican publications were launched in the American Southwest and smuggled into Mexico. Such publications included Adolfo Carrillo's *La República* in San Francisco, General Ignacio

Martinez's *El Mundo* in Brownsville, Paulino Martinez's *El Monitor Democrático* in San Antonio, *La Voz de Juarez* and *El Chinaco* in Laredo.<sup>210</sup>

However, the most prominent and radical publication was *Regeneración* by Ricardo Flores Magón. Ricardo Magón, along with his brothers Enrique and Jesus, was among the most influential figures to create social change in Mexico during the revolutionary movement. In the United States, Magón founded the Partido Liberal Mexicano (Mexican Liberal Party, PLM), dedicated to proletarian social justice, and established chapters across the Southwest. Through their publications in Los Angeles, *Regeneración*, and *Revolución*, Magón downplayed nationalism and emphasized multi-national and ethnic working-class solidarity in the struggle against capitalism. Their view was that Mexicans were leading the way for the liberation of the working class in the United States through their fight against political tyranny and capitalism in Mexico. In Los Angeles, *Regeneración* publicized rallies and labor conferences under the theme of Mexican, Mexican-American, and Anglo-American working class.<sup>211</sup>

The influence of *Regeneración* echoed in other Mexican expatriated newspapers in the Southwest, such as *La Bandera Roja*, *El Democrata*, *El Liberal*, and others. Some publications, like *El Obrero* (1909), *La Voz de la Mujer* (1907), and *Pluma Roja* (1913-1915), not only articulated the revolutionary cause but also emphasized a greater focus on gender issues and the emancipation of women. For example, after being expelled from Mexico in 1912 by President Francisco Madero, Blanca de Moncaleanos founded *Pluma Roja* in Los Angeles, which positioned women's liberation as central to any social change. The paper's anarchist program called for the full emancipation of women from three oppressors: the state, religion, and capital.

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<sup>210</sup>Richard Griswold del Castillo, "The Mexican Revolution and the Spanish Language Press in the Borderlands," *Journalism History* 4.2 (Summer 1977), 42, 46.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*



Moncaleanos was also critical of any man in the revolutionary movement who was not conscious of their suppression of women.<sup>212</sup>

By the 1930s, the revolution was over, and Magón was dead from circumstantial reasons during his incarceration in an American prison. The Mexican revolutionary press in the Southwest had dwindled or returned to post-revolutionary Mexico. However, the fall of the Diez regime did not mark the end of the Mexican origin press in the United States. Between 1900 and 1930, one million Mexicans crossed the border into the United States. Many of these were war refugees and political exiles from both the Mexican Revolution and the Cristero War that followed. Among them were Mexican conservatives who had been dislodged by the socialist revolution and resettled in the United States. They arrived in the Southwest with resources in hand and opened businesses. The journalists and writers among them established the Mexican exiled press that replaced their pre-revolutionary counterparts. The two major differences between the pre and post-revolutionary expatriated newspapers were that the latter was much more conservative and held a strong sense of nationalism.<sup>213</sup>

In Texas, the Mexican exiled press rejected the internationalist views of *Regeneración* and the ideas of Ricardo Flores Magón in favor of promoting Mexican heritage and championing la raza Mexicana. However, the sense of nationalism differed between publications on a class basis. Newspapers such as the Brownsville based *El Cronista* (1924-1930), El Paso's *La Buena Prensa* (1923), and Houston's *Gaceta Mexicana* (1927-1928), favored the Indianism unleashed by the Mexican Revolution and praised Mexico's Aztec heritage.<sup>214</sup> They became the backbone

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<sup>212</sup> Nocolas Hanellos and Martell Helvetia, *Hispanic Periodicals in the United States, Origins to 1960: A brief History and Comprehensive Bibliography* (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2000), 24.

<sup>213</sup> Roberto R. Teviño, "Prensa y Patria: The Spanish-Language Press and the Biculturalization of the Tejano Middle Class, 1920-1940," *Western Historical Quarterly* 4 (November, 1991), 454.

<sup>214</sup> Teviño, 456.

of the immigrant rather than the exile and tailored their message to the rapidly expanding lower-class economic refugees. Though, many of these publications were short-lived. Other publications represented the exiled *inteligencia* from the Mexican upper-class. They represented a version of Mexican nationalism based on European elitism associated with the Porfirio Diaz regime. One of the most prominent of these elitist newspapers (as well as the most successful exile newspaper in Texas) was the San Antonio based *La Prensa* (1913-1959), founded by Ignacio E. Lozano.

*La Prensa*, like other exiled publications in the borderlands, rejected the internationalist views of *Regeneración* in favor of Mexican nationalism. However, the Mexicanismo that *La Prensa* cultivated was immersed in elitist notions of Spanish cultural heritage. Lozano, who came from an upper-middle-class background in Northern Mexico, steered *La Prensa* to represent the voice of *los ricos*, the elite upper-class Mexican refugees who settled in the Southwest. According to Lozano, *La Prensa* sought to be “absolutely free” of any political faction and reported on both Mexican and international news.<sup>215</sup>

Strategically, Lozano chose to deviate from the conceptual working of the local community press, which served the long standing San Antonio Mexican-American community. Instead, he aimed his publication at a wider Spanish readership throughout the Southwest. Each issue of *La Prensa* was loaded onto freight cars and distributed by rail to other Southwestern cities and border communities in Northern Mexico. *La Prensa* enjoyed wide circulation and peaked at over 32,000 in 1930, well surpassing its competitor *El Imparcial* (1917-1921) max circulation of 9,500.<sup>216</sup> Riding on the success of his San Antonio paper and hoping to capitalize

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<sup>215</sup> “A la Prensa, a nuestros amigos y al publico,” *La Prensa*, February 13, 1913.

<sup>216</sup> Onofre di Stefano, “ ‘Venimos a luchar’: A Brief History of *la Prensa*’s Founding,” *Aztlan* 16 (Numbers 1 and 2, 1987): 105.

on the influx of Mexican immigration to California, Lozano started another publication in Los Angeles called *La Opinion* (1926-present). Lozano's entrepreneurial inclination was correct, and *La Opinion* went on to surpass *La Prensa*, which ceased operation in 1959, and to this day, remains one of the most widely read Spanish-language newspapers in the United States.

However, despite Lozano's nonalignment with political parties, his publication reflected the conservative and anti-revolutionary sentiments of the expelled Mexican elite.<sup>217</sup> Also, Lozano, like other elitists, believed that by giving more land and rights to the working classes, the revolution had been "the ruin of Mexico, the ruin of industry," and the cause of massive poverty. Through *La Prensa* and *La Opinion*, the Mexican exiled elites played the role of a shadow government. In editorials and articles, they criticized, dictated, and proposed policy for Mexico, while they presented the image of great men in exile and the eventual saviors of Mexico.<sup>218</sup>

### **The Mexican Exile Press on the Spanish Civil War**

During the 1930s, *La Opinion* and *La Prensa*, along with other conservative publications in Mexico, repeatedly criticized the domestic and foreign policies of President Lázaro Cárdenas, ranging from agrarian reform to the support of the Spanish Republic.<sup>219</sup> During the Spanish Civil War, Mexico and the Soviet Union were the only countries that supported the democratically elected government of Spain. Along with political and diplomatic support, Mexico supplied the Spanish Republic with \$2,000,000 in aid and material, including small arms and a few

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<sup>217</sup> Teviño, 455.

<sup>218</sup> Quoted in Teviño, 456.

<sup>219</sup> "Justificada Protesta," *La Prensa* April 30, 1937.

aircrafts.<sup>220</sup> President Cardenas undertook this action in light of the failure of the Non-Intervention Committee to prevent the direct flow of arms, supplies, and thousands of soldiers from the German and Italian military to the Spanish Nationalists.<sup>221</sup> However, Mexican society over the Spanish Civil War was divisive. Mexico's working-class and leftwing intellectuals were supportive of the Spanish Republic, while the conservative elite class and the Catholic Church favored the Nationalists.<sup>222</sup>

Pro-Loyalists Mexican workers showed their support through rallies, aid donations, letters of moral support, and military volunteers who traveled to Spain to defend the Republic. Workers unions, such as the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM), organized strikes against Mexican businesses that supported Nationalist General Francisco Franco.<sup>223</sup> The Spanish Republic's Ambassador to Mexico, Félix Gordón Ordás, confirmed that Mexico's pro-Republican activists came from, "workers and peasants, intellectuals of the left, members of the PNR... Masons, the Veterans of the Revolution organization, public functionaries supporting President Cardenas's policies, and ... teachers."<sup>224</sup> Mexico's rural population who supported the Republic managed modest efforts but with the deepest sincerity. For example, in the villages of

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<sup>220</sup> Gabriel Jackson, *The Spanish republic and the Civil War 1931-1939* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), 260.

<sup>221</sup> The Non-Intervention Committee consisted of ambassadors from over two dozen European countries except Switzerland. Important members included France, England, Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and the Soviet Union. The committee sought to control the war by barring the sale of arms and supplies to both factions. The United States did not sign the agreement, instead the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt adopted a policy of non-intervention and placed an embargo on Spain. However, Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union intervened in the Spanish Civil War unhindered. See Antony Beevor, *The Battle for Spain: The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).

<sup>222</sup> Mexicans who approved of President Lazaro Cardenas effort to aid the Spanish government included those who gravitated toward the nation's two liberal political parties: the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (National Revolutionary Party, PNR) and the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (Confederation of Mexican Workers party, CMT).

<sup>223</sup> "Huelga Contra Españoles En Mexico," *La Prensa*, November 4, 1936.

<sup>224</sup> Félix Gordón Ordás, *Mi Política Fuera de España* (Mexico: Talleres Graficos Victoria, 1965), 488.

Yztzacapa and Teltapa in the state of Hidalgo, residents collected and sent a modest sum of donations, accompanied by a letter offering a “fraternal salute” to the “noble combatants” of the Republic.<sup>225</sup>

On the other side of the political divide, Mexican conservative elites attempted to sway public opinion against the Spanish Republic through propaganda. One conservative group, the *Grupo Monterrey* (founded by business leaders in Monterrey), subsidized the distribution of pro-Nationalist and anti-Cardenista propaganda through pamphlets, newspaper articles, and radio broadcasts. Another conservative organization, COPARMEX (Confederacion Patronal de la Republica Mexicana), an employers association, distributed pro-Nationalist pamphlets in factories floors titled: “Communist Atrocities in Spain,” “Bolshevism: Public Enemy Number One,” and “Basic Anti-Communist Manuel.”<sup>226</sup>

In Mexico, liberal newspapers expressed their support of the Spanish Loyalists. For example, an editorial from the Mexico City newspaper *El Popular*, argued for the relevance of the conflict in Spain to the Mexican worker, by comparing the conflict with Mexico’s recent history. *El Popular* stated: “In the Spanish latifundium, in the clergy, in capitalism, in the traitorous military rabble, Mexican workers are seeing a repetition of the Mexican Revolution’s experience... The Mexican people are witnessing in the Spanish war their civil war of 1910-1917. Fortunately, during our Revolution, foreign intervention was minimal... Mexican workers are deeply concerned about the fate of the Spanish workers... Triumph of the Spanish Revolution will signify a new manner of struggle and progress for the Ibero-American nations; a step closer for all toward the realization of a better society. Its defeat, however, will be our

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<sup>225</sup> T.G. Powell, *Mexico and the Spanish Civil War* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1981), 125.

<sup>226</sup> Mario Revah, *México y la Guerra Civil Española* (Madrid: Turner Publicaciones, 2004), 250-252.

defeat, through a strengthening of fascism and its threat to the democratic countries.”<sup>227</sup> The Puebla newspaper, *El Diario de Puebla*, praised the Cardenas government efforts in defending the Republicans position to the International Community in the League of Nations by stating “In these chilling moments of international politics, it is well that Mexico persists in pointing out errors and condemning injustices so that the truth historically sustained by this nation endures in the world.”<sup>228</sup>

The two most conservative newspapers in Mexico City, *El Excelsior* and *El Universal*, leaned towards the Spanish Nationalist and took opportunities to criticize the Spain Republic on issues concerning Mexican politics at that time. For instance, in late January 1938, *El Universal* published an editorial on the “collectivist failure” of Catalonia’s industrial and agriculture economy. Blaming Catalonia’s failed industrial economy on lower worker wages and time wasted on “useless meetings,” and the failures of Catalonia’s agricultural economy to “the land, belonging to nobody, nobody works it.” The editorial continued by stating, “order and common sense” must prevail over “the empty rhetoric of myopic ideologies and opportunistic agitators” as “a body cannot govern itself without a head.”<sup>229</sup> Other conservative newspapers in Mexico, such as *El Provenir* in Monterrey, frequently published pro-Nationalist articles that read: “The Anarchists and the Communist Terror of Red Spain.”<sup>230</sup> *El Diario de Yucatan* newspaper also treated its readers with similar articles titled: “The Reds are Paying with Their Lives for Their Terrible Crimes.”<sup>231</sup> One conservative newspaper in Veracruz, *El Dictamen*, went beyond the usual publication of pro-Franco articles. The owner of the publication, Juan Malpica Silba, was

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<sup>227</sup> El Popular, July 19, 1938.

<sup>228</sup> El Diario de Puebla, October 11, 1937

<sup>229</sup> El Universal, January 31, 1938

<sup>230</sup> El Provenir, January 10, 1938

<sup>231</sup> El Diario de Yucatan, November 4, 1939

discovered to have assisted the Italian consul in Veracruz by photographing airplanes headed to the Spanish government.<sup>232</sup>

In the United States, the Spanish language press was also divided on the Spanish Civil War. The three most prominent Spanish language newspapers in the East Coast, *La Gaceta* in Tampa, *La Voz*, and *La Prensa* in New York, were pro-Loyalist. During the Spanish Civil War, no other city outmatched New York's material and political support for the Spanish Loyalists. New York housed almost all the headquarters of pro-Loyalist relief aid organizations. The city's two Spanish language daily newspaper, *La Voz* and *La Prensa*, represented the voice of the homogeneous "hispano" community in the city, comprised of Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Spaniards, Mexicans, and other Latin Americans. As we have seen in Chapter 1 of this paper, New York's "hispano" community was decisively pro-Loyalists, and their Spanish language press reflected this and regularly advertised aid drives and fundraising events. In Tampa, the trilingual publication *La Gaceta* represented the voice of the Spanish speaking "Latin" community comprised of working-class immigrants from Cuba, Spain, and Italy. Tampa's Latinos were also devotedly pro-Loyalist. *La Gaceta* regularly published pro-Loyalist articles and advertised community fundraisers to support the Spanish government.

In the Southwest, Lozano's *La Prensa* in San Antonio and *La Opinion* in Los Angeles were the two most prominent Spanish language newspapers. In contrast to the Spanish language press in the Eastern Seaboard, Lozano's publications did not represent the opinion of the working class Mexican immigrant and Mexican-American communities in the Southwest who favored the Spanish Loyalists, see chapter 2. Instead, *La Prensa* and *La Opinion* represented the

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<sup>232</sup> Powell, 142.

conservative voice of the Mexican exiled elite. They sided with Mexican conservative newspapers in condemning President Lazaro Cardenas' support of the Spanish government and leaned in favor of the Spanish Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War. Throughout the conflict, Lozano's dual publication reported extensively on the conflict. Consequently, after a few weeks into the war, the short-lived Spanish-language newspaper in San Diego, Texas, *La Voz*, criticized *La Prensa* over their "grandiose" and "extensive" reporting on a conflict "so distant" from the everyday concerns of Tejanos. *La Voz* did not report extensively on the war in Spain during its one year run in 1936; instead, it focused on local and national news from Mexico and the United States.<sup>233</sup>

However, despite the decision of *La Voz* to ignore the conflict in Europe, the paper did briefly express their opinion on the cause of the conflict. Like other Mexican expatriated newspapers in the Southwest, *La Voz* squarely blamed the Republic for agitating the Nationalist uprising into existence. *La Voz* stated that "the rebellion in Spain...come from the communist proclamations, which have blinded the proletarian class against the bourgeois...the workers searching for an equal utopia by force, does nothing but labor towards their ruin." Other Spanish-language newspapers in the Southwest held a more favorable view of the Loyalist, such as *El Heraldo de Brownsville*. However, no other Spanish-language publication out circulated *La Prensa* and *La Opinion* in the Southwest.<sup>234</sup>

*La Opinion* and *La Prensa* were not pro-war publications, and they condemned the foreign intervention on both the Republic and Nationalist side for prolonging the war on several

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<sup>233</sup> *La Voz*, July 31, 1936

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*



occasions.<sup>235</sup> However, the publication's call for peace was often for one that favored the Nationalists. For instance, in September 1936, an editorial in *La Opinion* criticized the Cardenas administration after Mexico rejected the call from the Republic of Uruguay for Pan-American mediation in the Spanish conflict. *La Opinion* stated: "The Mexican Foreign Ministry... considers the mediation of American countries in the Spanish conflict to be an interventionist act and ignores the recent sending of arms [by Mexico] to the government of President Azaña. Consider the humanitarian purpose of ending a bloody civil war to be undue intervention, and refrains from qualifying the ministering of the elements destined to give new impetus to the killing."<sup>236</sup> What *La Opinion* ignored in the editorial is that the major Latin American governments, such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Peru, openly sympathized with the Nationalists, and any mediation that involved these countries would have been skewed towards Franco.

Both publications often criticized the Cardenas administration for supporting the Spanish Loyalist politically and militarily. For instance, in June 1937, an editorial in *La Opinion* compared Great Britain's response to the Spanish Civil War with that of Mexico. The editorial praised the British government over how they handled the war. *La Opinion* stated when the conflict erupted, the British "put all its sympathies on the side of the government of Don Manuel Azaña. But no more than her sympathy, because she never compromises. Shortly after, when the struggle entered a period of uncertainty, England devised the so-called 'neutrality pact,' which allowed it to escape the cordiality that had been dispensing the men of Valencia," and still maintain favorable relations with Germany and Italy. Meanwhile, *La Opinion* criticized the Cardenas administration's political support for the Spanish Republic, the sale of weapons, and

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<sup>235</sup>See "Palabras De Paz Y Propositos De Guerra," *La Opinion* January 2, 1937; "Quienes Son Los Mercenarios," *La Opinion*, April 1, 1937.

<sup>236</sup>"La No Intervencion Mexicana," *La Opinion* September 3, 1936.

the acceptance of “five hundred children of red soldiers” in Mexico.<sup>237</sup> *La Opinion* argued: “Our country has no power to say whether the governments of other countries are legitimate or not. The only thing that corresponds is to deal with the constituted governments, leaving the citizens of each country the task of qualifying them.”<sup>238</sup>

During the conflict, reports of the war by *La Prensa* and *La Opinion* often leaned in favor of the Nationalists. For example, during the Battle of Madrid in November 1936, *La Prensa* reported biased headlines that read: “A Brilliant Maneuver by the Fascists,” and “The Fascists Will Make It More Effective.”<sup>239</sup> However, biased reports that favored the Nationalists became more apparent during the bombing of Guernica in April 1937. Between April 27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, several newspapers across the United States published the harrowing details of the bombing of Guernica by the German Luftwaffe. Frontpage headlines read, “Worst Air Raid of Spanish War,” “Hundreds of Civilians Die In Plane Machine-Gun Fire,” “Historic Basque Town Wiped Out.”<sup>240</sup> Even though *La Opinion* and *La Prensa* relied on the same war correspondence from the United Press and the Associated Press, like other American newspapers, their reports on the bombing during the same period was more subtle with a greater focus on the Nationalist’s advancements. For example, headlines from *La Opinion* and *La Prensa* read: “Eibar, Captured by Mola: Panic in the city of Bilbao,” “Mola’s Triumphal March: The Basques Abandon their posts,” “The Army of Mola nears Bilbao: The Basques Flee in Disarray.”<sup>241</sup> In comparison, *La Prensa* in New

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<sup>237</sup> *La Opinion* was referring to roughly 500 refugee children who were popularly known as “Los Niños de Morelia.” They were among the first Spanish Exiles to arrive in Mexico.

<sup>238</sup> “La Toma de Bilbao,” *La Opinion*, June 22, 1937.

<sup>239</sup> “Una Brillante Maniobra De Los Fascistas,” *La Prensa*, November 3, 1936.; “Lo Haran Mas Efectivo Los Fascistas,” *La Prensa*, November 6, 1936.

<sup>240</sup> *The Times* April 27, 1937; *Albany Evening News* April 27, 1937;; *The Times News* April 28, 1937; *The New York Times* April 28, 1937.

<sup>241</sup> “Eibar, Captured by Mola: Panic in the city of Bilbao,” *La Opinion* April 27, 1937.; “Mola’s Triumphal March: The Basques Abandon their posts,” *La Opinion*, April 28<sup>th</sup> 1937.; “The Army of Mola nears Bilbao: The Basques Flee in Disarray,” *La Prensa*, April 28<sup>th</sup> 1937.

York directly focused their reporting on the bombing of civilians. For example, on April 28<sup>th</sup> New York's *La Prensa*'s top headline was "Guernica burns; 800 dead: insurgent planes cause horrific ravages."<sup>242</sup>

Early reports of the bombing throughout the press were not comprehensive. However, after a few days more became known of the attack, and the American English language press began to print more detailed accounts. For example, three days after the event, the *Los Angeles Times* confirmed that the bombardment was carried out by "German planes and aviators" and published a detailed front-page report with the eye witness accounts, such as the testimony of the Canon of Valladolid, Alberto Onaindia, who rightfully claimed, "the rebels lied when they said they were not responsible for the bombardment." However, Lozano's newspapers did not report significant detail on these revelations. For example, on the same day of the *Los Angeles Times* report, *La Opinion* also reported the death of 800 civilians in an aerial attack "a few days before," on page two. However, the paper's account on the bombing was one sentence long and did not identify who flew the planes or included any eye witness accounts that were already circulating in the press. In contrast, *La Opinion*'s front page reported at greater length the nationalist testimony of events which blamed the bombing on "anarchists," and quoted Franco's invitation to journalists to come and witness the destruction of the "holy city" at the hands of "the red hordes in the service of the criminal President of the Basque Republic."<sup>243</sup>

Much can be interpreted from *La Opinion* and *La Prensa* over what they reported, but more can be said over what they did not. For example, in California, during the 1930s, Mexican workers played an active role in a variety of pro-Loyalist fundraising activities, see Chapter 2.

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<sup>242</sup> "Guernica burns; 800 dead: insurgent planes cause horrific ravages." *La Prensa*, April 28, 1937.

<sup>243</sup> *Los Angeles Times* April 30, 1937; *La Opinion* April 30, 1937.

Yet, *La Opinion* reporting on these events was non-existent. Also, neither publication provided any significant report over American support for the Loyalists in general or the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, which the English language press reported extensively. In contrast, the neighboring *Los Angeles Times* reported several stories on American volunteers with headlines reading: “More Americans Killed In Spain,” “Americans Dead in Spain 2,000,” “Americans In Spain Hold Celebration.”<sup>244</sup> However, a few articles on Lozano’s editorial page did discuss the internationals in Spain. For example, in April 1937, *La Opinion* published an editorial that discussed international volunteers in Spain but did not provide comprehensive details over the volunteers’ nationalities. In the article, Pablo Santos Lozano, a staff writer for *La Opinion*, labeled many of the internationals as “mercenaries” who fight in Spain for political reasons and only serve to prolong the conflict. However, he did give credit to those who volunteer in Spain over moral principles, but he did not identify who he was describing.<sup>245</sup>

Lozano was a staunch anti-Communist and frequently published a series of editorials that attacked the ideologies of Socialism, Anarchism, and Communism. One column in *La Prensa’s* editorial page, written by Mexican conservative Enrique Valay, titled, “The Apocalyptic Beast: Communism,” embraced fascism as a defense against Communism. The editorial attempted to absolve Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini’s invasion of Ethiopia and smear the “Bolsheviks” as lying “back-stabbing” murders. Also, Valay claimed: “Fascism is nothing more than a strong and necessary reaction against communism, which will be transferred into a true democracy, with a broader understanding of social and economic problems, fascism will realize the extent of human capabilities, which Marxism will never achieve. Those who

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<sup>244</sup> “More Americans Killed In Spain,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 1937.; “Americans Dead in Spain 2000,” *Los Angeles Times* November 22, 1938.; “Americans in Spain Hold Celebration,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 05, 1937.

<sup>245</sup> “Quienes Son Los Mercenarios,” *La Opinion*, April 1, 1937.

reject fascism can be compared to those who, shipwrecked, reject a saving table, waiting for a low.” The editorial went on to attack democracy as well, claiming that “perfect democracy has never existed, nor will it ever exist, in Mexico, and countries like Mexico, it is nothing more than a bloody farce. Everything is relative, and within that relativity, fascism is the best medicine to cure the World of Bolshevik morbidity.”<sup>246</sup>

In the same issue of *La Prensa*, Lozano published an editorial written by an unnamed staff writer responding favorably to Benito Mussolini’s call for peace during his speech in Milan on November 1, 1936. *La Prensa* stated: “This postponement of the destructive contest, which Mussolini prioritizes as ‘world peace,’ is imperative at this time.” The piece continued by claiming “the only way to ward off the phantom of destruction,” is through military strength “and spiritually with the intense nationalist propaganda of Fascism—or its equivalent,” against “the advance of communism, and the chaos it brings.”<sup>247</sup> The editorial painted Mussolini as a peacemaker and a guardian against Communism, but did not mention Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia or intervention in Spain. In another editorial, *La Opinion* published a flattering column of Adolf Hitler’s accomplishment in creating a “Solid System” of government. Contributor, Paul C. Smith, described Hitler as a man of “great intelligence, acute political perception, inexhaustible energy, who facilitates information he receives and demonstrates a fanatical devotion to his belief in the superiority of the German race.”<sup>248</sup>

However, despite *La Opinion* and *La Prensa* partiality towards Fascism, the paper did not embrace it completely. For instance, in one editorial *La Prensa* stated: “For us, men of the new

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<sup>246</sup> “La Bestia Apocaliptica: El Comunismo,” *La Prensa*, November 4, 1936.

<sup>247</sup> “La Paz De Mussolini,” *La Prensa*, November 4, 1936.

<sup>248</sup> “SOLIDO SISTEMA Creado por HITLER,” *La Opinion*, April 27, 1938.

world, possessed by an individualistic personality who have torn the breast of our homeland in search of freedom, fascism cannot offer any advantages.” The piece continued by elevating democracy over extremist ideologies, stating “democratic government that, even when imperfect, remains in the process of consolidating itself, as the culture of our peoples develops.” *La Prensa* concluded by warning that democratic people should not close their eyes to the danger of fascism, instead we should “understand that fascism in Europe has been a reaction against disorder...that not only threatens to disintegrate nationalities, but also stifles human freedoms.”<sup>249</sup>

Regardless of the publication’s rejection of Fascism, during the Spanish Civil War *La Prensa* and *La Opinion*’s editorial page regularly printed opinion pieces written by fascist sympathizers in Mexico and Nationalist journalists in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. One frequent contributor to the paper’s editorial page was Mexican conservative writer Alfonso Junco. Junco, who regularly wrote religious columns for both publications, was a fervent defender of the Catholic Church and one of Mexico’s staunchest supporter of Francoism and the Spanish Nationalists. Junco was also one of the staunchest critic of President Cardenas acceptance of the Spanish exiles after the war.<sup>250</sup> However, Junco’s writing pales in comparison to another frequent columnist, Falangist writer Manuel Aznar, whose editorials were nothing more than thinly-veiled Nationalist propaganda aimed at persuading public opinion.

Aznar was a Spanish Nationalist journalist and a regular columnist to *La Prensa* and *La Opinion*’s “Spain Today” column, which provided a Spanish perspective on the war. His writings were nothing more than pro-Nationalist propaganda. For example, the day after the

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<sup>249</sup> “El Fascismo en America,” *La Prensa*, November 18, 1937.

<sup>250</sup> Carlos Sola Ayape, “El Escritor Alfonso Junco: El Perfil Ideologico de un Franquista Mexicano,” *En-Claves del Pensamiento* 15 (Enero-Junio, 2014): 171.

bombing of Guernica, Aznar wrote a flattering column about General Franco for *La Opinion*. In the article, Aznar began by asking the question “how many times has General Franco shown us the extraordinary qualities of his military genius?” and proceeded with a long retelling of Franco’s military victories without mentioning the substantial support the Nationalists received from the German and Italian armies.<sup>251</sup> Two days later in *La Prensa*, Aznar wrote an article aimed at answering the question, which he claimed, “European leftists newspapers,” frequently asked, “what commitments did General Franco make with Mussolini and Hitler, in exchange for the sympathy’s that these two European leaders show towards Spain?” According to Aznar, “neither Italy nor Germany has asked for anything, and, in short, that if something had been requested, incompatible with the freedom, with integrity, with independence and with the dignity of Spain, the dialogue would not even have begun [by Franco].” He continued by attempting to discredit the Nationalists association with “fascism” and instead described the conflict in celestial terms, a fight between the anti-religious “Communists” and the “spiritual” Nationalists.<sup>252</sup>

Several weeks later, Aznar wrote another column for *La Opinion* titled, “In Spain Democracy is not fighting Fascism.” Aznar claimed that “democracy does not take part in the struggle for Spain: if anything, it would be in the ranks of the Nationalists.” Instead, he described the war as a “fight for the sense of Homeland, Family, Order, Justice, Honor, and Dignity, against denationalization and against all the fears of anarchy.” He also went on to delegitimize democratic governments and stated, “I do not believe that there is in all Spain, neither in the

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<sup>251</sup> “La España De Hoy: Una Immortal Hour of Generalísimo Franco,” *La Opinion*, April 27, 1937.

<sup>252</sup> “La España De Hoy: La Simpatia De Alemania Y De Italia Hacia La España Nacionalista,” *La Prensa*, April 29, 1937.

national nor in the red, who seriously dares to chant to us the excellence of a liberal and democratic regime, whose mouth is not seen to be bristling with inevitable catastrophes.”<sup>253</sup>

### **The Mexican Exiled Press and the Spanish Exiles**

During the Great Depression, the United States government's answer to the rise in unemployment was to undertake a massive repatriation campaign aimed at removing non-citizens from the country. An estimated 400,000 to 600,000 people of Mexican decent were deported between 1929 and 1939. And an estimated 63 percent were birthright citizens.<sup>254</sup> *La Prensa* and *La Opinion* were among the few publications in the United States to provide comprehensive coverage of the mass deportations of Mexicans. On January 29, 1931, *La Opinion* published an extensive article warning its readers about upcoming round-ups of immigrants and mentioned that lately, “the majority of those deported are Mexican.”<sup>255</sup> This report was so substantial that the Mexican Consul Rafael de la Colina sent copies of *La Opinion* to the Mexican Consul General in San Francisco, Mexico’s ambassador in Washington, D.C., and Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores in Mexico City along with letter’s detailing the impending raid.<sup>256</sup>

On August 31, 1932, *La Opinion* provided a one year update on the repatriation campaign on their editorial page. The paper rejected the U.S. Department of Labor’s claim that 1,600,000 people were repatriated in 1931 as an exaggeration. Instead, *La Opinion* placed their estimation

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<sup>253</sup> “La España De Hoy: En España No Lucha La Democracia Contra El fascismo,” *La Opinion*, June 8, 1937.

<sup>254</sup> Balderrama & Rodriguez, 149-151.; Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures 1929-1939* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1974), 174.

<sup>255</sup> “Las Autoridades Locales Piden La Ayuda Federal Para Realizar el Proyecto,” *La Opinion*, January 29, 1931.

<sup>256</sup> Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 72.



to be around 250,000, noting that “every day, our countrymen return [to the United States] in increasing numbers.” Also, the paper mentioned that the majority were deported from the borderland states of Texas, California, New Mexico, and Arizona, with smaller numbers from mid-western states.<sup>257</sup> Though, the paper later reported that Mexican officials estimated that the true number of repatriated might be higher since not all returnees reported to the Mexican immigration offices in border cities.<sup>258</sup> *La Opinion* also reported on the standard of living and economic condition of Mexicans living in the United States during the Great Depression. The paper mentioned that in 1930, most of the 40,000 immigrants that returned to Mexico did so voluntarily due to “poverty, lack of work or bad treatment.”<sup>259</sup> They mentioned that among the repatriated, “relatively few returned with some savings.”<sup>260</sup>

On May 7, 1934, *La Opinion* exclusively reported that the Mexican government had sent a delegation to the United States to investigate how Mexicans were being repatriated and to examine the living conditions of Mexicans in California, Texas, and Arizona. The article mentioned that the Mexican government ordered the investigation after Los Angeles County officials informed them that 50,000 Mexican migrants were living under difficult circumstances related to the economic depression.<sup>261</sup> During this time, Los Angeles County appeared to be on the verge of deporting thousands of improvised Mexican immigrants. This spurred the newly inaugurated Cardenas administration to act and initiate government efforts to facilitate the return of the repatriated, which included travel assistance and land distribution.<sup>262</sup> *La Opinion* was very

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<sup>257</sup> “Cifras Exageradas,” *La Opinion*, August 31, 1932.; “Llegaron A El Paso, Tex 500 Repatriados,” *La Opinion* November 2, 1932.

<sup>258</sup> “Han Pasado Por Juarez 24,7999 Repatriados,” *La Opinion*, October 31, 1932.

<sup>259</sup> “40,000 Mexicanos Salieron De Estados Unidos En 1930,” *La Opinion*, March 23, 1931.

<sup>260</sup> “Cifras Exageradas,” *La Opinion*, August 31, 1932.

<sup>261</sup> “Mexico Investiga Como Se Hacen Las Repatriaciones,” *La Opinion*, May 7, 1934.

<sup>262</sup> See Fernando Saul Alanis Enciso, *They Should Stay There: The Story of Mexican Migration and Repatriation During The Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

critical of the Mexican government's repatriation effort and warned that its “one of those things that must be done well, or not at all,” to ensure that those repatriated do not suffer unnecessary hardships.<sup>263</sup>

The Mexican government's efforts in searching and securing lands for repatriated Mexican nationals coincided with President Cardenas's decision to granted asylum to thousands of Spanish refugees who fled the Spanish Civil War. During the war, the Cardenas administration had provided asylum to a few hundred Spanish children and intellectuals.<sup>264</sup> However, after the defeat of the Spanish Republic in April 1939, well over 350,000 men, women, and children had swelled across the French border into the department of Pyrénées-Orientales, outnumbering the native population by two to one. Overwhelmed, French authorities relocated some of the women and children to whatever shelter they could find before herding the rest with the men to a sandy wasteland along the Mediterranean shore. Surrounded by barb wire, the refugees dug ditches in the sand and constructed primitive tents from tree branches, blankets, and bits of boards from box carts to shelter themselves from the elements in what became known as Argelès-sur-Mer internment camp.<sup>265</sup>

Late in life, world-renowned Spanish cellist and bearer of the United States Presidential Medal of Freedom, Pablo Casals, reflected on his experience after witnessing the horrid conditions in Argelès-sur-Mer in 1939. He described it as a scene from “Dante's Inferno” with tens of thousands of men, women, and children penned behind barbed wire like “animals.” They lacked shelter, sanitation, medical attention, food, and water. They were confined in the open,

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<sup>263</sup> “Otra Vez la Repatriacion,” *La Opinion*, April 8, 1939.

<sup>264</sup> They were known as Los Niños de Morelia and the intellectuals of the Casa de España.

<sup>265</sup> *LIFE* July 17, 1939

exposed to the rain and snow. The deplorable conditions attributed to the “scores [that] had perished from exposure, hunger, and disease.”<sup>266</sup>

Argelès-sur-Mer was just one of several hastily constructed camps that house the exiles in France. Mexican minister to the League of Nations, Isidro Fabela, was given the task to examine the possibility of providing Mexican aid to the refugees and toured several camps in early February. In his report to President Cardenas, he described the inhuman conditions of Argelès in detail. He cited the lack of sufficient shelter in the face of constant icy “hurricane wind” from the Mediterranean Sea had contributed to deaths from exposure every night. “The feeding in the fields has been insufficient. The first days only bread was distributed to the newcomers; afterward, but not always, they have been given meat and cereals. But only the healthy, the strong, the young, those who are able to obtain their ration. The weak, the sick, the old, did not always have a way to approach their food and that is why so many died of starvation.”<sup>267</sup>

The number of refugees housed in French custody varied from source to source. Mexican consular official Mauricio Fresco counted 300,000, while Fabela reported over 400,000.<sup>268</sup> All the same, the avalanche of humanity, which the French had feared would come, had arrived at their southern frontier. Unwillingly becoming host to one of the greatest humanitarian crises of

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<sup>266</sup> Pablo Casals quoted in Albert E. Kahn, *Joys and Sorrows: Reflections by Pablo Casals* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 223.

<sup>267</sup> Fabela, Isidro, Cartas al Presidente, “Carta No. 10,” Febrero 24 de 1939 < [http://www.biblioteca.tv/artman2/publish/1939\\_226/Cartas\\_al\\_Presidente\\_C\\_rdenas\\_Carta\\_10\\_Los\\_campos\\_de\\_concentraci\\_n.shtml](http://www.biblioteca.tv/artman2/publish/1939_226/Cartas_al_Presidente_C_rdenas_Carta_10_Los_campos_de_concentraci_n.shtml) >

<sup>268</sup> Mauricio Fresco, *La Emigracion Republicana Espanola* (México D. F: Editores Asociados, 1950), 40. accessed through Biblioteca Virtual Miguel Cervantes archive < <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/la-emigracion-republicana-espanola-una-victoria-de-mexico/> > ; Fabela, Isidro, Cartas al Presidente, “Carta No. 10,” Febrero 24 de 1939 < [http://www.biblioteca.tv/artman2/publish/1939\\_226/Cartas\\_al\\_Presidente\\_C\\_rdenas\\_Carta\\_10\\_Los\\_campos\\_de\\_concentraci\\_n.shtml](http://www.biblioteca.tv/artman2/publish/1939_226/Cartas_al_Presidente_C_rdenas_Carta_10_Los_campos_de_concentraci_n.shtml) >

the twentieth century. Fear of extremists led French authorities to confine the exiles in the camps unless they sought to return to Spain or had evidence of being granted asylum from a foreign embassy. In the early weeks of the exodus, several thousand refugees had returned to Spain, lured by Franco's short-lived policy of reconciliation. However, the letters from family members remaining in Spain received by the exiles, that managed to bypass the censors, reported a different story. One mother wrote to her son in France, "We await your return with joy... try to arrive in time for the First Communion of little Juan." The warning, hidden from the censor, was obvious to the recipient, for little Juan was an infant. Another wrote, "Come soon. The house is crowded, for the Garcia's lost their home and are living with us. But when you arrive you will find a room with Cousin Jose." Jose was long dead, killed in reprisal after the Asturias uprising in 1934.<sup>269</sup>

Furthermore, Fabela reported a great number of men of considerable prestige who expressed a strong desire to go to Mexico. "I found in Argeles, Arles and Amélie a good number of university students...professors from the Faculties of Philosophy and Law of the Universities of Madrid and Barcelona, doctors, engineers, lawyers who do not want to return to their country...many mechanics, military out of the Academies, aviators, who also wanted to settle in our land as soon as possible, not only because our country has declared that it will open its doors, but because it is the most sympathetic to them from the political point of view." He also mentioned the state of urgency. He pointed out that if the refugees stayed in France much longer,

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<sup>269</sup> LIFE, July 17, 1939

they ran a “very reasonable risk of being handed over to the rebel Franco when France and England recognize him as head of a de jure government.”<sup>270</sup>

Unbeknownst to Fabela, Cardenas had already secretly offered to accept sixty thousand refugees from the Spanish Republic in 1938, through Mexican Ambassador to Spain, Colonel Adalberto Tejada. The first offer was kept a secret to avoid affecting the morale of the Republican Army still active in combat operations. After the Mexican cabinet favorably received Fabela's report in April, the Mexican government officially announced the acceptance of all refugees in France. Practical reasons motivated Cardenas' decision to grant asylum to the Spanish refugees, but also humanitarian considerations. In his fifth government report speech to congress, Cardenas pointed to the advantages that would benefit Mexico from accepting prominent intellectuals, professionals, and experienced laborers. He outlined a plan to disperse the refugees to fluster industrial and agricultural development, Mexico “shall consider utilizing the distribution of the Republican workers of Spain in areas and conditions that favor the national economy.”<sup>271</sup>

Opposition toward the admittance of Spanish exiles arose immediately after the government announcement. On April 12<sup>th</sup>, La Union Democratica de Mexico sent Cardenas a message to protest the admittance of more “Iberos.” They argued the arrival of “Spanish Militants” would constitute further problems within the politically divided country.<sup>272</sup> The conservative *El Universal* argued that the country did not want extremists, thieves, and political

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<sup>270</sup> Fabela, Isidro, Cartas al Presidente, “Carta No. 10,” Febrero 24 de 1939 <[http://www.biblioteca.tv/artman2/publish/1939\\_226/Cartas\\_al\\_Presidente\\_C\\_rdenas\\_Carta\\_10\\_Los\\_campos\\_de\\_concentraci\\_n.shtml](http://www.biblioteca.tv/artman2/publish/1939_226/Cartas_al_Presidente_C_rdenas_Carta_10_Los_campos_de_concentraci_n.shtml)>

<sup>271</sup> Lázaro Cárdenas en su Quinto Informe de Gobierno el 1 de septiembre de 1939, Latin American Research Resource Project Mexican Presidential Message, <<http://lanic.utexas.edu/larrp/>>

<sup>272</sup> El Siglo de Torreon, April 13, 1939.

criminals any more than France did. Even pro-Republican supporters during the war were wary of admitting masses of refugees who they feared would include a disproportionate amount of extreme leftist, revolutionaries, and communists who would disturb the political balance of Mexico.<sup>273</sup> The *Excelsior* argued, “The Reds...have the intention of transferring into Mexico the civil war they have lost in Spain.”<sup>274</sup> The established Spanish community living in Mexico, who had celebrated the Nationalist victory, also reacted negatively against the Republican exiles.<sup>275</sup> Such a large section of the Mexican press had been hostile towards the Spanish refugees, that journalist and politician Felix Palavicini argued that Franco’s agents must have infiltrated the conservative section of the Mexican press.<sup>276</sup>

In the United States, *La Prensa* and *La Opinion* were also hard critics of President Cardenas’ decision to allow admission to thousands of Spanish exiles in Mexico. Both publications attacked the Cardenas administration for welcoming Spaniards at a time when repatriated Mexicans needed assistance. However, like other conservative newspapers, the true intention was to take the opportunity to attack President Cardenas. Also, their argument contradicted earlier statements made concerning Spanish immigrants living in Mexico that sided with the Nationals. For example, a few days after President Cardenas announced he would accept an unlimited number of Spanish refugees, an editorial writer for *La Opinion* and *La Prensa* wrote, “when Mexicans have bread for their children and when the country’s citizens abroad are officially supported and repatriated, then the government can afford itself the luxury of helping, on the people’s behalf, all the foreign refugees it wished to.” The piece also stated that “the best

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<sup>273</sup> *Excelsior*, June 2, 1939; *El Universal* May 17-19, 1939.

<sup>274</sup> *Excelsior*, January 17, 1939

<sup>275</sup> *Fresco*, 29.

<sup>276</sup> Felix Palavicini, *Mexico; Historia de su Evolucion Constructiva*, IV, (Mexico: Distribuidora editorial, 1945), 272-73.

thing” for the refugees should be to “return to their homeland...now that the environment has calmed down.” The editorial concluded that this harsh approach might be “selfish, but perfectly human,” and “patriotic.”<sup>277</sup>

However, this rejection of immigrants was a stark contrast to an earlier argument in November 1936, where *La Prensa* condemned a proposal that called for the expulsion of Spanish nationals residing in Mexico who identified as fascists as “absurd” and “intolerant.” *La Prensa* stated: “The majority of Spaniards living in Mexico are laborious, industrious and law-abiding...Many Hispanics have cemented their home among us, creating families that are already Mexican. They have mixed with us in the flesh and the spirit...Being a Spanish supporter of the rebellion is no crime.”<sup>278</sup> In another editorial, *La Prensa* made the same argument towards protecting pro-Nationalist in the established Spanish community in Mexico, stating the President “is obliged to grant constitutional guarantees to all foreigners, no matter what nationality they hold.”<sup>279</sup>

A few weeks later, after the first contingent of exiles arrived in Veracruz, *La Opinion* and *La Prensa* published an editorial that clarified that the arriving Spanish exiles should not be blamed for being in Mexico. This change of direction was in response to the socialist labor leader Lombardo Toledano’s attempt to redirect anti-Spanish sentiments towards the long-established, and conservative, Spanish community in Mexico. *La Opinion* and *La Prensa* stated, “It was a mistake to bring them into the current circumstance, it would be much worse to

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<sup>277</sup> “Primero Los Mexicanos,” *La Prensa* April 12, 1939., “Primero Los Mexicanos,” *La Opinion* April 10, 1939.

<sup>278</sup> “Una Iniciativa Absurda,” *La Prensa*, November 3, 1936., Mexico’s Minister of the Interior estimated that 40,000 of Mexico’s 47,000 Spanish residents had sided with the Spanish Falange during the war, and 1,600 were active militants involved in fascist organizations, such as *La Asociación Española Anticomunista y Antijudía* (The Spanish Anti-communist and Anti-Jewish Association). See Mario Revah, *México y la Guerra Civil Española* (Madrid: Turner, 2000), 223.

<sup>279</sup> “Otra Idea Descabellada,” *La Prensa* April 29, 1937

withdraw the hospitality granted, no matter how resentful nationalists are, we expect that Mexico will keep her essential principles of decency and honor.” Also, the editorial sympathized with the refugees by comparing them to the Mexican exiles that fled to the United States during the Mexican Revolution. The piece then redirected their criticism towards those who showed preference for the Spanish refugees over Mexican nationals in the United States: Lazaro Cardenas and Narciso Bassols, Mexico’s ambassador to France.<sup>280</sup> Another editorial in *La Opinion* titled “Down with the Mexicans! Long Live the Spanish!” similarly criticized the Cardenas administration for displaying a more favorable attitude toward the Spanish exiles than it did towards the repatriated Mexican nationals. It noted that repatriated Mexicans did not receive the same fanfare that the exiled Spaniards received when they arrived in Mexico.<sup>281</sup>

In the end, more than 25,000 refugees resettled in Mexico between 1939 and 1942. The German occupation of France severed all diplomatic ties between France and Mexico, ending all efforts to transport the remaining exiles. Instead, thousands were conscripted for forced labor by the Nazi authorities and deported to Germany to work in factories or concentration camps, including 7,000 in Mauthausen.<sup>282</sup> As time moved along, the exiles slowly assimilated into Mexican society. Most negative opposition and press coverage gradually cease within the first few years of their arrival. As more and more exiles settled peacefully, animosity against them evaporated.

After the end of the Spanish Civil War, the Mexican exiled press in the United States continued to criticize President Cardenas for having supported the Spanish Republic during the war. They pressed for normalization of diplomacy towards the Franco regime and the rejection

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<sup>280</sup> “Consumatum Est,” *La Prensa* June 28, 1939., “Consumatum Est,” *La Opinion* June 29, 1939.

<sup>281</sup> “Abajo los Mexicanos! ¡Vivan los Españoles,” *La Opinion* June 24, 1936.

<sup>282</sup> Gilbert Martin, *The Routledge Atlas of the Holocaust* (Routledge: Abingdon, 2009), 224.



of the Spanish Republican government in exile in Mexico City.<sup>283</sup> After the outbreak of World War II and the United States' entrance into the war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, *La Prensa* and *La Opinion*'s redirected their attention towards the threat of global war. Anti-Communist and anti-Socialist editorial continued to be published. However, they no longer presented Hitler and Mussolini in any positive light. Instead, they focused on the Allied war effort against the Axis powers. On domestic issues, *La Prensa* and *La Opinion* continued to report on matters concerning the Mexican American community during the 1940s, including the Zoot Suit Riots and Mexican-Americans fighting in World War II.

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<sup>283</sup> "La Bandera Español," *La Opinion* April 6, 1939.

## CONCLUSION

During the May Day parade in 1938, the first veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade to return were given the “place of honor” at the head of the march of 50,000 people through New York City. In September, at the League of Nations in Geneva, the Prime Minister of the Spanish Republic, Juan Negrin, announced the withdraw of all the international volunteers from Spanish territory. In vain, he hoped this measure would cause the League to pressure Nazi Germany and Italy to abide by the non-intervention pact and withdraw their foreign troops as well. The next month, the remaining 200 Lincolns in Spain represented the United States in the farewell parade through Barcelona before heading home. Out of the 2,800 volunteers, nearly one third were dead, and virtually every survivor was wounded at least once. Amidst a shower of flowers and kisses “La Pasionaria,” Basque Republican politician Dolores Ibarruri, bade the volunteers farewell: “You can go proudly. You are history. You are legend...when the olive tree of peace blossoms again, come back,” she declared. For many, this would be the last time they would see Spain.<sup>284</sup>

In the United States, countless gatherings and rallies honored the returning American volunteers. The dead were immortalized by journalists, writers, artists, filmmakers, and their

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<sup>284</sup> New York Times, May 1, 1938; UPI, October 28, 1988. ; Carroll, 203.

comrades in the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Ernest Hemingway wrote of them, “no men entered earth more honorably than those who died in Spain.”<sup>285</sup> His book, *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, was based on an American volunteer, executed in Gandesa by Fascist troops. After the survivors returned to the United States, they were labeled as communist subversives and premature anti-fascist by the U.S. government. Lincoln veterans and supporters of the Spanish Republic who served in the U.S. military during World War II were tagged and denied advancement. In the case of Bert Corona, the word of the former Spanish counsel in Los Angeles for Francoist Spain, who identified Corona as a “subversive” for his participation in El Congreso, was enough to derail his military career.<sup>286</sup> During the McCarty era, Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade were among the first organizations listed as suspicious organizations by the House Un-American Activities Committee. Many veterans and sympathizers were blacklisted by the FBI and watched for decades after the conflict.<sup>287</sup> Doctors who volunteered in Spain were stripped of their medical licenses. Several veterans were put on trial and jailed. Others moved to Mexico in search of refuge from prosecution.<sup>288</sup>

In West Tampa and Ybor City, at the end of the war, the purple, red, and gold flag of the Spanish Republic slowly began to come down from the mutual aid societies. The overwhelming support for the Republic from the Latin community was a testament to a tradition of fighting oppression, which began during the Cuban Independence movement in the 1890s. They continued this fight in the war to come. However, this time as Americans. During World War II,

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<sup>285</sup> Ernest Hemingway, “On the American Dead in Spain,” *New Masses* February 1938.

<sup>286</sup> Mario T. Garcia, *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (Los Angeles: University Of California Press, 1994), 150-151.

<sup>287</sup> Jackson-Schebetta, 21.

<sup>288</sup> "Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Spanish Civil War History and Education: Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives." ALBA Accessed April 20, 2019. <http://www.alba-valb.org/>.

the Spanish societies raised the American flag and faced the same fascist dictatorships that had invaded Spain. The day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Centro Asturiano called its “8000 members to pledge all resources to the service of the United States in the war emergency.” They declared themselves to be a “100 percent American organization,” and called on the Latin citizens of Tampa to “stand united with all our fellow citizens.”<sup>289</sup>

However, the plight of the 500,000 Spanish exiles housed in French internment camps continued to concern those among the Latin community, especially those with family among them. The Comité Popular Democrático de Tampa moved its focus towards aiding the refugees. They raised over \$50,000 in funds for resettlements and material donations and remained operational until 1970. However, as Aida Azpeitia recalled, after the fascist victory, the Latin community “were so defeated and disappointed,” that it became harder “to collect anything after the war is over.”<sup>290</sup> By the time of Franco’s death in 1975, most of the original supporters in West Tampa and Ybor City had either died or moved away, and the once vibrant Latin community had succumbed to modern urban life. But the feeling among those who remained “still ran high,” according to the former president of the Comité Popular Jose Martinez. Decades later, he was still bitter about the outcome of the war, “[Spain] was a free country changed to a slave state...they’ve been enslaved for 36 years, and who can forgive such a sin?”<sup>291</sup>

In New York, the news of Franco’s death was well received. Saturday Night Live comedian Chevy Chase ran a recurring skit on “weekend update” reminding viewers the “Generalissimo Francisco Franco is still dead!” Poking fun at American Presidents Richard

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<sup>289</sup> The Tampa Tribune, December 09, 1941.

<sup>290</sup> Azpeitia, Aida. Interviewed by Ana M. Varela-Lago. Spanish Civil War Oral History Project University of South Florida. Tampa, June 6, 1997. <https://digital.lib.usf.edu/SFS0022555/00001>

<sup>291</sup> The Tampa Times, November 20, 1975.

Nixon and Gerald Ford, and Henry Kissinger, who considered him “a loyal friend and ally” of the United States while a picture of Franco and Adolf Hitler standing together and giving the Nazi salute, ran on the screen. The skit continued well until 1976, losing none of its comedic potency. It was appropriate that a New York show reminded the country of Fascist Spain’s true colors, which had come to be considered an ally by the United States government during the Cold War.<sup>292</sup>

In New York, the fate of the Spanish Republic mattered to more people than in any other city outside of Europe, and New Yorkers remained involved for decades after Franco’s victory. New York City was home to the largest group of American volunteers in Spain, around 600, and the headquarters of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. However, while the cause of the Republic united New York leftists of every orientation, the conduct of the war divided them afterward. Many who had supported the Spanish Republic followed intellectuals such as George Orwell and other anti-Stalinists, including Lincoln veterans like William Herrick, and denounced the Communist Party and the Soviet dictatorship for the suppression of left-wing parties and militias in Spain.<sup>293</sup> The Communist Party’s shift to a pacifist stance towards Nazi Germany after the announcement of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the Soviet invasion of Poland further weakened the credibility of the Party in the United States. The wave of mass resignations that followed illuminated significant commitment towards antifascism and Spain’s cause.<sup>294</sup> Finally, the horrific revelation of Joseph Stalin’s Great Purge by Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev’s speech in 1956 struck a devastating blow to the Communist Party in the United States already

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<sup>292</sup> Saturday Night Live, season 1, episode 6, “Weekend Update,” aired November 22, 1975 on NBC.

<sup>293</sup> See George Orwell, *Homage To Catalonia* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938); The Ithaca Journal, July 16, 1986. Village Voice, July 1986.

<sup>294</sup> Smith, 123.

under stress by McCarthyism. By the end of the 1950s the CPUSA was reduced to roughly 3,000 members nationally.<sup>295</sup>

However, demonstrations against Francoist Spain continued well into World War II and through the Cold War. Leftist publications in New York persisted in calling for action in Spain for years. One such publication was *Liberación*, a weekly journal founded in 1946 by Puerto Rican Lincoln veteran Aurelio Perez, with a masthead that called for the “liberty of Spain, Puerto Rico, and other oppressed countries.”<sup>296</sup> Another was *España Libre*, a New York based newspaper founded by Spanish exile and intellectual Marí Ibáñez. *España Libre* was circulated throughout the United States, Latin America, and Europe, and was regularly smuggled into Spain until it ceased publication after the Spanish democratic elections of 1977.<sup>297</sup> The New York based National Maritime Union also pushed for action in Spain and against the normalization of diplomacy with the Franco regime. During World War II they refused to sail ships to Francoist Spain “in protest against the appeasement policy towards Butcher Franco.” The NMU went on record to assert, “Axis stooges such as Franco of Spain and Mannerheim of Finland are no different than Tojo, Hitler, and Mussolini. To play ball with them is to weaken the war efforts of the United Nations.”<sup>298</sup> Also, Hispanic Merchant Marines like Ralph Cuarón, a Mexican-American Communist from California, worked with the Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee in New

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<sup>295</sup> Enrique M. Buelna, *Chicano Communists and the Struggle for Social Justice* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2019), 150. See also, Dorothy Healey & Maurice Isserman, *Dorothy Healey Remembers A Life in the American Communist Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>296</sup> *Liberación*, April 9, 1949.

<sup>297</sup> Montse Feu, “Transatlantic Trenches in Spanish Civil War Journalism: Félix Martí Ibáñez and the Exile Newspaper *España Libre* (Free Spain, New York City 1939-1977),” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 10 (Fall, 2016), 53-59.

<sup>298</sup> “Franco is Hitler’s Stooge,” UCAPAPWA News, March 21, 1943.

York to smuggle exiled Republican partisans from Europe to the United States onboard NMU ships.<sup>299</sup>

In California, the Mexican-American community continued to confront domestic racial discrimination, the threat of fascism, and express support for the exiled Spanish Republic years after the end of the war. They maintained an international perspective through El Congreso and its successor, the Asociación Nacional México-Americana (ANMA). Domestically, El Congreso and affiliated CIO unions, combated racial discrimination by police towards Mexican-Americans. In one particular case, the ILWU played a main role in building broad base support for the seventeen Sleepy Lagoon defendants charged with murder in 1942 (later acquitted), a case that was a precursor to the Zoot Suit Riots. El Congreso and CIO locals, in particular ILWU Local 29 and UFWA Local 576, worked to suppress and denounce the distribution of propaganda by La Union Nacional Sinarquista (a fascist anti-Semitic organization in Guanajuato Mexico that collaborated with the Nazi Party in Germany and the Falange in Spain) and its newspaper *El Sinarquista* in the Southwest during World War II.<sup>300</sup>

In the post war period, ANMA also held an international stance in addition to domestic civil rights, political, and economic issues affecting the Hispanic community in the United States. Like El Congreso, ANMA was supported by CIO unions with large Mexican-American membership such as Mine Mill, the ILWU, the Furniture Workers, and UCAPAWA. During the 1950s, ANMA passed resolutions in support of amnesty for political prisoners who had been

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<sup>299</sup> Buelna, 44-45. Ralph Cuarón went on to have a long career as both a global activist and defender of Mexican American Civil Rights in Los Angeles. He also played an acting role in the 1954 film, "Salt of the Earth."

<sup>300</sup> Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 190-195.

condemned to be shot in Spain. ANMA also supported labor struggles in several Latin American countries and condemned the U.S. intervention in Korea and Guatemala.<sup>301</sup>

The ripples of the Spanish Civil War reached other Hispanic Communities in the United States not covered in this thesis. For example, symbols of the Spanish Republic were reflected in the 1938 Pecan Sheller Strike, the largest labor strike in San Antonio's history. During the strike, Mexican female workers wore military style hats and clothing reminiscent of the milicianas in Spain. Also, the movement leader, Emma Tenayuca, was nicknamed "La Pasionaria de Texas" named after the Basque Republican politician Dolores Ibárruri. The Spanish immigrant community in New Orleans, smaller than that of Tampa, initiated their local North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy without outside assistance in 1937. The Spanish community regularly sent checks from small community fundraising events to the Committee's New York office.<sup>302</sup>

In Chicago, the local chapter of El Frente Popular held regular meetings at the University of Chicago Settlement House to discuss the "the heroic fight of the Spanish people against the fascist invaders," and the "liberation of the Spanish-speaking peoples." The meetings drew large crowds of people from the Mexican and Spanish community in the city. Chicago's Frente Popular organizers sought to encourage the Mexican migrants to assist the Spanish Republic and facilitated the arrival of Spanish Republican delegates on a fundraising tour. Frente officers, such

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<sup>301</sup> Mario T. Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989), 200-215. Mario T. Garcia, *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 186-187.

<sup>302</sup> Smith, 71-72.



as Nicolas Hernandez, believed that if the Republic lost the war the result would have grave consequences for Mexican workers in the United States by emboldening the capitalist class.<sup>303</sup>

In Idaho, the Spanish Civil War proved to be a complicated issue for the immigrant community of Basque shepherder. News reports and letters from family members describing the brutal takeover of Bilbao by the Nationalist forces fueled collective action in the form of humanitarian aid. However, while many members of the Basque community in Idaho were eager to help the victims of the conflict, which included their family and friends, they were reluctant to support the Basque war effort. Attempts by the official delegation of the Basque government to raise war funds in Boise proved unsuccessful. Most of Idaho's shepherders had emigrated before the spread of nationalism in the Basque country side and were reluctant to throw their support behind either side of the conflict. Also, anti-Republican press in the United States and the Catholic Church's support of the Nationalists worked to shy them away from open support for the Basque Government in fear of being associated with communism at a time when they were trying to assimilate into American society.<sup>304</sup>

After the war, the Basque Government in exile tried again to raise support from the Basque community in the American west but found even less enthusiasm among the shepherders who were either unaware of unconcern about Franco's effort to eradicate Basque culture. The Basque in Idaho did not suffer the tragedies of the war nor experience the solidification of Basque identify in its aftermath. Instead, they were committed to living in their new country as Americans and participated in the U.S. war effort in World War II. They

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<sup>303</sup> John H Flores, *The Mexican Revolution in Chicago: Immigration Politics From the Early Twentieth Century to the Cold War* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2018) 101-102.

<sup>304</sup> Mark Bieter & John Bieter, *An Enduring Legacy: The Story Of Basques In Idaho* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 90-95.

continued to distance themselves from communism which they claimed “fomented” the Spanish Civil War and “kept our people in a blood bath for three long years.”<sup>305</sup>

During World War II Hispanics across the United States mobilized for war. An estimated 400,000 to 500,000 Hispanic Americans joined all three branches of the U.S. military (and the merchant marines) and fought in every major American battle. At home, hundreds of Hispanic women joined the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps and Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service and served as nurses and in administrative positions. Many Hispanic women challenged traditional gender roles by working jobs in manufacturing plants that produced munitions and material. At the same time, Mexican-Americans across the nation continued to fight against discrimination and demand recognition as Americans. In war, they demonstrated their loyalty to the United States and challenged all notions of being foreigners. After their return, they persevered in demanding their right to equality and dismantled racial barriers for decades to come.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> See Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez and Emilio Zamora, *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero: The Social and Political Legacy of A Generation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); Steven Rosales, *Soldados Razos At War: Chicano Politics, Identity, And Masculinity In The U.S. Military from World War II to Vietnam* (Albuquerque: University of Arizona Press, 2017); Richard Griswold Del Castillo, *World War II and Mexican American Rights* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008); Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

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