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Pamphlet: Black Americans in the Spanish People's War Against Fascism 1936-1939

Extracted on May-27-2022 01:52:21

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corps, responsible for repairing the bullet, grenade and shrapnel torn mouths and faces of the Internationals. After returning to the States he would continue to care for the Lincoln Vets' teeth, until retiring to the Caribbean, his birthplace, where he has since died. History sings his saga.

Their names were many in these units: Albert Chisolm, Nathaniel Dickson, Knute Frankson, chief mechanic of the International Garage; Thaddeus Battle of Howard U's medical school; Joe Taylor, Young Communist League leader from Harlem; Oscar Hunter, who, after entering the hospital, wounded, became a hospital commissar, and Edward Johnson, head of the general food commissary.

Thomas Page, one of eight to escape Brunete, summed up why he and the rest came to Spain:

[Voice:] "Well it was like this...When those bastards Mussolini and Hitler joined up with Franco, I felt it as time for me to do something more than just protest. If it could happen there (in Spain), the same thing could happen here (in the U.S.)..."

[Narr:] The war rolled on. The Republic limped beneath the "nonintervention" blockade imposed by the League of Nations.

Defying the blockade, some ships from the Soviet Union and Mexico broke through, bringing much needed munitions, foodstuffs and other necessities. The Afro-American and white Lincolns, fighting alongside German, Soviet, French, Italian, Irish and Balkan Internationals, welcomed the supplies. All appreciated these demonstrations of internationalism.

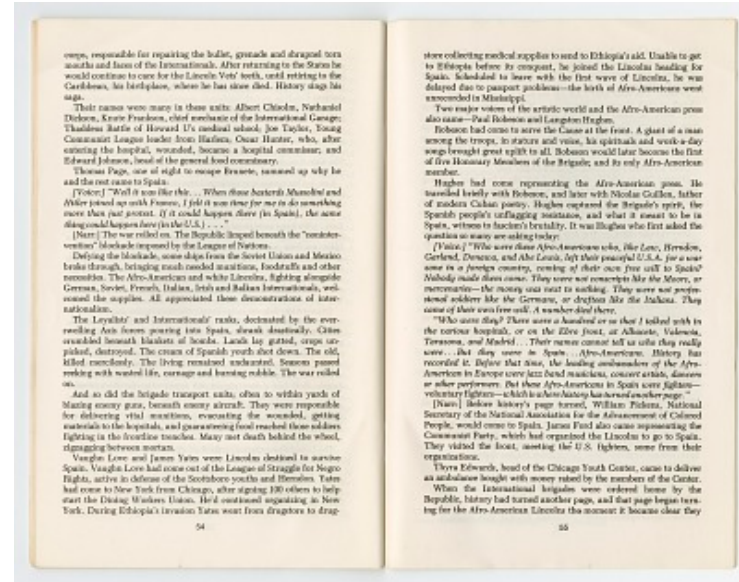
The Loyalists' and Internationals' ranks, decimated by the ever-swelling Axis forces pouring into Spain, shrank drastically. Cities crumbled beneath blankets of bombs. Lands lay gutted, crops unpicked, destroyed. The cream of Spanish youth shot down. The old, killed mercilessly. The living remained undaunted. Seasons passed reeking with wasted life, carnage and burning rubble. The war rolled on.

And so did the brigade transport units; often to within yards of blazing enemy guns, beneath enemy aircraft. They were responsible for delivering vital munitions, evacuating the wounded, getting materials to the hospitals, and guaranteeing food reached those soldiers fighting in the frontline trenches. Many met death behind the wheel, zigzagging between mortars.

Vaughn Love and James Yates were Lincolns destined to survive Spain. Vaughn Love had come out of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights, active in defense of the Scottsboro youths and Herndon. Yates had come to New York from Chicago, after signing 100 others to help start the Dining Workers Union. He'd continued organizing in New York. During Ethiopia's invasion Yates went from drugstore to drug-

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store collecting medical supplies to send to Ethiopia's aid. Unable to get to Ethiopia before its conquest, he joined the Lincolns heading for Spain. Scheduled to leave with the first wave of Lincolns, he was delayed due to passport problems - the birth of Afro-Americans went unrecorded in Mississippi.

Two major voices of the artistic world and the Afro-American press also came - Paul Robeson and Langston Hughes.

Robeson had come to serve the Cause at the front. A giant of a man among the troops, in stature and voice, his spirituals and work-a-day songs brought great uplift to all. Robeson would later become the first of five Honorary Members of the Brigade; and its only Afro-American member.

Hughes had come representing the Afro-American press. He travelled briefly with Robeson, and later with Nicolas Guillen, father of modern Cuban poetry. Hughes captured the Brigade's spirit, the Spanish people's unflinching resistance, and what it meant to be in Spain, witness to fascism' brutality. It was Hughes who first asked the question so many are asking today:

[Voice:] "Who were these Afro-Americans who, like Law, Herndon, Garland, Donawa, and Abe Lewis, left their peaceful U.S.A. for a war zone in a foreign country, coming of their own free will to Spain? Nobody made them come. They were not conscripts like the Moors, or mercenaries - the money was next to nothing. They were not professional soldiers like the Germans, or draftees like the Italians. They came of their own free will. A number died there.

"Who were they? There were a hundred or so that I talked with in the various hospitals, or on the Ebro front, at Albacete, Valencia, Tarazona, and Madrid...Their names cannot tell us who they really were...But they were in Spain...Afro-Americans. History has recorded it. Before that time, the leading ambassadors of the Afro-American in Europe were jazz band musicians, concert artists, dancers or other performers. But these Afro-Americans in Spain were fighters - voluntary fighters - which is where history has turned another page."

[Narr:] Before history's page turned, William Pickens, National Secretary fo the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, would come to Spain. James Ford also came representing the Communist Party, which had organized the Lincolns to go to Spain. They visited the front, meeting the U.S. fighters, some from their organizations.

Thyra Edwards, head of the Chicago Youth Center, came to deliver an ambulance bought with money raised by the members of the Center.

When the International brigades were ordered home by the Republic, history had turned another page, and that page began turning for the Afro-American Lincolns the moment it became clear they

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