

Black soldiers fight facism in Spain

A little known chapter in US history is the participation of Black Americans in the Spanish Civil War -- the first chapter in the conquest of Europe by facism. In the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, as the US volunteers were called, were nearly 100 Black volunteers. The Battalion, integrated from the beginning, was the first non-segregated US military force and, in addition, this was the first time Blacks served as officers over white troops.

During the years before the ABL went to Spain, the US was in turmoil. The Depression took a heavy toll; this was also a time of increased racism. Blacks' wages were 30 per cent less than those of whites and unemployment was double. From 1929 to 1933, some 150 Blacks were lynched.

It was also a time of heightened political struggle. In 1930 more than a million Americans demonstrated in hunger marches; in 1912 thousands of World War I veterans demonstrated against unemployment.

In 1936 the Spanish monarchists, ousted in elections and replaced with a republican government, issued a call to facists throughout Europe to help overthrow the new government. Led by Francisco Franco, facists from Germany, Portugal and Italy invaded the country.

By 1937 international brigades of anti-facist volunteers from all over the world arrived in Spain. The Abraham Lincoln Battalion was assigned to the southern front, where fighting was fierce. The front was stabilized and the facists stopped, although they won in the end.

Oliver Law was the first Black to command the first integrated military unit in US history. For six years he has served in a segregated unit in the US Army and left as a private, but after six months in Spain he became Battalion Commander with a rank of Captain. Eslanda Robeson (Mrs. Paul Robeson) wrote: "... many officers and men here in Spain considered him the best battalion commander in Spain." He was killed in battle in July of 1937.

Jim Peck was one of two Black pilots in the Spanish Republican Army. In spite of two years at the University of Pittsburg and a valid pilot's license, Peck was rejected by the US Air Corp and the Navy. When the Spanish Civil War began he went to Spain, where he flew Soviet made planes and played a prominent part in the air war.

Milton Herndon became the commander of a machine gun section in the Canadian brigade. He was killed when he left cover to aid a wounded soldier.



Battalion Commander Oliver Law with other comrades of the XVth International Brigade.



OLIVER LAW



MILTON HERNDON



DR. ARNOLD DONOWA



NURSE SALARIA KEE

tion in the Canadian brigade. He was killed when he left cover to aid a wounded soldier.

Salaria Kee was the only Black nurse in the Abraham Lincoln Battalion. A graduate of Harlem Hospital Training School, she worked in the hospital's obstetrical division. When Mussolini invaded Ethiopia she helped send tons of medical supplies to Ethiopia and helped organize a field hospital for Ethiopian troops.

Bert Jackson served as a topographer for the ALB. After returning to the U.S. he organized the United Negro Allied Veterans of America. He became a talented artist.

Dr. Arnold Donowa, a graduate of Harvard, served with the American Medical Bureau in Spain. He became head of Oral Surgery. Returning to the US he continued to care for facial wounds until his retirement.

Among the visitors to the ALB in

Spain was Paul Robeson. "I went to Spain in 1938 and that was a turning point in my life. There I saw that it was the working men and women of Spain who were heroically giving 'their last full measure of devotion' to the cause of democracy in that bloody conflict, and that it was the upper classes -- the landed gentry, the bankers and industrialists -- who had unleashed the facist beast against their own people... A new, warm feeling for my homeland grew within me as I met the young men of Abraham Lincoln Battalion -- the thousands of brave young Americans who had crossed the sea to fight and die that another government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth."

In the fall of 1938, at a conference held in Switzerland, the British government proposed that the arms embargo on all belligerents in Spain be lifted if all "volunteers" on both sides were withdrawn. Both sides

accepted and the international battalions were sent home. Franco did not keep the agreement, and the 7,000 member Nazi Condor Legion and 60,000 Italian troops remained in Spain. When the Civil War finally came to an end in April of 1939, it would be only a matter of time until the so-called neutrals -- the US, Britain and France -- would be fighting for their lives against the same facist forces that they had allowed to conquer Spain.

Waterway 13 case goes to court

By Nyewusi Askari

After a six-year wait, Bob Boyer, President of the A. Phillip Randolph Institute will finally get his day in court.

The court date involves a discrimination case, filed six-years ago by Boyer and twelve other defendants. The case became known as the "Waterway 13."

The suit charges Waterway Terminals of discrimination, by denial of upward mobility. Waterway Terminal is a subsidiary of Crown Zellerbach Corporation. It will be heard June 2, 1981, at 9:30 a.m., at the Federal Courthouse, 7th floor, 620 S.W. Main. Judge Helen Frye, presiding.

In an interview with the *Observer*, Boyer said he would appreciate the attendance and support of any and all community residents. "This case is important for a number of reasons," he said. "It's all about being able to not allow frustrations, pressures and the like, to prevent you from following through on any case. I encountered a lot of pressure these last six years. Originally, there were 13 of us involved with the case,

but 12 of the defendants settled by consent decree. I believe they were also under tremendous pressure. But I was bent on seeing it to the end. I feel that Blacks who find themselves involved with long court cases encounter the same pressures, which oftentimes lead to them settling their case out of court; and

many times its due to their feeling that its not worth the pressures and frustrations and manipulations involved.

"But, I have always believed that the race isn't always won by the swift and the strong, but by those who persist to the end. How else will you know that you can win?"

Odum appointed Deputy

Soverign Grand Inspector General William B. Odom, Jr., 33, was appointed Deputy for the Orient of Oregon, at the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the United Supreme Council in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, May 9-12, 1981.

The appointment was made by Soverign Grand Commander Russell S. Gideon, 33, who is Soverign Grand Commander of the Northern Jurisdiction of Prince hall Masons.

Deputy Odom has supervision over the Scottish Rite Masons, (PHA), in Oregon, Montana, and Idaho, under the Orient of Oregon.



W. B. ODOM, JR.

Hispanic issues addressed

National Image, Inc., an organization concerned with the employment of Hispanics in public and private employment, will hold its eighth annual convention in Portland, at the Marriott Hotel, from June 4th to 7th. The convention is expected to draw 1,000 people to a variety of events including workshops, a fashion show and other social events. "The Executive Committee will develop strategies to address national and local concerns

of Hispanics. The workshops will feature personal and career development, business and industry, national and international concerns, energy and the environment, and public service.

On June 2 and 3, the women's action committee, civil rights and legislative committee, internal revue service and office of personnel management will sponsor separate workshops.

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