

## Subversive Patriots

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Presidential historian Jon Meacham recently stated that “history [...] has a wonderful way of changing how we view things. In real time, people or events that are dismissed or derided can come to look better and loom larger in retrospect.”<sup>1</sup> Such a historiographical lesson is perhaps indispensable in evaluating the merit of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade’s commitment to fighting fascism in Spain; particularly given the lack of contemporary support from democratic nations. In more earnestly considering the perspective of these early American anti-fascists, it becomes clear that much of their commitment to preserving Spanish democracy can be drawn from their own objections to the political and social climate of America at the time. The service and writings of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade (ALB) expressed discontentment with American politics through the 1930s and ‘40s, and a desire for change. Namely, these grievances are best understood through the issues of racial injustice, isolationism, and the lack of political and social tolerance for left-leaning ALB veterans within the US military.

It is commonly accepted today that the allied effort in the Second World War was an absolutely necessary and righteous rejection of Nazism, Italian fascism, and Japanese imperialism. What’s less commonly considered is the pre-war reluctance, throughout the 1930s, of democratic Europe and the United States to oppose the territorial expansion, and military buildup, of fascist European regimes. The notion of negotiating with Hitler appears, with historical hindsight, akin to madness. The hard lessons learnt from Munich, however, prove that within the contemporaneous political landscape, appeasement, and tangentially non-intervention, were considered reasonable policies to the end of avoiding another calamitous war. Waiting in the wings for his history-defining service as the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill was a famous dissenting voice within conservative circles regarding appeasement. Less widely

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Meacham, *"Ronald Reagan's Farewell Address,"* C13Originals, 2020, ep. 5.

acknowledged in their prescient assessment of the danger of fascism were the roughly 3,000 American volunteers who combated a fascist uprising in Spain, on the eve of global war.<sup>2</sup>

The Spanish Civil War is a historical event which, when viewed from the future, does assume greater significance as a prelude, of sorts, to the following world war. The war represents an air of conflict in Europe between democracy and fascism. The Second Spanish Republic was proclaimed shortly following the subsiding of Primo de Rivera's former military dictatorship. The new government was established by a soft alliance of varied Spanish political factions. The most influential political groups involved were the more moderately left-leaning republicans and the socialists. These two left-oriented groups also received support from some moderate conservatives who didn't support the monarchy and were committed to defending conservative principles and positions within the framework of the new government.<sup>3</sup>

The Second Spanish Republic established a constitution with the goal of introducing a democratic government with universal suffrage to Spain. The republic, however, alienated most Spanish conservatives through reforms aimed towards abolishing the role of the monarchy, reducing the political influence of the Catholic Church, proposing agrarian reforms, and advancing the possibility of land redistribution. In response, the predominantly conservative class of generals in the Spanish military began preparations for a coup that would ultimately be initiated in July of 1936.<sup>4</sup>

As the Second Spanish Republic successfully resisted the capture of eastern Spain by the fascist rebels, the coup became a prolonged civil war that would ultimately end in April of 1939, in a nationalist (fascist/rebel) victory. Early in the course of the conflict, Francisco Franco assumed leadership of the nationalist faction, supported with arms and air support from Nazi

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<sup>2</sup> Cary Nelson and Jefferson Hendricks, *Madrid 1937* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Julián Casanova, *The Spanish Republic and Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 28; *Ibid.*, 1-2.

Germany and Fascist Italy. The Second Spanish Republic, in turn, received munitions from the Soviet Union in exchange for Spanish gold reserves. While the republic was still formally recognized by the United States, Great Britain, and France up until its eventual defeat, these nations assumed positions of neutrality and policies of non-intervention in regard to the Spanish Civil War.<sup>5</sup>

The American reluctance to become entangled in the conflict can be explained by a general isolationist sentiment that characterized the US approach towards Europe in the 1930s. The British and French policies towards Spain can be understood as partially stemming from a miscalculated acceptance of false German assurances on non-intervention, and more predominantly out of a reasonable fear of another devastating world war. The Republican war effort was bolstered by the presence of international volunteer soldiers who were organized into the International Brigades by the Soviet organization Comintern (communist international).

The American volunteers were organized into a Washington Battalion and an Abraham Lincoln Battalion, later combined and collectively referred to as the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Most of the Lincoln volunteers veered left in their politics and demonstrated in their writings a sense of fondness towards the USSR (accompanied by a contemporaneously limited understanding of its totalitarian nature). In spite of efforts by Comintern to recruit American volunteers for service in Spain, it is clear that the political philosophies of ALB veterans were predominantly formed in response to forces at home. These beliefs predisposed many potential volunteers to serving in Spain, which meant that very little convincing was needed on the part of Comintern. ALB veterans exercised agency in their decision to go and fight for Spain. As professors Cary Nelson and Jefferson Hendricks explained: “The men and women who

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<sup>5</sup> Nelson and Hendricks, *Madrid 1937*, 1; Brian Domitrovic, “*There Must Be Moscow Gold*,” *Forbes*; Nelson and Hendricks, *Madrid 1937*, 3.

understood this early on and who chose of their own free will to stand against fascism have thus earned a special status in history. They were not drafted; they volunteered, and they did so long before most of their countrymen realized the world was in danger.”<sup>6</sup>

The clearest of motivating factors for the participation of these Americans in the Spanish Civil War, were the grievances which the ALB held against key aspects of contemporary American politics and culture. The connection between Spain and the discontentment of the ALB is readily understood by way of the grievances over American isolationism and the US military’s intolerance towards left-leaning politics. The connection between the ALB’s service in Spain and their grievance with racial injustice in the US may not be as apparent before considering the contrast between the stances of the ALB and the US military on racial integration, and the ruminations on race this situation prompted in the writings of ALB members.

The American volunteers who fought in Spain were keenly aware of the unjust social and political conditions for black Americans in the United States. Within the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, this racially progressive outlook manifested itself in the form of integration. The Abraham Lincoln Brigade was one of the first racially integrated American fighting units, with black and white soldiers fighting alongside each other eleven years ahead of President Truman’s executive order to integrate the previously segregated US military in 1948. More than eighty black Americans served in the ALB out of approximately 2,500 volunteers. Despite being a minority within the ALB, a few of the black Americans serving were able to rise to the ranks of company captains during the course of the war.<sup>7</sup>

One such man was Douglass Roach. In an obituary, the *Chicago Defender* reported the various ranks he had held; Roach served as a sergeant following the Jarama campaign, and as a

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 3; *Ibid.*, 307; *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Carroll, *The Good Fight Continues* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 116; Langston Hughes, "Harlem Ball Player Now Captain in Spain," *Afro-American*, February 12 1938, 6.

commander of a machine gun company. After the death of Oliver Law, another black American to lead a battalion in the ALB, the *Atlanta Daily World* reported on the fraternity expressed between white and black volunteers in mourning. Kinship was not solely expressed in this manner, but also practiced throughout the entire war by the Americans' intent on treating each other as human beings. Additionally, numerous black veterans of the ALB noted that the Spanish people were less prejudiced in their attitudes towards race than was the case in the United States. *Chicago Defender* contributor and Spanish Civil War combatant Oscar Hunter mentioned that the Republican Spaniards had believed that the entire colored world was against them when the Moroccans had thrown in with the rebels; seeing black men comprise a portion of the American troops was immediately reassuring to them.<sup>8</sup>

Black American volunteers marked Spain's seemingly egalitarian, and non-racist, society as a measure by which to direct progress in the United States on the issue of race. Langston Hughes, an ALB veteran, wrote in the *Afro-American* that "colored people are not strange to Spain, nor do they attract an undue amount of attention." He went on to say that color was not an important factor or issue in the course of fighting in Spain; ability was the primary consideration behind every position in the ALB; not color.<sup>9</sup>

While many black newspapers in the United States paid this view much attention, race relations in Spain were viewed just as favorably in the personal writings and testimony of black ALB veterans; these men consistently praised the openness of the Spanish people and the International Brigades to fighting with black soldiers. When asked by a US Subversive Activities Control Board member in 1954, whether he felt as though he had been treated unfairly on the

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<sup>8</sup> The *Chicago Defender*, "D. Roach Dies," the *Chicago Defender*, July 23 1938, 2; Nancy Cunard, "Negro Captain of Spanish Unit Killed," *Atlanta Daily World*, December 20 1937, 1; Oscar Hunter, "BALCK MEN'S ROLE IN SPAIN," the *Chicago Defender*, October 8 1938, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Langston Hughes, "Ability, Not Color found to Count most," *Afro-American*, November 6 1937, 1.

basis of race by his peers in the International Brigades, ALB veteran Crawford Morgan offered a poignant response: “No, from the time I arrived in Spain until the time I left, for that period of my life I felt like a human being [...] I was treated like all the rest of the people were treated, and when you [...] have been treated worse than people treat their dogs, it is quite a nice feeling to go someplace and you feel like a human being.”<sup>10</sup>

Integrated service was a significant attribute and legacy of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Black Americans volunteering in the Spanish Civil War saw a chance for renewal at home in following the example set by the ALB in Spain. A nurse from Harlem, serving in the Spanish Civil War, expressed hope towards the prospect of racial cooperation in Spain being the beginning of a global fight against racial injustice. These perspectives assumed greater historiographical significance following the Second World War and civil rights movement.<sup>11</sup>

Following the defeat of the Second Spanish Republic, ALB veterans were keen to continue the fight against fascism. Consequently, many enlisted with the US Army upon America’s entry into the Second World War in late 1941. The transition from volunteer battalions to the army was marked, in the minds of Lincolns, by something other than an abundance of supplies and advanced facilities; namely, that enlistment in the US Army meant transitioning from an integrated, to a segregated fighting force. This contrast highlighted the sense of equality felt through the memory of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish Civil War. Segregation in the military caused many veterans to nostalgically reflect on their time in Spain in their writings during their army service. It also underlined the racial injustices of 1930s America that the Lincolns had been so glad to live without during their time in Spain.

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<sup>10</sup> Carroll, *Good Fight*, 258.

<sup>11</sup> Nancy Cunard, “*Harlem Nurse Plays Heroic Role*,” *New Journal and Guide*, January 22 1938, 6.

ALB veteran James Bernard Rucker expressed his frustration over the racial attitudes of the US military in writing, "I'll be turning my back on the Jim Crow United States [but] it won't be goodbye to Jim Crow because the Army seems to have pledged that it will carry Jim Crow to the far corners of the Earth." In an earlier letter, Rucker wrote of the waste of manpower that could be put towards fighting the Nazis: "Many things come to mind as one contemplates an immobilized mass of trained soldiers. Immobilized by Jim Crow." Furthermore, Rucker expressed the incongruity of the goal of defeating the Nazis, with service in a segregated organization, in saying, "aren't Negroes expected to rejoice at their own liberty! Liberty to ride the back of the bus. Liberty to be last class citizens in the life of the country." This sardonic excerpt illustrates the frustration many black Lincolns had with their experience in the army.<sup>12</sup>

White Lincoln vets, having also taken pride in serving in integrated units during the Spanish Civil War, often made known their opinions of the racism displayed by the American military. Lincoln vet Julius Deutsch wrote of his experience in Officer Candidate School; having roomed with three other white candidates and two black candidates, his superior informed him that the 'mixed business' was accidental, and that new accommodation would be found for the two black men: "...the 6 of us made it plain we weren't in favor of a change, so things remained as they were [...] There has been no Jim Crow in our class as a result; the only place in Ft. Knox where it doesn't exist." In this instance, the six men were not only going against the army's policy of segregation, but also confronting Kentucky's policy of segregation; a Jim-Crow state where segregation was supported by both local code and custom. Another white Lincoln vet, Steve Levine, wrote, "Saw some Negro soldiers working as radio men. The first Negro G.I's I have seen given the chance to do skilled work. Made me happy to see this. I hope this is a sign of a letdown of Negro discrimination in the army." White Lincoln vets often talked of the lunacy of

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<sup>12</sup> Carroll, *Good Fight*, 136-137; 136; 138.

a segregated army to their white compatriots. They found people keen to consider a desegregation of the army, and others who were confident in the status quo.<sup>13</sup>

Some saw a solution to the problem of segregation in political education. Men in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade were entrenched in political discourse and debate, and often prided themselves as being more educated in these areas than most Americans. They viewed a lack of political education among Americans as partly to blame for the perseverance of prejudice. As Irving Weissman wrote: “Political education could act as a catalyst, and also it would integrate us all into this magnificent and critical struggle [...] our experience in Spain [...] proves this.” Julius Hene took it on himself to educate some of his fellow soldiers on issue of race in America: “Last night we had a big bull-session about the Negro problem [...] I pointed out that the colored soldiers [...] were doing well in combat [...] One of the southern boys said they ought to take several of the Southern states and turn them over to the colored population and let them run the show and see what they could produce... At any rate, despite all the prejudice, people are starting to think of these things.” Weissman and Henes’ writings demonstrated a recognition on the part of Lincoln vets of the discourse and rhetorical work ahead of them in trying to shift the culture in the army towards integration and a reevaluation of prejudice.<sup>14</sup>

These frustrations with segregation in the military represented a commonly shared grievance among the Lincolns towards racial injustice in the United States throughout the early 20th century. As Rucker’s letters demonstrated, ALB veterans’ encounters with segregation in the army prompted many of them to take to writing on the subject of racism in America; specifically, they frequently suggested that the contemporary racial politics in the US revealed shades of fascism in America that caused discomfort for men so committed to eradicating it.

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 144; 146.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 160; 149.

Black veteran Walter Dicks wrote: “The Spanish people know nothing of discrimination but at home we have all the germs of fascism as discrimination, jim-crow, and lynching.” It was not an infrequent analogy among the ALB: fascism as a sickness. There were no doubt elements of nostalgia for his service in Spain informing his writing. Nevertheless, when he was segregated in the US army, Dicks was compelled by circumstance to reflect positively on the relative racial equality he experienced while volunteering in Spain.<sup>15</sup>

Many Black ALB veterans expressed this perspective, of American racism as an unacknowledged form of fascism, in their writings from their time in Spain. Canute Frankson questioned his reader why he, as a black man, was serving in a fight between two contingents of a predominantly white Spanish society: “Since this is a war between whites who for centuries have held us in slavery, and have heaped every kind of insult and abuse upon us, segregated and jim-crowed us; why I, a Negro, who have fought through these years for the rights of my people, am here in Spain today?” One possible interpretation to be drawn from this quote would be that it exhibited the Marxist influences on the political character of the overwhelmingly left-wing Abraham Lincoln Brigade; in viewing the experience of racial oppression through an international and conflict-oriented lens. Frankson continued highlighting the connection between service in Spain and racism in America; having said that, “We are no longer an isolated minority group fighting hopelessly against an immense giant [...] Because if we crush Fascism here, we’ll save our people in America, and in other parts of the world, from the vicious persecution [...] which the Jewish people [...] are suffering under Hitler’s Fascist heels.” Frankson established a comparison between racial attitudes and discrimination in the United States, and the brand of fascism commanded by Hitler in the Third Reich.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>16</sup> Nelson and Hendricks, *Madrid 1937*, 33-34.

Making such a connection clearly defined Frankson's view on racism as being a fascist element in American society. His assertion that by crushing fascism in Spain (Franco's variety), the ALB could save black people in America is indicative of many black ALB veterans' perspectives towards the import of their fight against fascism, internationally, in the struggle for racial equality at home. In 1954, before a Subversive Activities Control Board, veteran Crawford Morgan was asked, "Did you have any understanding [...] before you went to Spain of what the issues were connected with that were there?" Crawford responded, "I felt that I had a [...] pretty good idea of what Fascism was and most of its ramifications [...] the fact the way that I and all the rest of the Negroes in this country have been treated ever since slavery, then I figured I had a pretty good idea of what Fascism was, because we have quite a few Fascist tendencies in this country [...] Negroes have been getting lynched in this country by mobs, and that was Fascism on a small scale in this country." Crawford's statement before the board supports the conclusion that a connection between European fascism and American racism was present in the minds of ALB veterans during the Spanish Civil War. This is illustrative of the sentiment that would later inform the 'Double V' campaign; which, during the Second World War, sought to promote both victory abroad (in respects to defeating the Axis powers), and victory at home (in respects to securing the full rights and liberties of African-Americans).<sup>17</sup>

In having evaluated the issues of race and fascism across continents, these veterans revealed another component of the group's character; their tendency to think in international terms. Members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade often spoke, and wrote, in terms of internationalism. They consequently shunned non-intervention and the notion that America could shelter itself from Europe's tribulations and political upheavals by the geographic grace of the Atlantic Ocean. The service and writings of volunteers in the ALB expressed such grievance

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<sup>17</sup> Carroll, *Good Fight*, 257.

with the mainstream American political sensibility that underestimated the threat of fascism. In the view of most Lincoln veterans, Spain was the battle that would either stem or encourage the tide of fascism. The Lincolns knew a defense of liberty in the Iberian Peninsula was also a defense of liberty in the New World. ALB vet Canute Frankson wrote from Madrid, “I do hope that everyone of you who love liberty and democracy has done, and is doing, everything to help our cause here [...] You must understand [...] that our fight is inseparable from the struggle of the progressives of the world who fight to put an end to tyranny.” Frankson addressed this letter to his stateside significant other. His writing flagged the Spanish Civil War as an important proving ground for the support of American ideals as rhetorically powerful as liberty and democracy. His remarks highlighted the international context of his views by further connecting the plight of Spanish Republicans to the condition of all the progressives of the world.<sup>18</sup>

This international perspective was influenced by the Marxist character of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Veteran Ben Gardner wrote to his sweetheart from Spain, “For the first time in my life I felt that it is not capitalist property I’m guarding, as I did in the National Guard, but the property of the workers, the people of Spain.” Gardner’s letter illuminated a theme among many letters of ALB veterans (both during and following the war); that while fighting in Spain, they felt more aligned with their political purpose than they did with their American identity. Such a sentiment reinforces the positing that the service and writings of ALB vets during the Spanish Civil War is reflective of grievances with contemporary American politics and culture. This alignment with political purpose was, no doubt, a powerful and infectious feeling for the self-described ‘comrades.’ John Simon, a volunteer doctor, wrote of the aura of excitement in Spain: “There has never been an army like this. The Red Army [...] has the spirit - but there is not the same cosmopolitanism, even with all the nations of the Union, that there is here, where

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<sup>18</sup> Nelson and Hendricks, *Madrid 1937*, 132.

orders are given, and obeyed, in German, French, English.” Simon wrote of the cosmopolitan spirit of his outfit, saying that even the Soviet Union couldn’t match the variety of languages and international background on display within the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. He continued: “With all this, the most excellent spirit prevails among the men. Officers’ commands are obeyed - but with an enthusiasm that all the whips of the capitalist army officers cannot produce.” Simon went on to compare the spirit of the ALB with that of more ‘capitalist’ fighting forces. His language portrayed capitalist leadership as more forceful and oppressive than the alternative. That capitalist army officers should have to use whips in commanding their men suggests that coercion is a more standard strategy among capitalists than leftists. Such a comparison contributed to the sense that ALB members were not entirely pleased by the political and social structure of the United States at the time; which they perceived as calculated towards the benefit of an American bourgeois, at the expense of the American part of a global proletariat. Veteran Lee Royce reiterated this point in his writing; where he described himself as a formally slave-minded pawn of aristocracy.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, many American volunteers still exuded patriotism in their writings. The ALB paper, *The Volunteer*, sought to recruit soldiers for the Spanish Republic using iconography from the American Revolution. This comparison caught the imagination of many American volunteers. The connection to 1776, however tenuous it might have been, was seen as a means to convince more Americans of the value in fighting Franco and to present a new interpretation of American history that aligned more closely with the internationally involved vision ALB volunteers held for the United States. Veteran Archie Brown attempted to refute the isolationist characterization of prominent American figures: “Neither Washington, Jackson, Lincoln, or Frederick Douglass were isolationists when it came down to brass tacks. All of them invited

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-66; 88; 107.

foreign help and cooperated with foreign nations fighting for independence. He cited the French & Polish troops that came during the Revolutionary War. The fact that Washington was greatly pleased when they sent him the key from the French Bastille. He also cited Lincoln's letter of thanks to Karl Marx, during the Civil War." Brown used the example of French aid to the US during the revolution to advocate returning the favor to another European power that was seen by many in the ALB as undergoing its own revolution. An epistolary exchange between Abraham Lincoln and Karl Marx was an historical anecdote that enthused many in the ALB, given the influence which these two historical figures had on the volunteers. Veteran Donald Henry also referenced the French role during the American Revolution: "The political situation here is not much different than the political situation of the U.S. in 1776 when the French people helped the U.S. throw off the British monarch because the masses believed in a democratic govt. Now U.S. citizens close their eyes to an assault on a democratic people and in doing that are actually aiding the spreading of fascism." Henry's allusion differed slightly from Brown's, in that he more explicitly stated the intention of drawing such a connection between the past and present, and also recontextualized the revolution as a struggle between democracy and fascism. Irving Weissman wrote at further length on the perceived need for more political education surrounding democracy and fascism, by reference towards the American Revolution: "It is not only our experience in Spain that proves this [...] It is also the experience of the American Revolution, the great work of Thomas Paine at that time, which prove the power of [political] education." For Weissman, then, the benefit of greater political education in the United States would not only have been in eroding racism, but also in encouraging a more internationally engaged citizenry. From the perspectives of ALB members, it is clear that they would expect a proper political education to be left of center.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 53; Carroll, *Good Fight*, 25; 161.

Despite this nominally uniform orientation towards the political left, members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade were fairly diverse politically. The ALB consisted of socialists, communists, and anarchists; all of whom had competing visions for the future of the Spanish Republic after the war. The motley volunteer fighters were able to unify, however, on the grounds of antifascism. Veteran Leon Rosenthal wrote his sweetheart, “I am witnessing with my own eyes the growing unity of the Socialists & Communists here into one revolutionary party [...] and don’t worry about me - for the first time I’m able to get in a whack at the oppressors.” In his letter, Rosenthal commented on the increasing unity between different (albeit all left leaning) political ideologies within the ALB, before he expressed his enthusiasm for fighting fascism. This demonstrated the prioritization decided on by those serving in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade; defeat the fascists, and then worry about our own disagreements later.<sup>21</sup>

ALB members considered the unity of antifascists in Spain essential in combating Franco. The loosely defined coalition between left-oriented fighters for the Republic was known as the Popular Front. Volunteer nurse Rose Freed offered her conviction in the unity of antifascist forces in Spain: “The Popular Front must be maintained at all costs and the Communists who created it must see that it gets stronger every day. Only with the unity of all antifascist forces in Spain will we be able to win in the end [...] We no longer trust or believe the democracies of the world, who are leaving us here to fight for our democracy and theirs [...] We are only interested in the union of the Workers of Spain and of the world [...] We are not interested in any Non-Intervention Pact, Control Plan, or X Pact created by democracies who sit back and offer no help.” Freed’s writing highlighted the unifying power of the common term ‘antifascist,’ that could be unambiguously worn by every member of the ALB without raising any contention between its sub-groups. Her writing was also critical of the democratic nations who had not

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<sup>21</sup> Nelson and Hendricks, *Madrid 1937*, 168.

directly opposed Franco; suggesting that these nations were inadvertently aiding the growth of fascism.<sup>22</sup>

American volunteers in Spain hoped that the survival and continuation of democracy in Spain would inspire other democratic powers to also combat fascism. Veteran Moe Fishman, in his writing, described the unity on display in the international brigade as setting an example for the more reluctant democratic powers: “The international brigade is playing a role of tremendous significance here in Spain. Not only as an explosion of solidarity of the peoples of the world with the liberty loving people of Spain. But even more as an example of well-disciplined antifascists.” In his letter, Fishman placed the emphasis on the example set by opposing fascism, over the example set by standing in solidarity with the liberty loving Spanish. While both were no doubt important to him, this emphasis highlights the effectiveness of organizing around the precept of antifascism.<sup>23</sup>

The reluctance of the United States towards any involvement with the Spanish conflict demonstrated a more isolationist American sentiment that contrasted the international attitude of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. That difference served as the basis for much of the vets’ criticism over American policy towards Spain. This is well displayed by the Lincolns’ own writings on non-intervention and, more specifically, the U.S. embargo on the sale of arms to Spain. Veteran Leonard Levenson made the claim that the American embargo was the only thing preventing the Spanish Republic from winning the war against Franco: “That Act has kept peace out of the world and caused the slaughter of Spanish women and children by fascist bombs. Give us the arms which the act denies us and the forces of Hitler and Mussolini would be mowed down in a few week’s time.” Levenson’s confidence in the ability of the Spanish Loyalists to succeed,

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

barring the embargo, was very common among the ALB. Often soldiers referenced significant defensive successes throughout the course of the war, such as the battle of Jarama. If, in actuality, the war would have played out to a different result or not is unknowable. It can be inferred, however, that the U.S. embargo struck a tender nerve with the American volunteers.<sup>24</sup>

ALB vets felt that the democratic nations that weren't committing to aid the fight against fascism were creating a more dangerous international political situation, whilst at the same time acting ignorantly in dealing with fascist nations. Veteran William Sennett says as much in his writing: "The dangerous military position that has been created is due to dangerous [...] political policies of the other Democracies. While the policy of 'Non-intervention' was (and is) in effect, Germany and Italy poured in troops and materials [...] Don't think that Non-intervention wasn't applied at all - it was when it came to the Republic. Germany, Italy, Portugal bought war materials for Franco, but the Spanish public was denied the right to buy arms in accordance with the Non-intervention agreement!" Sennett's comments suggested that the democracies were deluding themselves about the non-intervention agreements, given that the fascist powers were still delivering weapons to Spain and had already violated these pacts. Such seemed apparent to anyone paying attention and convinced many ALB members that the democratic governments weren't very concerned by the prospect of Spanish Fascism.<sup>25</sup>

ALB members looked towards their letters as a medium by which to increase support among US citizens for greater American involvement in Spain. Veteran Archie Brown in his writing portrayed a common exercise of hope among the ALB; engaging in rumors regarding an eagerness on the part of President Roosevelt to lift the embargo: "Today's papers carry the story that Roosevelt will propose the lifting of the embargo on Spain, to the next Congress [...] this is

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

the most logical step. But - the people must respond with meetings, resolutions, demonstrations etc. in favor of the President's proposal or reaction will nip the plan in the bud [...] Boy what the Spanish people couldn't do with a few artillery pieces & planes & of course food." Brown expressed optimism for the prospect of a lift on the embargo but cautioned this with the understanding that domestic allies to the cause of U.S. involvement in Spain would have to get involved. This reflects an understanding, on the part of this particular ALB member, that the blame for what they perceived as the U.S. abandoning another democratic nation to the spread of fascism was not solely the responsibility of Congress, but also of a wider American culture that was too cautious towards becoming militarily involved with Europe.<sup>26</sup>

Groups of Americans who sympathized with the ALB vocally opposed the embargo at home. The chairman of a 'welcome home' committee in Chicago, to welcome ALB veterans back to the United States, was quoted in the *Chicago Defender* as having stated, "We [America] have held the lamp of liberty. That we still love liberty is attested to by this spontaneous welcome [of thousands] to a few individuals who have demonstrated they are more courageous than most of us [...] Through the operation of an embargo on goods to the Loyalist government, we Americans have placed ourselves as a nation, in the position of aiding our enemies and opposing our allies." This quote reflected an opinion among the ALB and affiliated Americans that the United States' foreign policy towards Spain did not reflect the values of America properly, and actually strengthened the position of the fascist powers.<sup>27</sup>

Black Americans also supported intervention in Spain through both material and political means. The National Negro Congress, as reported in the *Chicago Defender*, regarding Spain, stated that, "a ringing appeal that 'every Negro paper campaign, every pulpit ring, and every

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 460.

<sup>27</sup> The *Chicago Defender*, "TRAVEL - WEARY SPANISH WAR VETS ARRIVE: 10,000 WELCOME GALLANT WARRIORS HOME FROM THE FRONT," the *Chicago Defender*, December 31 1938, 8.

Negro organization activate to help send moral and material aid to the cause of Loyalist Spain [...] 'The American Negroes in the fight for world freedom on Spanish soil greet you from the frozen front lines,' [...] A defeat of fascism in Spain is a blow against international fascism and will result in the liberation of Ethiopia. A free Ethiopia shall be the symbol of freedom for the Negro peoples of the world." Such quotes resonated with black Americans in connecting the political situation in Spain, however indirectly, to the political reality faced by black Americans in the 1930s. This helped encourage support among black Americans for involvement in the Spanish Civil War. Moreover, those hoping to mobilize the black American public into supporting intervention in Spain also drew on the community's history to find inspiration. Veteran Oscar Hunter, an edition of the *Chicago Defender* brought to memory the American Civil War, and the service of black Union soldiers in order to galvanize black Americans' opinions towards US intervention in Spain: "The Negroes in the Lincoln brigade [...] have lived up to the tradition of their forefathers who fought in the ranks of the Union forces during the Civil War [...] If the democracies, especially the United States, would abolish their non-intervention policy and would forthwith give adequate supply of planes, guns and food to the Spanish Loyalists, the war would end within an incredibly short time." Hunter's perspective drew upon black Americans' military history as well as the expectation that Spanish loyalists would win the war if better outfitted, and in doing so reinforced some common ALB thoughts on the lack of appropriate action on behalf of the democracies, having committed themselves to non-intervention, and the ability of the Spanish Republic to prevail with better supplies.<sup>28</sup>

Unions were also affiliated with the ALB in their desire to see the embargo lifted. Many ALB veterans were involved with unions before the Spanish Civil War, and many of those still

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<sup>28</sup> The *Chicago Defender*, "Ask Aid for the Spanish Loyalists," the *Chicago Defender*, March 5 1938, 24; The *Chicago Defender*, "Oscar Hunter Back in U.S. from Spain: TELLS OF EXPERIENCES IN SPANISH WAR," the *Chicago Defender*, October 8 1938, 24.

would continue to support unions following the war. The teachers' union of Howard University (a historically black university) sought to advocate on behalf of reinstating commercial ties with the Spanish Republic: "The Howard Teachers' Union of Howard University, has unanimously adopted a resolution demanding that the President and Congress effect immediate revision of the Neutrality Law to enable normal commercial relations with the recognized democratic government of Spain." Even beyond the teachers' union, Howard University was very vocal in support of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade; likely due in large part to the integrated nature of the ALB. The teachers' union resolution was very direct and forward in urging action on the part of the US government. Veteran William Sennett expressed another possible reason for this, in his claim that victory for the Republicans in Spain would bolster the strength and influence of unions and left politics in the United States: "The victory here, yes, will help to develop the Farmer Labor Party, will build the Party and the Youth Movement. Its concrete expression will surprise some [...] on the benefits for America of a Popular victory in Spain." His suggestion that a victory in Spain will be of benefit at home is similar to ALB veterans' later conviction in a double victory during World War II.<sup>29</sup>

A similar internationalist attitude existed amongst unions and left-leaning politics at home as that which existed within the ALB. Nearing the end of the war, and in the process of withdrawal of the International Brigades, the association, 'The Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade,' campaigned in New York to raise funds for the return of American volunteers. Part of their strategy was to draw on the relationship between the ALB and unions: "The vast majority of our Americans in Spain are members of trade unions and other organizations [...] It is from trade unions that we must expect the most consistent and best organized support." The

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<sup>29</sup> *Afro-American*, "Howard Union Asks Neutrality Revision," *Afro-American*, January 21 1939, 3; Nelson and Hendricks, *Madrid 1937*, 312.

organization's willingness to bet on the financial assistance of the unions in returning the ALB vets is further evidence of the ties that existed between the ALB and unions.<sup>30</sup>

The internationalist stance of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade is a likely reason for their perceiving the advance of fascism in Spain as a direct and immediate threat to democracy in America. It was this common conviction among the ALB that compelled many of its members to fight in a foreign war, and that further explained the feelings of ALB members towards the predominantly isolationist stance of the pre-war United States. Hyman Katz, a Jewish-American volunteer in the ALB drew on his Jewish heritage to emphasize the importance of preventing a fascist takeover of the United States, presumably due to Germany's example of how antisemitism can thrive and become powerful through policy within a fascist regime. Katz claimed that Spain's defense was in the interest of the United States: "I came to Spain because I felt I had to [...] We didn't worry when Mussolini came to power in Italy. We felt bad when Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, but what could we do? [...] Seeing all these things - how fascism is grasping power in many countries (including the U.S., where there are many Nazi organizations and Nazi agents and spies) - can't you see that fascism is our own problem - that it may come to us as it came to other countries? And don't you realize that we Jews will be the first to suffer if fascism comes?" Katz used the inaction of the United States, and global democratic powers more broadly, towards the advance of fascism in Italy and Germany as a point of reference that ought to have influenced the contemporary political opinion of the democracies towards becoming involved in Spain and defending its government from the spread of fascism. By illustrating this pattern of democratic neutrality and non-intervention, followed by the rise of fascism, Katz hoped to convey to the intended audience of his letter (that being a loved one at home who was

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<sup>30</sup> *New York Times*, "SEEK FUNDS TO AID AMERICANS IN SPAIN: FRIENDS OF LINCOLN BRIGADE ASK \$250,000 TO RETURN FIGHTERS," *New York Times*, June 26 1938, 25.

dubious of his decision to go fight in Spain) a similar urgency towards the spread of fascism that was shared among the ALB.<sup>31</sup>

Canute Frankson, a black member of the ALB, made a similar case as Katz in writing on the high threat that fascism in the United States would pose to black Americans, as well as Jewish Americans: “We are doing our part here. You and especially our people must take some part in the struggle. If Fascism gains power in America we and the Jews will be the baits.” Frankson issued a direct call to action to the reader of his letter; a call to action that urged involvement in the global struggle against fascism. Along with antisemitism, Frankson insinuated that the history of racism towards black Americans in the United States would undoubtedly influence a fascist government to persecute them in a manner similar to the persecution of Jewish people in Nazi Germany. The allusion to Germany’s treatment of Jewish people is evidenced by Frankson’s likely preoccupation with the subject as a consequence of being a member of the ALB, who were aware of such political developments in Europe and fiercely committed to opposing fascism across the world.<sup>32</sup>

John Cookson, as a member of the ALB, wrote of the need to combat fascism in Spain in order to defend the democracies of the world from fascism. Defending scientific and professional freedom, he advanced his larger point: “If Spain turns fascist, then Belgium and France can not hold off the menace there. Then England, China, and America. But we cannot tolerate a long period of history, and I least of all as an embryo scientist, of fascism. For scientific investigation is thwarted.” While it is reasonable to assume, by virtue of his attachment to the ALB, that Cookson would have harbored concerns for the likely severe social and cultural evils that would follow a fascist takeover of the United States, it is interesting to approach the need to combat

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<sup>31</sup> Nelson and Hendricks, *Madrid 1937*, 31-32.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

fascism through the approach of protecting freedom in one's professional career and in scientific advancement. The former, especially, could have been a point that may have registered with a great number of Americans and proved rhetorically powerful for a country amidst a depression. If fascism could be framed as something that would further restrict Americans opportunities to work, then that would undoubtedly prove compelling to Americans of the era and likely support more steadfast resistance to international fascism if that seemingly foreign force could be demonstrated as to having the potential to take over the United States.<sup>33</sup>

Even by the time the United States' opinion had shifted towards combating fascism, however, the US military did not feel any more favorably towards the Abraham Lincoln Brigade; leadership within the military maintained that support for the Second Spanish Republic was associated with nothing other than a subversive commitment to communism. In returning to the United States from Spain, members and veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade faced political discrimination within the United States military under the suspicion of communist sympathies. A primary differentiation between the perspectives of Lincoln veterans and leadership within the United States military was that the former tended to view their role in the Spanish conflict as a part of the same fight against fascism which the United States was now involved with. Whereas the latter conceived of the Spanish Civil War as a foreign conflict, removed from the present predicament of the United States. Moreover, the military's top brass tended to assume that the Republican position within the Spanish Civil War was in support of communism. This distinction is useful in understanding the actions of the United States military leadership in following an unstated policy of blocking veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade from avenues of promotion and agency within the US military. ALB veteran John Gates wrote of the perception that Spain was a foreign war and described his own experience of political discrimination in the military:

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

“That was a foreign war of course, as some people who should have known better still think, and who still question the loyalty to America of those who fought in Spain, because of their political beliefs [...] I was recommended by my battalion for officers school but turned down by the examining board despite [my previous education, military experience, and present record being more qualified than others accepted,] only because as I must assume, of my political beliefs.” Gates argued that service in Spain was proof of loyalty to the United States because, in the Lincoln view, halting fascism in Spain was necessary to safeguard liberty in the United States. Given that the military leadership were not convinced of the connection between the continuation of the Spanish Republic and the safety of the United States, they were more prone to view the involvement of Americans in a war on the other side of the Atlantic as a disloyal action.<sup>34</sup>

Military leadership understood American anti-fascists’ decisions to volunteer for war in Spain as being connected to communist influences that were subversive towards the United States. Such an understanding fostered political discrimination within the armed forces. Veteran Alvin Warren claimed, in his letter, that Military Intelligence was gathering information on his personal politics: “The only developments since [having been transferred out of a combat unit] is that the Military Intelligence has been visiting many of my former friends and employers, soliciting information of a political nature, about me.” Warren’s letter evidenced the paranoia that became widespread among American veterans of the Spanish Civil War, who had enlisted to fight fascism again during the Second World War. The apparent collection of information on ALB vets, and their subsequent barring from advancement in the military, served to cultivate an expectation of disillusionment within the ALB towards the United States military.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Carroll, *Good Fight*, 62.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

ALB veterans, predictably, took personal insult to the claim of disloyalty to (or an interest in subverting) the United States. Another ALB veteran, Milton Wolff, remarked on an exchange with his officer: “A high ranking officer, whose name I cannot give, who is interested in my case helpfully suggested that I lean over backwards to prove that I am not a Red because I fought for Loyalist Spain. He hinted that that would help him help me get overseas to do some fighting [...] Why should I lean over backwards to prove anything? It seems to me that I have leaned forwards enough to prove to anyone that my one desire is to fight for the good things that America stands for, to fight against the Nazis and the Fascists and the Japanese who want to destroy those good things.” The anecdote, while not proven by Wolff’s account alone, is one such example of a perceived trend, among ALB vets and sympathetic groups, of unfair political scrutiny directed towards ALB members in the United States military. Wolff’s writing supports the notion that ALB vets, enlisting in the American military, understood there to be a broadly unspoken policy towards ALB members, that would deliberately stymie their desire to serve. Wolff’s position in his letter also strongly suggested that the reason for such deliberate political discrimination of the ALB was a suspicion of communist leanings, and that overseas fighting (the reason many ALB members were so keen to enlist) was contingent on adequately demonstrating that one was not a communist; this was a difficult position for many ALB members, given that, in practice, ALB affiliation practically meant an automatic assumption of a communist orientation. Furthermore, many ALB members were openly communist in their own political character and made the argument that such opinions were personal and not reason enough to bar them from service. Wolff seems to give voice to frustrations harbored by many former volunteers to Spain. He exclaims that the antifascist stance the ALB had taken in Spain is the same stance that the United

States, essentially, then held towards the Nazis and Japanese; meaning that Wolff had done nothing but prove his willingness to serve the then present cause of the United States military.<sup>36</sup>

The predominant manifestation of political discrimination towards the Abraham Lincoln Brigade within the United States military was the removal of Lincolns' real presence in the armed forces; whether by means of transfer or by blocking promotion. ALB member Jack Bjoze began collecting accounts of discrimination against servicemen associated with the ALB, so that he might build a case against such discrimination. ALB veteran Leonard Grumet wrote to Bjoze to inform him of his recent transfer: "Dear Jack [Bjoze], [I'm] writing this to let you know that I am another Vet who has been suddenly transferred and sent to this outfit which is one degree better than an internment camp." Grumet's emphasis on being 'another' vet to be transferred indicates that such practice by army leadership, to the purpose of removing the presence of the ALB, was common knowledge among Grumet and his peers. He also described the new outfit as having conditions that were substandard by comparison to an internment camp. This claim was corroborated by similar descriptions in other ALB letters and, if true, would support the idea that the military transfers of ALB veterans from standard or active combat units to those which many in the ALB considered 'sideline units,' was politically motivated and aimed at the removal of Lincolns from service.<sup>37</sup>

Further supporting the notion that veterans of the ALB were, specifically, being targeted for transfers on the basis of their political beliefs, Walter Garland wrote of an instance in which his superior intended to transfer him based on his political orientation: "I was then assigned to 731st Military Police [...] My C.O. at that time admitted that a telegram had been forwarded, in advance of my arrival, warning that I was a communist and a veteran of Spain's struggle for

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

freedom from Fascist Slavery.” If true, this anecdote of top-level communications regarding soldiers’ political character would support the concerns of ALB vets; concerns over the fairness of their treatment within the military. Garland’s declaration that the Spanish Civil War had been a ‘struggle for freedom from fascist slavery,’ supports the earlier stated conflict of opinion, between the United States military and members of the ALB over the political characteristics and justifications involved in the decision to fight in Spain. That the ALB hoped to communicate that Spain was just an early part of the ongoing war the United States was then fighting. The disgruntled manner in which Garland asserts that the Lincoln view (that the fate of Spain would be consequential towards the future safety of the US) is the correct view of the geopolitical situation betrays the extent to which Lincolns were offended and upset by their treatment whilst serving in the US military.<sup>38</sup>

Discriminatory treatment of ALB vets within the United States military prompted another reaction besides bewilderment or anger; that being a concern over the safety of ALB veterans who did manage to serve overseas. In the minds of Lincolns, it no longer seemed outrageous to assume that the leadership within the United States military might deliberately assign Lincolns to more dangerous combat roles or conceive of ways in order to bar entry back into the United States. ALB veteran, Bunny Rucker, wrote on this issue in his letter: “Of course the idea of returning servicemen is a joyous idea and it must be great for them as they return. But suppose some of them who shared overseas duty and are entitled to return home are denied that pleasure because they fought fascism a few years too soon or because they thought friendship with Russia was a good idea as far back as 1941. Is there an attitude of just writing them off as World War II casualties?” Rucker’s concern is accompanied by his assertion that it is arbitrary and hypocritical for the United States to discriminate against the veterans of the ALB due to their volunteering in

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

the Spanish Civil War, given that the United States had since adopted the ostensible mission of the Lincolns during that war: to combat fascism.<sup>39</sup>

When ALB members had found that their grievances often fell on deaf ears within the United States military, some began to focus on reaching influential figures in the civilian leadership. Some of the more ambitious letters, in this regard, are those addressed to US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. ALB member, Jack Bjoze, wrote to FDR in order to illuminate the problem for the President, and to appeal to his power and position as Commander-In-Chief (and priorities as a war-time President) by offering reasons as to why the discriminatory political treatment of ALB veterans in the United States military wasn't just the wrong approach in principle, but that it also was an unstated policy that could only impede or deprive the war effort:

“Dear Mr. President: We are addressing ourselves to you as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of our nation [...] members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade are barred from combat duty and from advancement in the Army [...] It is this fact that makes the situation a serious one not only because of its threat to national unity, but because it is holding back experienced and proven anti-Axis fighters from contributing their abilities and their lives if need be for the defense of our country [...] We think it is now clear to all liberty-loving Americans that the cause of Spain was the cause of Democracy and was our cause.”

Bjoze's opening appeal was an open recognition of the agency possessed by FDR by virtue of the political office he held. This demonstrated the general feeling among ALB members in the American military that the leadership of the armed forces needed to be subject to outside pressure if they were to alter their policy of political discrimination towards ALB members. The

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

foremost line of reasoning used by Bjoze and others was to argue that political discrimination within the United States military hurts national unity and deprives the military of experienced fighters. Bjoze's point on the experience of ALB vets as axis-fighters reinforces the point derived from Wolff's aforementioned letter: that the stated aim of combating fascism in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, during the Spanish Civil War, was the same predominant aim that the United States would then assume as its own during World War II. This point is made explicit, by Bjoze, when he signs off by clarifying that the cause of Spain was democracy; which is itself a central cause of the United States.<sup>40</sup>

While most of the attention on political discrimination against the Abraham Lincoln Brigade focused on the experiences of enlisted Lincolns in active service, there were instances in which the War Department practiced political discrimination against the ALB in the domestic sphere. The *Washington Post* ran a story by the headline 'Lincoln Vets Rites Banned By War Dept.' This story covered the rejection of the ALB at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which was justified by a strict code of procedure around the visiting of the tomb after a select group of Italian American fascists had raised a fascist salute in a photo taken at the tomb. The *Washington Post* article read: "The War Department revealed yesterday it had refused a request by American veterans of the Spanish loyalist army to hold exercises at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier tomorrow because the shrine was not open to demonstrations by groups which were not 'American nonpartisan patriotic organizations.'" The primary criterion here, then, that justified blocking any ALB activity near the tomb was the fact that the group was decidedly partisan, and that many of its members subscribed to communist political ideals that contrasted with that of much of the United States. However, the ALB would contend that they remained patriots and committed to the United States Constitution and to American democracy; as such, their niche

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-92.

political views ought not to be viewed as a threat to the memory of the unknown soldier. ALB members predominantly resented that they would be considered as a group that could potentially behave disrespectfully towards the memory of Americans lost in combat. The ALB were convinced that the American military and public did not appreciate that they had fought fascism before the rest of the country, and the instance around the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier does support this critique.<sup>41</sup>

Reporting by the *New York Times* illuminated two additional instances of political discrimination against the ALB domestically: "Leaders of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade have been subpoenaed to appear before a Federal grand jury next Monday, it was learned yesterday after the disclosure that agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation had raided the headquarters of the organization." That the ALB was both broadly subpoenaed and raided, suggested a desire on the part of the domestic intelligence community to neutralize the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, likely out of a concern of communist subversion. *Washington Post* reporter Joseph Butler communicated how Lincolns perceived this concern: "[...] as the veterans see it, the Spanish government is no more Communist than the New Deal." Butler's comment, in likening the Spanish Second Republic to the New Deal, was purposed towards portraying the Second Spanish Republic and its cause as being no more left leaning than contemporary American legislation.<sup>42</sup>

In returning to a historiographical consideration of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade's service in the Spanish Civil War, it is plain to see that their struggle (and their reasons for engaging in that struggle) are more in line with American opinion today than that of the national opinion in the 1930's and '40s. As such, the ALB does prove to be quite a significant group for

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<sup>41</sup> The *Washington Post*, "'Lincoln Vets Rites Banned by War Dept.," *The Washington Post*, February 11 1939, 23.

<sup>42</sup> *New York Times*, "FBI Raids Spanish Loyalist Veterans," *New York Times*, February 10 1940, 1; Joseph Butler, "The Lincoln Brigade Veterans," *The Washington Post*, February 14 1938, 1.

historical study, just in how prescient many of their concerns seemed to be for the United States. Historical hindsight seems to confirm that they were at least correct on account of which aspects of American life would reach inflection points throughout the following decades. The ALB grievance with contemporary racial discrimination in the United States assumes a greater significance, retroactively, following the Civil Rights Movement. The ALB grievance with American isolationism was certainly rectified in the postwar era, even if it wasn't aimed towards the aims of a global proletariat (as many in the ALB might have hoped). And certainly, the political discrimination of left-leaning ALB members and veterans appears more significant following McCarthyism. Each of these grievances can be readily understood and perceived in the service and writings of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Though a foreign conflict, the volunteering of these Americans in the Spanish Civil War can best be understood as a perceived means by which they could signal discontent towards these aforementioned aspects of 1930s and '40s American politics and culture, while also acting towards the thwarting of fascism internationally.

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