

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

WHAT MAKES THE NEWS: CHICAGOLAND REPORTING ON THE SPANISH CIVIL  
WAR 1936-1939

BY

ALEXANDER FURASH

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FACULTY ADVISOR: ALEXANDER HOFMANN

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“Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.”

-Thomas Jefferson

“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes”

-Song of Solomon 2:15

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It was cold in the dungeons under the Castle of Figueras. The jails which once would have been crowded with political prisoners of the Spanish Second Republic were now mostly empty save for Henry Buckley, his fellow foreign correspondents, and the members of parliament they had come to witness. As he reported on a parliament forced to meet underground out of fear of bombings, Buckley's friend, the Russian writer Ilya Erenburg remarked that this dungeon would become known as the tomb of both the Spanish Second Republic and European Democracy. Buckley agreed.<sup>1</sup>

Two months ago Buckley had sat in an English church questioning matters of faith. How, he wondered, could Christians around the globe celebrate their faith while turning their back to the cries of the Spanish Second Republic? It certainly couldn't be for lack of effort on Buckley's behalf. When the Spanish Civil War had begun Buckley had spent those July nights "in a state of complete mental inebriation" furiously using his typewriter to write reports "ablaze with indignation." He had felt sure that the message he and many of his fellow reporters believed, that the democratically elected Spanish Second Republic was threatened by a fascist-backed insurrection, would be heard clearly in Europe and the Americas and promptly answered with support for the Republic. As Buckley sat in that dingy dungeon watching the last parliamentary meeting of the Spanish Second Republic, he would have plenty of time to think back to those July nights. Why, he might have asked, if the message was so clear, why had no one answered?<sup>2</sup>

The conflict that Buckley reported on, the Spanish Civil War, had begun on July 1936 but its causes went back to the start of the decade. Primo de Rivera, who had ruled Spain as dictator since 1923, had lost power by 1930 and had moved to France where he promptly died. Shortly after, the military dictatorship he had ruled followed him to the grave and by 1931 elections were held to determine what form the new Spanish government would take. The urban centers of Spain, Madrid and Barcelona,

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Buckley, *Life and Death of the Spanish Republic*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1940: 414.

<sup>2</sup> Buckley, *Life and the Death of the Spanish Republic*: 404-405, 207.

returned such pro-republican results that Spain's monarch, Alfonso XIII, fled the nation. With him gone Spain's "first democracy," the Spanish Second Republic, was born.<sup>3</sup>

From 1931-1936, the Spanish Second Republic would experience constant violent political conflict. The first two years saw struggles between center left parties which were unified by anti-clericalism and the left-wing parties they had allied with who desired land reform. 1933-1936 was characterized by the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (CEDA), a coalition of right-wing parties which had gained ground in the elections of 1933, walking back the reforms of the early years of the republic. Fearful over the success of CEDA, miners in the principality of Asturias rose up in 1934 which Gen. Francisco Franco, serving under the Spanish Second Republic, put down ruthlessly leading to around fifteen hundred casualties.<sup>4</sup> By 1936, an alliance of socialist and left-wing parties gained primacy in the parliament and began to push economic reform further, including attempting land redistribution to break up the large farming estates in the south while additionally pardoning those who had revolted in 1934. Meanwhile political violence between the police force, anarchists, and the Spanish fascist party the Falange had become constant. By July 1936, in response to the death of Spanish right-wing politician Calvo Sotelo at the hands of Socialist party members in league with the police force, various military leaders including the then partially exiled Francisco Franco attempted a coup against the government. When their initial plan failed due to popular resistance, the plotters dug in for a longer conflict and the Spanish Civil War had begun.

Spain was not unique in experiencing deep unrest in the 1930's, Under Mussolini's rule, Italy began to aggressively look abroad and invaded Ethiopia in 1935; In Germany, the Weimar government withered under rightist assault and would fall to Hitler in 1933; In Mexico, President Cárdenas moved to nationalize the oil industry; in Asia, Japan attacked China over control of Manchuria; and in France, an

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<sup>3</sup> This quote, along with much of my description of the creation and politics of the Spanish Second Republic is taken from the eminent historian Stanley G. Payne in Stanley G. Payne, *Spain's First Democracy: The Second Republic, 1931-1936*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.)

<sup>4</sup> Stanley G. Payne, "Political Violence During the Spanish Second Republic," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, no. 2/3 (May-Jun, 1990): 284.

alliance of center left and left-wing parties, termed the Popular Front, battled for control of the state against French conservatism.

In the United States President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal intended to pull the American economy away from the clutches of the Great Depression. The American bourgeoisie stood at a crossroad: should they accept the New Deal and the benefits it brought, such as the National Recovery Act's support of cartelization, or resist the checks and controls FDR's new administrative state was attempting to create over big business? American Labor faced internecine conflict too, as executive support and the ensuing increase in militancy led to a divide between the more moderate American Federation of Labor and the nascent and radical Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) on how best to organize. Farther left, American Communists, once somewhat unified in support of the victorious Bolsheviks under Lenin, began to fracture into Stalinists and Trotskyists<sup>5</sup>

The American Press, which had recently undergone a profound transformation, experienced this conflict as well. New technologies allowed for the cheap mass production of newspapers changing how papers functioned. Into the late 19<sup>th</sup> century papers made the majority of the profits from lucrative printing contracts handed out by elected officials in payment for their support and as such were far more partisan, but by the 20<sup>th</sup> century papers began to stake out a more neutral stance as it became possible to reach and advertise to a larger and politically heterogeneous audience.<sup>6</sup> Papers that were able to utilize these new technologies began to buy up those that could not in an effort to expand their reach, leading to a consolidation in the market. This consolidation, and the ensuing power it vested in a relatively small

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<sup>5</sup> For a selection of books on the tumultuous interwar period in the United States and Europe see Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*, (New York, NY: Verso, 1996); Duncan Hallis, *The Comintern*, (Chicago, Ill: Haymarket Books, 2008); Julia L. Mickenberg, *American Girls in Red Russia: Chasing the Soviet Dream*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2017); Robert Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes: A Biography*, (New York: Viking [Penguin], 1986); T. Harry Williams, *Huey Long*, (New York: Vintage Press, 1981).

<sup>6</sup> Richard K. Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of American Objectivity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.)

amount of publishers, was checked partially by journalists organizing into unions such as the Newspaper Guild, which challenged the likes of William Randolph Hearst in the 1936 Seattle protests.

This strife, experienced in the United States, did not distract Americans from the Spanish Civil War as might be expected, rather it imbued it with new meaning. Despite deep cultural differences, Americans saw similarities between Spain and America, especially on how the two nations dealt with the crises of the Great Depression. The American Intelligentsia on the left, from intellectual communists to liberal New Dealers, could relate to the young Spanish Second Republic and its attempts to implement economic reform to avoid crisis. Labor activists, especially those in the militant CIO, could relate to Spanish Syndicalism and the movements efforts to gain control over the factories which they worked. The American right saw a similarity between the government overreach they feared in the New Deal and reports of the abuses inflicted on Spanish conservatives by the left-wing Spanish Second Republic. Regardless of political preference, Americans saw themselves in at least one faction in Spain.

This interest in Spain was not limited to the cosmopolitan east-coast and yet, historical accounts tend to focus on the biases of war-time correspondents and/or the biases of major east-coast papers, namely the *New York Times*.<sup>7</sup> This study is not without merit, the biases of foreign correspondents, of which the *Times* had the most, can be illuminating when studying how journalism shapes perceptions of war but it has also led to foreign correspondents and east-coast periodicals having an outsized position in the current historiography.

The *Times* was not the only paper interested in war, and periodicals shaped coverage of the war regardless of if they could afford foreign correspondents or relied on news wire services. In the city of Chicago alone nearly every perspective on how to cover the Spanish Civil War could be found. The

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<sup>7</sup> For instance see: Paul Preston, *We Saw Spain Die: Foreign Correspondents in the Spanish Civil War*, (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2009); Adam Hochschild, *Spain in Our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939*, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016); Julie Prieto, "Partisanship in Balance: The New York Times Coverage of the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1936," Alba.org, 2007, [Microsoft Word - Julie Prieto.doc \(alba-valb.org\)](http://Alba.org).



*Tribune*, the city's richest paper, provided its readership with charged reports from foreign correspondents, one of which was Buckley, to inform its readers of what the war felt like. The *Defender*, at the time the nation's largest black paper, viewed Spain as part of a global attack on the rights of the oppressed by reactionary forces. The *Herald-Examiner* connected the policies of the Spanish Republic to the New Deal, and the *Times* horrified its readers with photographs displaying the destruction of property in Spain. Even papers seemingly un-interested in the war, such as the *Daily News*, felt compelled by their readership to cover the war, including re-printing AP stories and providing their own editorial spin.

By shifting the focus to an under-studied region, the Midwest, a narrative emerges which challenges current historiography, especially that which depicts the Midwest as a hub of Isolationism. Even recent academics who have challenged the prevalence of isolationism have tended to concede that the region, and its press especially, were essentially isolationist.<sup>8</sup> This carve-out in the current academic discussion is un-warranted. No paper, even those uninterested in the politics of the war, could afford to not at least partially cover the war indicating a demand for foreign coverage inexplicable if the region was populated by the ignorant peasants that authors like David M. Kennedy describe.

So why did these conditions mean that the message Buckley hammered into his typewriter went unanswered? American neutrality on the war gave American periodicals significant room to maneuver on how to cover the war, but this coverage was bounded by an audience which demanded to hear about the war in ways that justified their own political ideology. Because of this latitude and this demand newspapers that provided coverage to their audience which did justify their ideology would draw attention and make sales, meaning papers motivated by either pecuniary or ideological interest pursued this route. How these periodicals did so, and why no unified message could form, can be answered by a close comparative analysis of these Chicagoland papers.

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<sup>8</sup> For instance, see Peter Boyle, "The Roots of Isolationism: A Case Study," *Journal of American Studies* 6, no 1 (1972); Warren Kuehl, "Midwestern Newspapers and Isolationist Sentiment" *Diplomatic History* 3, no 3 (1979). David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999)

### **The Chicago Tribune: Reporting from the “World’s Greatest Paper.”**

The Chicago *Tribune* didn’t just advertise itself as the “World’s Greatest Newspaper,” it believed it. Over the course of the Spanish Civil War the *Tribune* did more than report on the conflict, it also used the war as a chance to advertise its superiority compared to competitors. To do so the *Tribune* used its wealth to provide its readership with an amount of coverage from foreign war correspondents that dwarfed what any other Chicagoland paper could or did provide. In utilizing correspondents embedded within both the Nationalist and Republican sides the *Tribune* took an apparent neutral stance on the war, yet editorial decisions indicate a subtle but noticeable support of the Nationalist cause on behalf of the *Tribune* which at times came at odds with the stance of its reporters.

Before looking at the *Tribune*’s coverage of the Spanish Civil War it is important to understand the paper’s origin. Founded in 1847, the *Tribune* began to gain prominence under manager and future owner Joseph Medill who positioned the paper as one of the first in support of the creation of a Republican party out of the ruins of the Whigs.<sup>9</sup> The *Tribune* worked very closely with Abraham Lincoln during his senatorial campaign in 1858 and then his presidential campaign, even going into debt to promote the Republican party.<sup>10</sup> So vocal was their support of Lincoln and the free-soil movement that years after the civil war Medill recounted that at one point during a semi-private meeting he was told by then president Lincoln that out of any newspaper the *Tribune* was the most responsible for the current crisis.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Lloyd Wendt, *Chicago Tribune: The Rise of a Great American Paper*, (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1979): 44.

<sup>10</sup> Wendt, *Chicago Tribune*, 98.

<sup>11</sup> Wendt, *Chicago Tribune*, 22.

Medill's conduct as manager and owner of the *Tribune* created two important precedents. The first was that the *Tribune* was to be a Chicago paper. Medill felt a sort of noblesse oblige towards his adopted city, after the great Chicago fire he served as the mayor of the city, and so whereas other cosmopolitan papers such as the *Times* attempted to become the nation's paper of record the *Tribune* remained firmly rooted to the city of Chicago.<sup>12</sup> The second precedent established was that the Tribune company would be private rather than publicly traded. Because of this, after Joseph Medill's death management of the *Tribune* passed down first to his grandson Joseph Medill McCormick and then, most importantly, to Col. Robert McCormick who would manage the paper for much of the first half of the twentieth century.

Robert McCormick was in many ways an aristocrat, a trait instilled in him from a childhood spent in English boarding schools due to his father's career as the U.S ambassador to Austria, France, and Russia. Following in the footsteps of his maternal grandfather, Robert McCormick was not content to only publish the news and instead attempted to use his power to enact change in the world. McCormick funded the defense in *Near v. Minnesota*, a landmark supreme court case which ruled that the first amendment protected press from state censorship, and he used the *Tribune* editorial page to launch broadsides against his many detractors.<sup>13</sup> McCormick controlled many aspects of the *Tribune* including the papers foreign press service leading one historian to write that McCormick's beliefs and the *Tribune's* foreign coverage were so mixed that "Colonel McCormick was the policy."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Wendt, *Chicago Tribune*, 243.

<sup>13</sup> Sam Lebovic, *Free Speech and Unfree News: The Paradox of Press Freedom in America*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2016): 45; Ironically, McCormick was also involved in another important U.S. Supreme court case *Associated Press v. United States* which he inadvertently caused by using his A.P membership to block the *Chicago Sun* from applying for membership.

<sup>14</sup> Jerome E. Edwards, *The Foreign Policy of Col. McCormick's Tribune 1929-1941*, (Reno, University of Nevada Press, 1971): 21.

Because of McCormick's politics and how closely the *Tribune* followed them, some historians have depicted the paper as isolationist. David M. Kennedy described it as "obstreperously isolationist" and McCormick as "a bullying giant of a man and a towering colossus of provincialism."<sup>15</sup> Even historians who disagree with the prevalence of isolationism in the inter-war period have conceded that the *Tribune* was an isolationist paper.<sup>16</sup> What these academics mis-understand is that McCormick was a nationalist; he advocated for whatever foreign policy would advance his understanding of American interests, but he was no pure isolationist. While McCormick did advocate for a less-active foreign policy, including opposing the Marshall Plan, he also advocated for trade deals and strengthening diplomacy in the Pacific.<sup>17</sup> While he certainly contained an isolationist impulse, McCormick was more nuanced in his beliefs to fit the term isolationist as neatly as some historians claim.

Similarly, the *Tribune* during the 1930's was more complex than the term isolationist would imply. Yes, it followed Colonel McCormick in advocating for a lack of foreign entanglement but it also showed a deep and abiding interest in foreign affairs. By 1930 the *Tribune* was one of seven American papers to have a dedicated foreign press service, the size of which was only second to the *Times*.<sup>18</sup> This service was populated mainly by correspondents trained from work in the *Paris Tribune*, an offshoot of the *Chicago Tribune* initially created to supply American troops in Europe during the first world war and read heavily by the Parisian ex-

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<sup>15</sup> David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 440; Robert McCormick was no stranger to being called provincial, supposedly once being called "the finest mind of the fourteenth century" by a former *Tribune* writer.

<sup>16</sup> Warren F. Kuehl, "Midwestern Newspapers Isolationist Sentiment," *Diplomatic History* 3, no. 3 (1979): 283-306. In this journal article Kuehl uses reprinting of *Tribune* editorials as a positive indicator that a paper supported isolationism.

<sup>17</sup> Edwards, *The Foreign Policy of Col. McCormick's Tribune*, 54-55.

<sup>18</sup> Edwards, *The Foreign Policy of Col. McCormick's Tribune*, 27-28.

pat community in the inter-war period. Whereas its main rival for American expats, the *Paris Herald*, was described as catering to the “lobster palace Americans” the *Paris Tribune* had more “plebian origins” with coverage focused on the modernist left bank of the Seine.<sup>19</sup> The *Paris Tribune* exemplifies the nuance of McCormick and the Tribune in their relation to isolationism. Despite being published and read in Paris, McCormick argued that it was an “American paper” which reflected an American and non-European point of view.<sup>20</sup> That a paper could be so European and American at once indicates an envisioning of what “American” meant on behalf of McCormick that did not reject the outside world on principle, but rather sought to moderate outside influences lest they dilute pure “Americanism.” This world view certainly provides historians who describe McCormick and the *Tribune* as inherently isolationist with some amount of justification, but in doing so these authors miss the nuance of the Colonel and his paper’s beliefs which refuse to fit neatly into an isolationist framework.

At home in Chicago the *Tribune*’s readership was far less plebian. Between 1936-1939 the *Tribune* maintained a subscription cost of thirteen dollars and eighty cents, a price it would take a worker earning the federal minimum wage implemented by the Fair Labor Act of 1938 fifty-five hours of work to afford, which combined with its large circulation brought it an average income from subscribers over the period of over eleven million dollars a year making it the wealthiest paper in the Chicagoland area by far.<sup>21</sup> The *Tribune* did best in higher income neighborhoods such as Evanston and Hyde Park-Woodlawn and struggled in working class areas

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<sup>19</sup> Nissa Ren Cannon, “The American Colonies: Paris’s Chicago Tribune and Paris-American Identity,” *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 8, no. 1 (2017): 37.

<sup>20</sup> “Tribune’s Life of Service to Americans Ends Today,” *Chicago Daily Tribune European Edition*, Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> 1941, quoted in Cannon, “The American Colonies,” 53.

<sup>21</sup> Figure taken by averaging figures provided in N.W. Ayer & Son’s *Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Son, 1936-1939)

like Gary and East Chicago.<sup>22</sup> As the Spanish Civil War broke out these readers would be offered a wealth of news on the conflict from foreign war correspondents, something no other paper in Chicago could provide. McCormick expected his foreign correspondents to be both reporters and editorial, as one author wrote “Not only the facts count for him, but his opinion.”<sup>23</sup> Of the many correspondents Buckley, Smalls, Allen, and Taylor were the most prolific on the Spanish Civil War.

### Henry Buckley

Henry Buckley was one such reporter for the Chicago Tribune who came out of the Paris branch. Arriving in Spain in 1929 Buckley quickly felt a moral imperative to support the newly formed republican government despite describing himself as “a practicing Catholic with a moderate amount of fervour (sic).”<sup>24</sup> Buckley wrote for several papers in addition to the *Tribune* including the *Daily Telegraph* and he was critical of the lack of interest the international press held for Spain before the conflict, specifically in their ignoring of the atrocities inflicted on the socialist led rebels of 1934.<sup>25</sup> Because of Buckley’s time in Spain, once the war broke out his analysis of the conflict’s cause and Spain’s political scene was more nuanced than most.

Whereas authors such as Edmond Taylor used terms such as “red mob” to describe various

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<sup>22</sup> Edwards, *The Foreign Policy of Col. McCormick’s Tribune*, 33.

<sup>23</sup> Edwards, *The Foreign Policy of Colonel McCormick’s Tribune*, 28.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Buckley, *Life and Death of the Spanish Republic*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1940: 3. Buckley’s account of the decline and demise of the Spanish Second Republic wonderfully blends historical analysis with an earnest neuroticism which makes for an endearing read. For instance, Buckley complains that after spending a year as a foreign correspondent in Paris he left the city a virgin, the type of admission one does not normally see in a profession so infused with Hemingway like machismo.

<sup>25</sup> Buckley, *Life and Death of the Spanish Republic*, 152.

political factions, Buckley related to the reader the vast differences of political opinion between each cabinet member before predicting what sort of government they would make.<sup>26</sup>

During the war Buckley reported from the Republican side, in his words searching for “something positive which I could use as news.”<sup>27</sup> He found that positive story in the Spanish women who took up arms against the Nationalists in the Guadarrama mountains, in the loyalist siege of Alcazar, and in the “great heroism” shown by the loyalist troops attacking Teruel.<sup>28</sup>

When Buckley reported on the Nationalist side of the war, he always made mention of the soldiers and weapons of war sent to the Nationalists by Hitler and Mussolini.<sup>29</sup>

Buckley was a passionate supporter of the rRepublic. Reflecting on the first days of the war Buckley wrote:

For days in the fierce heat of those July days in Madrid I was in a state of complete, mental inebriation. I banged the keys of my typewriter with furious conviction... I turned out at white heat, ablaze with indignation and hope. In my fury I could not understand how anyone to whom Democracy meant anything at all and no matter in what part of the world he lived, could not be thrilled to see the way in which civilians with little experience and few arms had partially checked a well-prepared military revolt.<sup>30</sup>

The *Tribune* functioned as a “cooling saucer” that tempered Buckley’s reporting, but it also shaped his coverage to be more in line with the paper’s values. Compare Buckley’s sense of thrill at seeing civilians check the Nationalist’s advance to his report in the *Tribune* in which he wrote “Workers of Spain, armed with all sorts of weapons, flocked toward Madrid tonight to

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<sup>26</sup> Edmond Taylor, “Red Mob Rule Imperils Spain; Fights Rioters,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb, 21<sup>st</sup> 1936; Henry Buckley, “Spain’s Radical Factions Unite in New Cabinet,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Sep, 5<sup>th</sup> 1936.

<sup>27</sup> Buckley, *Life and Death of the Spanish Republic*, 220.

<sup>28</sup> Henry Buckley, “Women Shoulder Arms; March to Fight Fascists,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul, 27<sup>th</sup> 1936; Henry Buckley, “Holds Off Rebels From Art Gems of Toledo, Spain,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul, 30<sup>th</sup> 1936; Henry Buckley, “Teruel Battle Horrors Barred by Survivors,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec, 27<sup>th</sup> 1936.

<sup>29</sup> Henry Buckley, “Loyalists Halt Drive of Italian Army on Madrid,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar, 1<sup>st</sup> 1936; Henry Buckley, “Here’s Picture of What Nazis Did to Almeria,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun, 6<sup>th</sup> 1937.

<sup>30</sup> Buckley, *Life and Death of the Spanish Republic*, 207.

save the republic” and the difference becomes clear.<sup>31</sup> Partially this was due to self-censorship, Buckley himself described moments where he would re-write headlines after catching himself philosophizing rather than reporting, but the *Tribune* had other tools to accomplish this goal.

The first of these methods was the control the *Tribune* held over the titles and introductions around dispatches. After *Tribune* reporter Henry Wales wrote a positive account of his time in the Soviet Union, the paper claimed he had been heavily censored despite Wales himself writing the opposite, and it appears the *Tribune* took a similar approach to Buckley’s reports.<sup>32</sup> For one dispatch in which Buckley recounts three initiatives the new Republican government initiated with no comment on efficiency the *Tribune* gave the title “Spain Tied Up by Decrees of its Red Regime.”<sup>33</sup> When this tactic was not utilized the *Tribune* could utilize the other method to shape coverage, placing Buckley’s reporting in conversation with other, more conservative journalists, journalists like Edmond Taylor.

### **Edmond Taylor**

Edmond Taylor liked Spain, to him it was a semi-mythical land where he could wax lyrically of walking by the bones of El Cid “that medieval trigger man” or the mausoleum where “generations of Spanish kings lie sealed in stone and pride” but he was less positive about Spaniards.<sup>34</sup> Taylor described Spaniards as a bloodthirsty, honorably, and lazy lot, a people who had not worked “since the discovery of America,” who “being Spaniards they do not care how

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<sup>31</sup> Henry Buckley, “Workers Face Troops,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul 20<sup>th</sup>1936.

<sup>32</sup> Edwards, *The Foreign Policy of Colonel McCormick’s Tribune*, 62-63.

<sup>33</sup> Henry Buckley, “Spain Tied Up By Decrees of Its Red Regime,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul, 29<sup>th</sup> 1936.

<sup>34</sup> Edmond Taylor, “Spain Doomed to Red Revolution by Mass Poverty,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar, 15<sup>th</sup> 1936.



much blood is spilled” in the process of revolution, and to whom historically “revolution was considered a kind of sport.”<sup>35</sup>

As the war broke out Taylor embedded himself within the Nationalist front, a position that did not change his patronizing view of Spaniards. During one battle, Taylor attributed the success of loyalist defense efforts as due to it being “the only kind of fighting that Spaniards are any good at” and finished by explaining to the Chicago reader that “The Spaniards are not cowards. It is simply that they do not take civil wars seriously... while they are not frightened by battles, Spaniards get so excited they lose their heads completely.”<sup>36</sup>

Despite his patronizing views, Taylor viewed the Nationalists both positively, largely due to their perceived competence, and as a movement he could be included in. Describing the rebel advance on Madrid, Taylor continuously used the term “we” to describe rebel advances, and after describing a moment in which he related news to a town guard of the rebels advance which caused the guards to surrender joked that “I can claim having conquered that village for Gen. Mola.”<sup>37</sup> During his time as a war correspondent Taylor reported on un-verified Nationalist victories, Republican atrocities though conspicuously never Nationalist atrocities, and despite reporting on the growing Nationalist air force never once reported on the German and Italian planes flying alongside them.<sup>38</sup> Of the Republicans Taylor wrote:

The liberal Spanish Republic is dead and armed workers, who in fact have ruled all of Spain since the civil war started, except those parts held by the rebel armies, now hold

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<sup>35</sup> Edmond Taylor, “Spanish Revolt Leader a Killer and a Charmer,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar, 29<sup>th</sup> 1936.

<sup>36</sup> Edmond Taylor, “Tells of Battle For Madrid: Mountain Pass Won and Lost in Two Day Fight,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul, 25<sup>th</sup> 1936.

<sup>37</sup> Edmond Taylor, “Tribune Writer Describes Push of Rebel Army,” Jul, 24<sup>th</sup> 1936.

<sup>38</sup> Edmond Taylor, “Madrid Battle Toll Heavy,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug, 3<sup>rd</sup> 1936; Edmond Taylor, “Badajoz City of Dead as Rebels Rout Loyalists,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug, 17<sup>th</sup> 1936; Edmond Taylor, “Spanish Mob Shoots 500 Prisoners and Burns Bodies,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug, 19<sup>th</sup> 1936; Edmond Taylor, “Rebel Air Force Gains Edge Over Madrid Flyers,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug, 11<sup>th</sup> 1936

power legally. The machinery of a proletarian soviet state, modeled after Russia, is already functioning through the emergency wartime decrees... Rigid censorship hitherto concealed from the world the true picture of what was going on in Madrid and Barcelona.<sup>39</sup>

Once away from the battlefields Taylor's reporting became more focused on the connection between the Nationalist forces he had traveled with and international fascism which he feared. "We" dropped out of Taylor's vocabulary when discussing the Nationalists, and he described the non-intervention committee "as a mask for Italian intervention in Spain."<sup>40</sup> This change of opinion on the Spanish conflict occurred alongside a broader change in Taylor's writings in which he became more fearful of international fascism, eventually causing him to leave his position at the *Tribune* after publicly criticizing the owner Robert McCormick for "not taking the threat of Hitler's Germany seriously."<sup>41</sup>

### Alex Small

Unlike Edmond Taylor, Alex Small never wavered from his support of Franco and the Nationalists. Some of his first dispatches from Spain described the Nationalist strategy as a "good combination of audacity, prudence, and shrewd judgment of the enemy's capacity" whereas he criticized the Republican army for including "boys as young as 11 years of age and many not over 15."<sup>42</sup> Small's reporting was inherently biased in favor of the Nationalists, in one telling article he completely denied that the Nationalists had committed war crimes which he instead solely blamed on the Republican forces, a stance he never retracted. In the same article

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<sup>39</sup> Edmond Taylor, "See Spain Drift to Soviet State Under Red Leadership," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Sep, 6<sup>th</sup> 1936.

<sup>40</sup> Edmond Taylor, "Vatican Joins Democracies in Drive for Peace," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct, 14<sup>th</sup> 1937.

<sup>41</sup> Rudolph M. Unger, *The Chicago Tribune News Staff 1920s-1960s*, (1995): 94.

<sup>42</sup> Alex Small, "Flee Before Moors," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct, 22<sup>nd</sup> 1936; Alex Small, "Rebels Prepare for Storming of Spanish Capital," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct, 23<sup>rd</sup> 1936.

Small admitted to Nationalists receiving aid but described it as “a justifiable balance to the support with men and supplies the Reds [loyalists] have been receiving, chiefly from Russia.”<sup>43</sup>

Small’s support of the Nationalists stemmed from his anti-Russian politics. To him, popular front governments or communist parties were made up of citizens who “wish to sacrifice their own country for which they have lost all patriotic feeling in the struggle that is considered inevitable... to save ‘holy Russia.’” In the same article Small engaged in international victim-blaming, complaining that “Wiser heads deplore the fact that France is furnishing Germany and Italy with pretexts for war through the noisy communist agitation in favor of intervention for the Spanish Popular Front government.”<sup>44</sup> Despite his clear biases Small would report on Spain longer than any other *Tribune* correspondent, blaming anarchists for violence inflicted on refugees, without mention of why there were refugees, as late as 1939.<sup>45</sup>

### Jay Allen

Despite reporting on the conflict for the least amount of time, Jay Allen produced some of the most well-known reporting on the Spanish Civil War. Unlike Alex Small, Allen had experience with Spain long before the first gunshots began in 1936. The son of a lawyer, Allen worked as a sailor before graduating from Harvard and becoming a foreign correspondent first in the *Tribune*’s Paris branch and then in Spain. Despite never belonging to a political party, Henry Buckley described Allen as unable to ignore an injustice “always ready to sweep the cobwebs from the problems of the day.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Alex Small, “Rebel Cruelty in Spain Denied By War Writer,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov, 8<sup>th</sup> 1936.

<sup>44</sup> Alex Small, “France Plunged in Gloom: Fears Red Revolution,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan, 1<sup>st</sup> 1937.

<sup>45</sup> Alex Small, “Refugees Bare Spanish Terror of Anarchists,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan 30<sup>th</sup> 1939.

<sup>46</sup> Buckley, *Life and Death of the Spanish Second Republic*, 172.

Allen found those cobwebs in his first reports on the “clique of political generals, survivors of King Alfonso XIII praetorian guards,” leading a “savage assault on the republic voted by an immense majority of the Spanish people in 1931.” The framing of his first article on the revolt not only reveal a dislike of the nationalist forces but a personal dislike of their leadership, describing Franco as “undersized” and Gen. Manuel Goded as joining “for the sheer love of conspiracy.”<sup>47</sup> Initially positive about the loyalists’ chances, Allen reported that he believed the Republicans had won as early as July 30<sup>th</sup> 1936.<sup>48</sup>

As the war continued with no victory in sight, Allen sought answers as to why. One such answer was that despite avowed neutrality, international press favored the Nationalists. Writing on British support in particular Allen claimed:

The British Military and naval people as a whole sympathize with the rebels, who are men they know and play bridge and polo with and hunt with- the “nice people” of Spain. *It is the sympathy of caste for kindred caste* [emphasis added]. The official gazette of Gibraltar, *The Chronicle*, from the first has dubbed the republicans as “the reds” and ignored the existence of the government at Madrid.<sup>49</sup>

Following this line, Allen was the first journalist at the *Tribune* to verify reports of fascist aid on behalf of Germany and Italy, a point he argued would sway western democracies into backing the loyalists.<sup>50</sup>

Despite his support of the Republican cause Allen was one of the first U.S. reporters to interview Gen. Francisco Franco once the war broke out. Allen’s disdain is evident in the report of the interview, which describes the leader of the Nationalists as “Another midget who would

<sup>47</sup> Jay Allen, “Army Chiefs Attempt Coup; March on Madrid,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul, 20<sup>th</sup> 1936.

<sup>48</sup> Jay Allen, “Army Forces on the Defensive, Beaten by Navy,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul 30<sup>th</sup> 1936.

<sup>49</sup> Jay Allen, “Spanish Revolt Stalemated on Southern Front,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul 24<sup>th</sup> 1936.

<sup>50</sup> Jay Allen, “Keep Hands Off! Spain’s Warning to Duce,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug, 2<sup>nd</sup> 1936; Jay Allen, “Italian Flyers Join Rebels,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug, 4<sup>th</sup> 1936.

rule.”<sup>51</sup> In addition Allen interviewed Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, the imprisoned leader of the Spanish fascist party, who shortly thereafter was executed.

Allen did not just focus on the “great men” of the war, the political and military leaders who had brought about the calamitous conflict, he also reported on what was befalling the citizenry of Spain. His first report along this line was a semi-sensationalist piece on stories he heard about the activities of Moorish troops on the Nationalist side, but as the war progressed his reporting became less detached.<sup>52</sup> Allen covered atrocities committed on both sides, of the murder of prisoners of the Republic Allen wrote:

There is a terror in the Jails of Malaga where close to 1,000 prisoners lie... There is a terror in the hold of a grimy freighter which holds fully 500 more. There is a terror in a thousand homes of the Rightists in the town itself which has become for all of them a vast prison. They have had a month of terror already since the Fascist rebellion was drowned in blood on that first night.<sup>53</sup>

As a sort of balance, the next day Allen wrote “If in Malaga -held by loyalists- it is in Red terror; In Granada it is a white terror. And it is raging.”<sup>54</sup>

Allen’s reporting on war-time atrocities culminated in his report of the Nationalist slaughter of the citizens of Badajoz, his most famous piece of reporting on the war. Allen was by this point so invested in what he was witnessing that he could not help but begin his report by narrating his experience rather than the events, writing:

This is the most painful story it has ever been my lot to handle. I write it at 4 o’clock in the morning, sick at heart and in body, in the stinking patio of the Pension Central, in one

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<sup>51</sup> Jay Allen, “Franco Orders ‘No Let-Up In Drive on Madrid,’” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul 28<sup>th</sup> 1936.

<sup>52</sup> Jay Allen, “Tells Atrocities of Rebel Moors in Southern Spain,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1936.

<sup>53</sup> Jay Allen, “Malaga in Grip of Terror Fascists Face Mass Slaughter,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug 17<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>54</sup> Jay Allen, “White Terror Grips Granada,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug 18<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

of those tortuous white streets of this steep fortress town. I could never find the Pension Central again, and I shall never want to.<sup>55</sup>

This “most painful story” was the report of how Nationalist troops, in league with nearby Portuguese military personal, slaughtered 4,000 citizens after retaking Badajoz. Allen lingers on the horrors of the sheer scale of such slaughter, including reports that so many locals had been executed in the local bull-fighting ring that the floor had become palm deep in blood. The impassioned nature of this report has led some historians to challenge it’s validity, as only Allen’s version included machinegun executions in the arena.<sup>56</sup> Other historians have claimed that Allen’s report incensed Robert McCormick enough to cause the editor to fire Allen, but as no evidence of such an exchange has been provided and given that Allen continued to report on the conflict for two months after his report on Badajoz this is likely an unfounded rumor.<sup>57</sup>

### **The Tribune**

With so many partially biased reporters, the *Tribune* was able to make its thoughts on the war known by placing itself in the middle, an objective arbitrator of what its correspondents submitted. When Edmond Taylor falsely reported on the Nationalist forces capturing Guadarrama, claims which were disproven by Henry Buckley’s reporting, the *Tribune* chose to print both stories, using the conflicting claims as marketing by advertising that Buckley had scooped Taylor, rather than only printing the factual report.<sup>58</sup> And yet, despite positioning itself as impartial moderator the *Tribune* was far from fully objective, especially in its titles. One

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<sup>55</sup> Jay Allen, “Slaughter of 4,000 at Badajoz, ‘City of Horrors’ Is Told by Tribune Man,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug 30<sup>th</sup> 1936.

<sup>56</sup> Marta Rey Garcia, *Stars for Spain: La Guerra Civil Española En Los Estados Unidos*, (Sada, A Coruna: Edicions de Castro, 1997): 205.

<sup>57</sup> Edwards, *The Foreign Policy of Col. McCormick’s Tribune*, 102.

<sup>58</sup> Edmond Taylor and Henry Buckley, “General Shot; Rebel Wounded Fill Hospitals, Both Sides Claim Victory in North,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1936.

report, on FDR not ending the arms embargo, was tilted “Diplomat *Saves* U.S. from Clash Over Loyalist Spain (emphasis added)” and as previously mentioned reports from Buckley bore significant changes between title and content indicating change.<sup>59</sup> Finally, readers of the *Tribune* would simply get more information from the Nationalist side than the Republican. Both Allen and Buckley stopped reporting for the *Tribune* by 1937 whereas Taylor and Small reported on the conflict until the bitter end. The *Tribune* falsely positioned itself as an objective moderator to obscure this fact, but at the end of the day its readers heard more about and more from the Nationalist side than they did the Republican which would naturally effect how their readers perceived the war.

When compared to its rival, the *Daily News*, at first glance their coverage appears broadly similar. Despite having less foreign correspondents than the *Tribune* the *Daily News* included many reports from their foreign press service. Where the two differed was in how their correspondents went about their jobs. Reginald Sweetland, for the *Daily News*, alternated between reporting from the Nationalist and Republican sides of the war sometimes on a near daily basis.<sup>60</sup> *Tribune* correspondent on the other hand were expected to embed themselves only on one side with Jay Allen occasionally proving an exception. This style created far more biased reporting than the *Daily News*, which the *Tribune* was able to use to position itself at the as a non-biased arbitrator.

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<sup>59</sup> “Diplomat Saves U.S. from Clash Over Loyalist Spain,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*. Apr 24<sup>th</sup>, 1938; Henry Buckley, “Spain Tied Up By Decrees of Its Red Regime,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jul, 29<sup>th</sup> 1936.

<sup>60</sup> Reginald Sweetland, “Malaga Defenders in Panic; Harassed by Rebel Air Raids,” *Chicago Daily News*, Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1936; Reginald Sweetland, “Rebels Take Key Town in Madrid Drive,” *Chicago Daily News*, Sept 4<sup>th</sup> 1936.F

Another area these two papers differed is in the usage of visuals. Both papers included pictures of combatants readying for war, but only the *Tribune* produced comics mocking the war. In one such comic planes are seen flying over the feeble Neutrality Wall to bomb a “castle in castile,” in another an actor portraying Stalin fails to appear believably heroic while stopping Italy and Hitler from ravaging a female Republican Spain who is ironically the only actor armed in the performance. These comics furthered the *Tribune’s* detached and objective appearance by presenting the conflict as comical, something to study and dissect but not necessarily to treat as vitally important.



Figure 1 "Sky Writing In Spain," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Aug 18th 1936.





Figure 2, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Oct 22nd 1936.

### Conclusion

The “World’s Greatest Newspaper” walked a tightrope in its coverage of the Spanish Civil War. On one side its editor and owner Robert McCormick was a man who had no compunction against using his paper to promote his personal philosophy, similarly to how his grandfather utilized the *Tribune* as a battering ram for the free-soil movement and the Republican Party in the 1860’s. On the other side, the *Tribune* circulated widely, particularly among the middle and upper classes, who demanded insightful and seemingly objective reporting. The solution the *Tribune* found was tapping into its foreign press service on a scale no other paper in Chicago could do. These reporters were not expected to be un-biased, instead through the act of presenting conflicting reports the *Tribune* presented itself as un-biased. Of course, the *Tribune*’s

control of titles, editorials, and decisions of whom to hear from and how long to listen meant that it had far greater power in how to present the conflict than might be immediately obvious. What is obvious is that the *Tribune* used its wealth of foreign correspondents to provide a look at the war that no other Chicago paper could, a fact the “World’s Greatest Newspaper” happily advertised with every impassioned report.

## The Chicago Defender: Coverage of the War At-Home and Abroad

The Chicago *Defender* was quick to provide its audience with coverage of the Spanish Civil War and it did so in a manner unique to itself. It did not have the funds for as many foreign correspondents as the Chicago *Tribune*, nor as many glossy photos as the *Daily Times*, and as a weekly it could not provide the battle-by-battle analysis like the *Daily News* could. Instead, what the *Defender* offered was ideologically led coverage of the war, mostly driven by its editorial department, which placed the war within a broader narrative. This narrative connected the violence in Spain to Italy's invasion of Ethiopia and racial violence in America arguing all were instances of a revanchist war on the oppressed of the world by forces of reaction. This ideologically lead coverage did not make for objective or accurate journalism, but it was passionate journalism, more so than any other paper in the Chicagoland area.

### Making the “World’s Greatest Weekly”

The *Defender* was founded in Chicago in 1905 by Robert S. Abott. From humble roots, Abott was the son of a former slave, the *Defender* grew into “the foremost shaper of black thought” during the first half of the 20th century.<sup>61</sup> At the time, the *Defender* reported weekly on events in the Chicagoland area from an African American perspective, with a particular focus on the south side in which its main office was, yet over time it took a broader scope. Rising literacy rates among African Americans, sale of newspapers through railroads, and few initial competitors created fertile ground for the *Defender* to cultivate a national audience. To speak to this wider audience, the *Defender* moved to cover broader issues like social justice, using its

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<sup>61</sup> Mary E. Stovall, “The *Chicago Defender* in the Progressive Era,” *Illinois Historical Journal* 83, no. 3, (1990): 159.

editorial sections to promote “The Great Migration” in which African Americans in great number left the Jim-Crowe south for northern cities.<sup>62</sup> Given its audience, the *Defender* drew less revenue from traditional sources such as advertising, instead relying on paper sales and most importantly subscriptions to continue operations. From 1936-39 the *Defender* averaged 81,333 subscribers which, at a subscription cost of three dollars brought it an average annual revenue of 244,000 dollars.<sup>63</sup> Compared to other major Chicagoland papers this was a minuscule amount, but for the *Defender* it was enough to allow them to produce in their own words the “world’s greatest weekly”<sup>64</sup>

### The Long Mediterranean War

By the middle of the 1930’s the *Defender* had developed quite an interest in foreign affairs, instigated by fascist Italy’s years long provocation and eventual invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935. The *Defender* was quick not only to side with Ethiopia but to find connections between the conflict and American culture, comparing Emperor Haile Selassie to upcoming heavyweight champion Joe Louis as both champions of the race.<sup>65</sup> This focus on foreign affairs specifically in the Mediterranean positioned the *Defender* to be an early leader in coverage over

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<sup>62</sup> James R. Grossman, “Blowing the Trumpet: The Chicago Defender and Black Migration During World War 1,” *Illinois Historical Journal* 78, no. 2 (1985): 82-96; Bitner highlights audience retention driving their coverage and promotion of the *Defender* in Katherine A. Bitner, “The Role of the Chicago Defender in the Great Migration of 1916-1918,” *Negro Historian Bulletin* 48, no. 2 (1985): 20-26.

<sup>63</sup> Figure taken by averaging figures provided in N.W. Ayer & Son’s *Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Son, 1936-1939)

<sup>64</sup> Compared to the other papers included in this study the *Defender* ranks last in revenue trailing the next lowest by over two million dollars a year. This is due partially to the *Defenders* cheap subscription cost (between 1936-39 the *Defender*’s subscription cost stayed at three dollars whereas *The Herald-Examiner* which had the next lowest subscription cost seven dollars and eighty cents during that period) and partially it’s low subscriber count (between 1936-39 the *Defender* averaged 81,333 subscribers whereas every other major paper measured subscribers in the hundreds of thousands)

<sup>65</sup> “Youth Takes Its Place” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1935.

the conflict brewing in Spain.<sup>66</sup> Whereas most papers only began to report on Spain once war broke out the *Defender* was reporting on the release of political prisoners four months before the conflict's violent eruption. Already the *Defender* positioned its coverage to be partisan, describing the prisoners as African men of letters and obfuscating their socialist politics.<sup>67</sup>

Despite this early coverage, the *Defender* did not report on the breakdown of the Spanish Second Republic as might be expected. While interested in Spain by early 1936, most of the *Defenders* focus was still occupied with Ethiopia. Even as the war in Ethiopia ended the *Defender* continued to publish material on the conflict, recapping why the war was lost or castigating the international communities lack of response. As late as June 1936 Spanish news was relegated to the foreign affairs section and Ethiopian reports were regularly headline news. What news was reported out of Spain was vague or inaccurate indicating only a partial interest in Spanish affairs.<sup>68</sup> Despite a preexisting focus in foreign affairs in the Mediterranean and North Africa and the paper demonstrating an early sympathy with the leftist side in Spain the *Defender* was so invested in Ethiopia that like the other Chicagoland papers it took conflict breaking out to turn its gaze to Spain.

While the *Defender* was slow to begin covering Spain, once war broke out the speed in which the paper took to caring about the conflict and contextualizing it as part of a global

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<sup>66</sup> For a point of comparison between the *Defender* and other Chicago papers interest in Spain before the war the *Tribune*, which already had a correspondent in Spain when the 1935 miners' rebellion broke out instead chose to relocate their correspondent to cover the assassination of French politician Louis Barthou.

<sup>67</sup> "7 Black Spaniards Released from Jail" *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Mar, 14<sup>h</sup> 1936.

<sup>68</sup> "Emperor Leads Ethiopian Army on Northern Front," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Mar 28<sup>th</sup>, 1936; S. Van la Mimosa "Civilization is Plea in Grabbing Territory" *Chicago Defender National Edition*, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1936. This dispatch was both kept to the foreign affairs section whereas discussion of why Ethiopia lost was front page news but and demonstrated the papers lack of knowledge of Spain at this date as it attempts to explain Spanish colonial policy without mentioning the Rif War which both indicate a general lack of interest in the nation.

narrative was second to none. To the *Defender*, what was happening to the people in Spain was a continuation of a global conflict between fascists and free peoples that began in Ethiopia. While correspondents at larger papers attempted to find a precise term to describe what political ideology the rebels served the *Defender* was quick to provide an answer. In the words of the *Defender's* chief editorial writer Metz. T. P. Lochard the rebels were the rich and wealthy, the “professional oppressors of the common mass” who supported fascism “as a means to retrieve their lost authority, power and opulence.”<sup>69</sup> The *Defender* stressed that this conflict was not unique to Spain and had global implications, in the words of one editorialist “The Spanish fascists, forcing a terrorized, superstitious, priest-ridden, ignorant population into their ranks, have added insult to injury by making secret deals with the two mad men of Europe, Hitler and Mussolini.”<sup>70</sup> By stressing the connection between the Nationalists and European fascists, editorialists at the *Defender* attempted to revenge themselves for the loss of Ethiopia. Lochard used his editorial platform to drive home the connections between the Ethiopian and Spanish conflicts, gleefully reporting that the failures of Italian volunteers in Spain demonstrated that Italians made far better gangsters than fighters.<sup>71</sup>

The early stance the *Defender* took on the Spanish Civil War was not uniform. Near the start of the conflict, one untitled editorial argued that “neither side appears to deserve the respect of Mankind.” Ruth Pearson Koshuk, a resident of Chicago and reader of the *Defender* took issue with this stance and wrote a rebuttal in a letter to the editor. In her response Koshuk criticizes

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<sup>69</sup> Metz T. P. Lochard, “Fascist Uprising in Spain Sends Warning to American Masses,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Aug 1<sup>st</sup>, 1936. For an example of the more precise terminology of other Chicagoland papers see Jay Allen, “Army Chiefs Attempt Coup; March on Madrid,” *Chicago Tribune* Jul 20<sup>th</sup>, 1936, in which Allen describes the rebels as “reporting to have the backing of the Spanish Fascists and Monarchists.”

<sup>70</sup> B.F. Corrothers, “Fascism in Spain Given New Analysis” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Oct 10<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>71</sup> Lochard, “Panorama of World News,” Apr 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1937

the previous editorial and negatively compares it both to Lochard's editorials and Jay Allens reporting in the *Tribune*. The implicit threat in her response, which should the *Defenders* coverage waver ideologically readers can turn to other even more traditionally conservative papers seems to have been effective. No response to Koshuk's criticism was penned and coverage became more uniform in supporting the republican cause.<sup>72</sup>

### The War Comes Home

As the war developed the *Defender* began to envision the conflict in a new way. Spain was no longer the most recent battleground of a war that began in Ethiopia, but part of a much larger legacy of racism and the fight against it. This analysis was present from the start; Corrothers had ended his piece explaining the origins of the war with a warning that Sinclair Lewis, the author of the novel *It Can't Happen Here*, in which a fascist politician comes to power in the United States, may be proven right in the end and Lochard warned his readers that "Fascist ideals and hopes are pretty strongly embedded in many important quarters of this country." But as the war progressed this rhetoric gained a new intensity. The war and the Homefront had become one, and to protect African Americans, the Spanish Republic had to be defended. In an editorial, a volunteer for the Lincoln-Brigade, a group of international volunteers for the Republican army, wrote that:

We, blackmen (sic), went to Spain because we understood the Fascist assault upon democracy would have far reaching effects upon the welfare of our people everywhere. The invasion of Manchuria by Fascist-minded Japan, the annexation of Ethiopia by Italy, and the ruthless persecution of Jews by Germany are logical sequences of Fascist imperialism. In America, the Klu Klux Klan, the Black Legion, the Crusaders, and other groups, organized by industrial tycoons to terrorize the masses, are preparing the way for

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<sup>72</sup> "War in Spain," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Sep 19<sup>th</sup>, 1936; Ruth Pearson Koshuk "What the People Say: War in Spain" *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Oct 24<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

a fascist coup. When that day comes the American blacks will be the first to be visited by the plague.<sup>73</sup>

The unique threat that fascism posed to African Americans was further elaborated by one *Defender* editorialist who wrote:

Whatever else it may mean to others, to us Fascism implies a cancellation of those rights and privileges for which we have shed our blood. It means the elimination of those sacred principles which have given hope for an equitable economic and social adjustment to the common mass under a democracy... A victory for General Francisco Franco would give impetus to fascism in other corners of the world where the seed of this dangerous weed has already been transplanted.<sup>74</sup>

With such investment in the conflict the *Defender* began to identify itself as a participant, and its detractors as enemies. The headlines and editorials of the *Defender* began to use more aggressive language even when reporting on non-war related subjects, for instance in response to reports of police violence, Lochard warned that Chicago had become “the focal point of fascist influence and concentration in America.”<sup>75</sup> As a participant the *Defender* sought to aid the war effort more so than any other Chicagoland paper.

As part of this contribution, the defender promoted fundraising for Republican Spain. The Neutrality Act of 1937 made shipment of arms illegal, so the Defender instead fundraised for medical aid. The paper wrote that it had identified “large numbers of people on the south side of Chicago who are interested in Spain” and so chose to advertise Chicago fundraisers as they would be most successful, but it also supported attempts to foster national aid networks.<sup>76</sup> These

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<sup>73</sup> Sterling Rochester, “Race Must Help Spain to Rescue Freedom,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Sept 25<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

<sup>74</sup> “Our Brothers in Spain,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Sept 18<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

<sup>75</sup> Lochard, “Panorama of World News,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Jun 12<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

<sup>76</sup> “Race Becomes Ally to Spain in War Crisis,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Apr 10<sup>th</sup>, 1937; “Name Spain Ambulance Committee,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Dec 18<sup>th</sup>.



contributions were framed as non-ideological and non-partisan, instead being sent in the name of African Americans.

The *Defender* was not content to only be a mouthpiece for fundraising, it also promoted volunteering for the Spanish Civil War. In this the *Defender* had to be careful, they could not openly promote volunteering as they did with fundraising as it was illegal for U.S. citizens to travel to Spain due to the Neutrality act of 1937, and so they worked more subtly. Their first tactic was to use reporting on foreign volunteers to Spain to highlight the advantages doing so. In one report titled “700 Cubans Fight for Spanish Red Loyalists” volunteering is portrayed as a romantic adventure for the 200 black Cubans among the volunteers as “Already exploits of their heroic deeds are being sung by the admiring Spanish Senoritas *who are sparing no trouble to inspire them* (emphasis added).”<sup>77</sup> As the war progressed the *Defender* shifted its strategy from reporting on groups of volunteers to highlighting the heroism of locals who volunteered and died in the struggle. When Chicagoan Milton Herndon, brother of labor organizer Angelo Herndon, died while fighting for Republican Spain he was eulogized for a month in an almost religious fashion, an “outstanding leader, politically and militarily” who gave his life for “the redemption of the masses from blood-sucking fascists who advance their frontiers day by day.”<sup>78</sup> Milton Herndon was not alone in being eulogized in this fashion, a memorial for the anniversary of Oliver Law, a black Chicagoan who died in Spain, death was publicized in the *Defender* as was the death of Joe Dallet.<sup>79</sup> At first glance the *Defender’s* focus on the dead might appear at cross-purpose with its attempt to rally support for the Republican cause but when contextualized as one

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<sup>77</sup> “700 Cubans Fight for Spanish Red Loyalists,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Sept 19<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>78</sup> Thyra J. Edwards, “Kill Kin of A. Herndon in Civil War,” *Chicago Daily Defender National Edition*, Nov 20<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

<sup>79</sup> “Spanish Volunteer Returns to USA,” *Chicago Daily Defender National Edition*, Dec 4<sup>th</sup>, 1937; “Will Observe Oliver Law’s Death, July 10” *Chicago Daily Defender National Edition*, Jul 9<sup>th</sup>, 1938.

aspect of the papers broader narrative it begins to make more sense. In none of the articles reporting on the deaths of volunteers was the war or Americans participation in it questioned and the heroism of the deceased was always stressed. This re-framing turned tragic events into causes to celebrate, Law was not a casualty of war but “the finest example of a great race and the bravest of the brave,” Dallet and Herndon didn’t die as soldiers of a losing cause but instead in a such a heroic fashion that “can show you how to die.”<sup>80</sup> What the *Defender* was doing should not be viewed as similar to a morbid focus death that other papers demonstrated, but rather as a promise it was making to its readership that should they volunteer and die they *will* be remembered, and they will be remembered as heroes.

Photography too was used to both honor volunteers and raise awareness of fundraisers. While the *Defender’s* editorials and reporting focused mainly on male volunteers in combat positions the papers photographs tended to display female volunteers. In one particularly striking image, Chicago social worker Constance Kyle sits by reporter and aid organizer Thyra Edwards comfort Spanish children made homeless by the war in Spain. In another, the only African American nurse for the Lincoln Brigade, Salaria Kea, stands beside the chancellor of the Spanish consulate in Chicago Senor Begaga at a reception in her honor at the University of Chicago. Unlike say the *Chicago Times* which used photography to capture the gruesome and destructive side of the war in a marketable form, the *Defender’s* photographs should be considered restrained. Their position as an active participant in the war meant that photographs depicting the sensationalized would actively preclude raise funds and volunteers, so photography was instead

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<sup>80</sup> Rochester, “Race Must Help Spain to Rescue Freedom,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Sept 25<sup>th</sup>, 1937; Edwards, “Kill Kin of A. Herndon in Civil War,” *Chicago Daily Defender National Edition*, Nov 20<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

used to highlight the many contributions African Americans were making as part of the war effort.



*Figure 3* “U.S. Social Workers with Spanish Children,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Dec 25<sup>th</sup>, 1937.



*Figure 4* “Spanish Consul Gives Reception for Nurse,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Jun 18<sup>th</sup>, 1938. (Note Salaria Kea second most left and to the right of Senor Luis Perez Begaga.

In addition to attempting to raise material support and volunteers for the war effort, the *Defender* contributed to the defense of the Spanish Second Republic by launching continuous broadsides against the international communities’ position of neutrality. At the onset of the war,

the *Defender* argued that Italy and Germany's involvement in the war would make the international communities' stance of neutrality temporary.<sup>81</sup> As the body count rose, and the international community continued to stand back the *Defender* became more vigorous in its condemnation. Chief editorial writer Metz T.P. Lochard wrote that "The Democracies of the world have a definite obligation toward Spain, which is fighting today for civilization and Christianity," for the United States own Neutrality Act of 1937 he wrote that "such a stupid piece of legislation could have only been enacted by hopeless idiots, devoid of intelligence, decency, and morality."<sup>82</sup> Lochard was unique in his intensity, but not in his condemnation of the American Neutrality Act, another editorialist called it "an embarrassing piece of unwise legislation" and that it "was inspired more by fear than by a spirit of international justice and morality."<sup>83</sup> Even as the war's end shuddered into sight the *Defender* continued to mock calls for neutrality from governmental or non-governmental bodies, one particularly scathing example bearing the title "Pope Blesses War Tanks, Appeals for World Peace."<sup>84</sup>

The Catholic Church's support of the Nationalists particularly irked the writers of the *Defender*. As centers of both religious and political power in Southside Chicago, the *Defender* frequently worked closely with numerous churches. Furthermore, many of those who worked for the paper were religious themselves which often matched their left-leaning politics. Robert Abbot, publisher and owner of the *Defender*, converted to the Bahá'í Faith in 1936, a decision he made due to the religion's message of the inherent brotherhood of man and commitment to

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<sup>81</sup> "World War seen as Duce, Hitler Aid Fascists in Wartorn Spain," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Aug 29<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>82</sup> Metz T.P. Lochard, "Panorama of World News," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Apr 4<sup>th</sup>, 1937; Metz T.P. Lochard, "Panorama of World News," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Apr 16<sup>th</sup>, 1938

<sup>83</sup> "The Neutrality Law," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1938.

<sup>84</sup> "Pope Blesses War Tanks, Appeals for World Peace," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Oct 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1938.

equality.<sup>85</sup> This background meant that the *Defender* took issue with the Nationalist's use of Christianity as a justification and occasionally supported the Republic with religious language itself, something that few other leftist papers did.

The work the *Defender* did on behalf of the Spanish Republic did not go unrecognized. In a letter to Abbott which was republished in the *Defender*, the chancellor of the Spanish consulate of Chicago, Luis Perez Begaga, thanked the publisher for having “joined your voice to that of all democratic peoples of the entire world who have come to the aid, support and defense of Spanish Democracy.” Perez took the opportunity to stress the achievements while blaming Fascist support for prolonging the conflict. Perez finished his letter with a thanks to the *Defender* “in defending Spanish Democracy has also defended the cause of world democracy and oppressed people.”<sup>86</sup>

This praise was not limited to coming from professional diplomats. Foreign soldiers volunteering in Spain applauded the stance the *Defender* took. Not only did the *Defender's* coverage of the war capture the moral stakes, but in the mind of soldiers like Ralph Thornton of Evanston it also “has a wonderful effect on our comrades who are not so conscious of the forces that remain in back of our particular racial strivings.” Furthermore, the *Defenders* coverage shown a light on the accomplishments of the race, accomplishments Thornton was proud to use the paper to communicate “My father who lives at 1619 Evans Avenue, would, for instance, like to read in your columns the fact that the writer, Ralph Thornton, an American black boy, was cited for bravery in action at Quinto by the Fifteenth Brigade.”<sup>87</sup> In its coverage the *Defender*

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<sup>85</sup> Ethan Michaeli, *The Defender: How the Legendary Black Newspaper Changed America*, (New York, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016): 214.

<sup>86</sup> Luis Perez Begaga, “An Appreciation,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Dec 11<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

<sup>87</sup> Ralph Thornton, “Soldier in Spanish Trench Lauds Policy of Defender,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Jan 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1938.

chose to stand with the Loyalists, and while this decision was non-objective, it was certainly appreciated by the papers audience, be they living in Chicago or a Spanish trench.

### Fellow Travelers

The *Defender* did not limit itself to defending the republic of Spain, it also backed the beleaguered republic's few allies including the Soviet Union. Initially this spirited defense was led by the *Defender's* Moscow correspondent, Chatwood Hall (real name Homer Smith), who used the opportunity of the war to vindicate not only Soviet involvement in Spain but the Soviet experiment on a whole. Reporting on a Soviet shipment of food to Spain, Hall wrote that such shipments of food disproved the "obvious falsifications about famine and food riots in the Soviet Ukraine" which had been spread by "the fascist German propaganda machine." Tailoring his propaganda to themes that would resonate with the *Defender*, in another article on the nineteenth anniversary of the October revolution Hall claimed that in those nineteen years "Soviet Russia has to its credit one achievement which capitalist society has not achieved and cannot hope ever to achieve, absolute destruction of national oppression and racial strife."<sup>88</sup>

To be clear Hall had been reporting on Moscow for the *Defender* since 1932 and his reporting had been highly supportive before the war broke out.<sup>89</sup> As the Spanish Civil war went on, what changed was that Hall's voice become joined by others within the *Defender*. Lochard, who prior to the war was vaguely positive if uninterested in Communism was transformed into a vociferous supporter. Between 1936 to 1939 Lochard wrote nine editorials that spoke on

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<sup>88</sup> Chatwood Hall, "Soviets Send Food to Spain for Followers," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>, 1936; Hall, "All Races Celebrate During Anniversary of Russian Revolt," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Dec 5<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>89</sup> It appears that Hall's coverage of Spain began in 1932 by covering the African American performers who traveled to the Soviet Union for the film "Black & White" which was never released. He continued living in Moscow and reporting for the *Defender* and other news services until 1946.

Communism more than double the amount he had written in his previous eight years of work for the *Defender* demonstrating a growing interest in the topic. Not only did the frequency of his thinking on Communism change but so too did the quality of praise given. In 1935 his highest praise was that “No teacher with intellectual honesty, with a reasonable degree of intelligence is apathetic or wholly indifferent to the logical inductions of Karl Marx” which could be described as supportive but subdued especially compared to Lochard style of emotionally packed prose.<sup>90</sup>

As the war progressed Lochard’s view of Communism became far more appreciative. Aversion to Marxism no-longer demonstrated a lack of intellectual curiosity, instead it was the trademark of those “both in theory and practice an ally of Fascism.” To Lochard the failure of democracies to intercede in the invasion of Ethiopia and the Civil War in Spain had proven that bourgeoisie democracies were no longer viable, they were “too flabby to resist for long the impact of so vicious a combination as Fascism and Nazism.” Given the stakes, Lochard declared that “Communism is the only effective check against Fascism.”<sup>91</sup> The *Defender* did not simply view Communism as an ally of convenience in Spain but also as a powerful tool for racial justice.

Ever seeking to connect the struggle abroad to the struggle at-home, one editorial for the *Defender* wrote:

For under its aegis the black man has become world minded. And, if he is fighting today in Spain under the communist banner, it is because communism seems to be the only social philosophy which embraces him unconditionally and on equal footing. Not, however, on account of his racial identity, but because he is identified with the class that is persecuted, exploited, and denied by capitalism, fascism, and klu klux klanism.<sup>92</sup>

## **An Imperfect War**

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<sup>90</sup> Lochard, “Panorama of World News,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Nov. 30<sup>th</sup>, 1935.

<sup>91</sup> Lochard, “Panorama of World News,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Apr. 15<sup>th</sup>, 1938; Lochard, “Panorama of World News,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Apr. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1937.

<sup>92</sup> “A Real Patriot,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

The shape of the *Defender's* coverage of the Spanish Civil War should be clear by now. They viewed it as part of a wider war against the oppressed peoples of the world by fascist powers and that a victory for Franco would embolden oppressors around the world. To that end the *Defender* chose to highlight instances of racial solidarity between Africans and Spaniards. It made headline news when one thousand dollars of aid for the Republic was raised by south African natives, and African's volunteering for the International Brigade were routinely reported on. The Spanish Republic represented racial equality, according to Lochard, which treated minorities with "dignity, respect, and on the same equality with other citizens."<sup>93</sup>

So why then were Spanish Moroccans fighting for Franco? This question haunted the *Defender* throughout the entirety of the war. Both Nationalists and Republicans had acknowledged the presence of Moroccan troops within the Nationalist offensive, and so their existence could not easily be ignored. This facet of the war was reported on by the *Defender* more than any other. By 1938, when the *Defender* began to run reports from foreign war correspondents, both correspondents interviewed Moroccans to find the answer. To the *Defender*, Moroccans fighting for Franco posed a problem for their entire argument. If it demonstrated that perhaps the Spanish Republic was not a bastion of racial equality, the papers' view on the importance of the war would crumble, so an answer needed to be found.

The answer the *Defender* settled on was that Moroccan troops were tricked, either forcibly conscripted or misled about the conflict. War correspondent wrote that recruiters for Franco pretended to be French officials and told the Moroccans they would be given jobs before secretly shipping them to the front. Another war correspondent, Nancy Cunard, wrote that the

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<sup>93</sup> "Africans Send Aid to Loyalist Spain," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1938; Lochard, "Panorama of World News," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Sep. 19<sup>th</sup>, 1936.



Moroccans she interviewed were to a man forced into Franco's side through threats of imprisonment or persecution, and in fact had their hands bound from recruitment until they were brought to Spain.<sup>94</sup>

**FRANCO'S AGENTS RECRUITING MOROCCANS**



Figure 5 Joseph North, "French Moors Tricked into Rebel Army," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Apr. 30<sup>th</sup>, 1938.

If Moroccans were tricked into fighting for Franco, then the *Defender* reasoned that once the deception fell away a Moroccan revolt wasn't just likely, it was *inevitable*. Readers of the *Defender* between 1936 and 1939 were told that a Moroccan revolt was occurring or about to occur nearly ten times in articles such as "Moroccans Revolt Against Fascists," "Franco Sends Rebel Army to North Africa," "Moroccan Natives Riot Against Franco," and "African Natives Help Loyalists Against Rebels."<sup>95</sup> In one particularly indicative article the *Defender* reported that "self-determination for the Moorish people is pledged by the Spanish popular front government,"

<sup>94</sup> Joseph North, "French Moors Tricked into Rebel Army," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Apr. 30<sup>th</sup>, 1938; Nancy Cunard, "Rebels Using Boys in Major Engagement," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Oct. 28<sup>th</sup>, 1938.

<sup>95</sup> "Moroccans Revolt Against Fascists," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Sep. 19<sup>th</sup>, 1936; "Franco Sends Rebel Army to South Africa," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>, 1938; "Moroccan Natives Riot Against Franco," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>, 1938; "African Natives Help Loyalists Against Rebels," *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Apr. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1937.

that the Moroccans were “not aware of the nature of the conflict” but that with this pledge “Moors are expected to desert Gen. Franco’s rebel lines, perhaps at the crucial hour.”<sup>96</sup>

This reporting wasn’t merely hopeful, it was fundamentally incorrect. There was never any promise made by the popular front government of Moroccan independence and while the idea was potentially floated internally, republican officers instead tried to sway Moroccans with a promise of five pesetas per day for recruits with five hundred a month given to chieftains.<sup>97</sup> This non-factual reporting was utilized frequently by the *Defender*. It did not always involve outright fabrications like in the above example, often more of a matter of *what* was covered, and rebel victories were not. Loyalist victories however insubstantial or rumored had a chance to be covered which create an incredibly lopsided view of the war.

An example of this phenomenon would be the *Defender’s* coverage of the Battle of Teruel. The battle took place between December of 1937 and late February of 1938 and saw Republican forces lay siege to and take the mountain town of Teruel before losing Teruel to a Nationalist counter offensive. Nancy Cunard, one of the *Defender’s* foreign correspondents, only reported on the initial victory and not the eventual defeat for the republic even though her report was written and published nearly a week after the Nationalists had re-taken Teruel.<sup>98</sup> As late as October of 1938 the *Defender* was speculating that dissatisfaction was spreading through Francos ranks.<sup>99</sup> While this dubiously accurate journalism might appear sinister, it was likely more due to the information they were given than any ill will on behalf of the *Defender*. The

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<sup>96</sup> “Spanish Reds Offer Independence to Moors,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Feb. 13<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

<sup>97</sup> Michael Seidman, *Republic of Egos: A Social History of The Spanish Civil War*, (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2002) 41.

<sup>98</sup> Nancy Cunard, “Nancy Cunard Tells of the Fall of Teruel,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>, 1938.

<sup>99</sup> “Franco Sends Rebel Army to South Africa,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>, 1938.

*Defender's* foreign war correspondents were all based in the republican side, its government connection was all on the republican side, and so it reported the perspective of the republican side which naturally overlooked failures and focused on successes. Furthermore, confirmation bias likely played a large role; the *Defender* wanted the republic to win and so it printed facts that supported that end and ignored inconvenient facts.

## Conclusion

To best understand the style of the *Defender's* reporting on the Spanish Civil War compare its coverage to a more neutral paper such as the *Chicago Daily News*. The *Daily News* grouped together the conflicts in Spain and Ethiopia but only as two foreign conflicts pressing on the international community. The *Defender* viewed them as two sides of the same global conflict. The *Defender* also believed far more in the international underdogs and was far less detached. *Daily News* writer Wallace R. Deuel wrote that “The Ethiopian fight is hopeless. In the end Ethiopia is bound to lose.” Lochard writing on the same conflict stated “Had Ethiopia been supplied with arms; John Bull today would not be agitated by periodical blasts from Mussolini. Ethiopia would have won the war.” But most importantly the *Defender* felt more connected to the war than papers like the *Daily News*. Whereas the *Daily News* analyzed how the Italy might be emboldened by global inaction in Spain and Ethiopia, it was life or death stakes for Lochard “Given two more years of unchecked development, the Nazi and fascist adherents in America will grow to such formidable proportions in the pursuit of their mad career that they will challenge and smash all the hard-won principles of democracy.”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Wallace R. Deuel, “Big Power Lose Control of Ethiopian and Spanish Situations; Europe in Crisis,” *Chicago Daily News*, Sep. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1936; Metz T.P. Lochard, “Panorama of World News,” *Chicago Defender National Edition*, Apr. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1937.

The *Defender* cared about the Spanish Civil War more than any other Chicagoland paper. It viewed the war as part of a global attack against social equality, and it thought that a loss in Spain would mean a loss of rights in America for African Americans. This care that suffused its coverage at times created factually inaccurate reporting as well as at times replicating Comintern propaganda without acknowledging it was doing so. Yet this did not come from a malicious desire to shape the news but rather a human need to see the underdog win once; to see that might does not always equal right.

## Chicago Times: The Image of War

In 1936 the position of the *Chicago Times* was precarious. At an average circulation of 291,610 between the years of 1936-39 the *Times* was the second smallest paper to be analyzed, only beating out the *Defender*.<sup>101</sup> Complicating their position further, the *Times* differed from every other periodical in Chicagoland, relying far more on photography. In the Spanish Civil War, the *Times* found an opportunity to highlight this difference, to position itself as the periodical to purchase to not simply read about the war but view it. In utilizing that technology so heavily the coverage of the Spanish Civil War from the *Times* became detached, sensational, and incoherent.

The *Chicago Times* was created in 1929, initially as the *Daily Illustrated Times*. As the name indicates, the *Times* heavily relied on images and photography from its inception, a trend that would intensify until its eventual merger with the *Chicago Sun* in 1947. Despite having the second smallest circulation figures the *Times* charged the third most for subscriptions indicating its intended audience as the middle class, those who might not be able to afford the prices charged by the *Tribune* or *Daily News* but could afford to a premium for access to more photography than a paper like the *Defender* could offer.<sup>102</sup>

And for the cost of that subscription readers were given a wide range of photographs and reporting daily. Whereas other periodicals would include photographs to augment their reporting the *Times* would offer entire pages of photographs with short descriptions, a usage of

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<sup>101</sup> Figure taken by averaging figures provided in N.W. Ayer & Son's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Son, 1936-1939), the precarity of the *Times* position resulted in their merger with the *Chicago Sun*.

<sup>102</sup> At a subscription cost of \$8.84 in 1938, a worker earning the minimum wage imposed by the new Fair Labor Standards Act would have to work 36 hours to afford a subscription to the *Times* indicating the publishers were targeting a higher class than industrial workers.

photography that was only occasionally matched by the larger periodicals and never with the sustained frequency of the *Times*.

### **A Photo or a Thousand Words?**

Photography occupies an interesting position within journalism. Photography proports to be a vessel through which the viewer can perceive an event frozen in time as if they themselves were there to see it. In actuality, the camera is a separate entity positioned far outside the viewer's body which tricks them into believing that they have perceived the event spontaneously despite the multiple layers separating the viewer, the photograph, and the event captured. This gives the photographer immense power to create and reinforce subjectivity in the audience, with the final photo acting as a sort of fetish, a finished product which obscures the history of its production.<sup>103</sup>

As photography proliferated organizations that utilized photography were faced with the issue of what to do with the photos. Some attempted to bring photography within the archives, finding ways to index visual evidence alongside the more traditional written word, while others sought to utilize photography to compile composite images more true than individual pictures, seeking to “embed the archive in the photograph.”<sup>104</sup> Photographs began to be used to generalize, as evidence of larger trends not captured but perhaps represented within a photo.

These two trends within photography, to generalize and to distract viewers from its own production, impact how photos function as a tool for war reporting. As Susan Sontag highlights

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<sup>103</sup> Jonathan Crary, “Techniques of the Observer” *October* 45 (1988): 3-35, <https://doi.org/10.2307/779041>; Anton Lee, “The Photogenic Invention of Thought-Emotion: Duane Michals and Michel Foucault.” In *Foucault on the Arts and Letters: Perspectives for the 21st Century*, ed. Catherine M. Soussloff, (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016,) 25–43.

<sup>104</sup> Allan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive,” *October* 39 (1986).

in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, the act of photography, especially war photography, is inherently political. Photos objectify their subject and their pain into something to be consumed and the decision of what is included is only masked by photography's perceived authenticity.<sup>105</sup> Because the context around the photo is shrouded, it can very easily be changed, one side might see in a photo evidence of a massacre where the other side sees an example of a false flag as was the case with photos of the destruction of Guernica.<sup>106</sup> The impulse to generalize compounds with the obscured context of photography, for instance a photo of a burned building can purport to be evidence of larger scale destruction than what is captured by the lens which leads to an inauthentic amalgamation of narratives, creating the distorted view of war that Baudrillard perceived.<sup>107</sup>

### **War as Conveyed in Photography**

The photos that the *Times* presented of the Spanish Civil War fell into these trends, creating a narrative of war that differed sharply from what could be gleaned from written reporting. Destruction loomed large in the photography of the *Chicago Times* but specifically destruction of property. Burned out churches and rubble strewn streets were depicted far more frequently than injured people, who were often dwarfed by the destruction captured. Context was provided for the perpetrators, often nationalist bombers, but victims were de-individualized. In doing so these images invite the viewer to view this destruction as spectacular in its immensity,

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<sup>105</sup> Susan Sontag, *Regarding The Pain Of Others*, (New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003): 81.

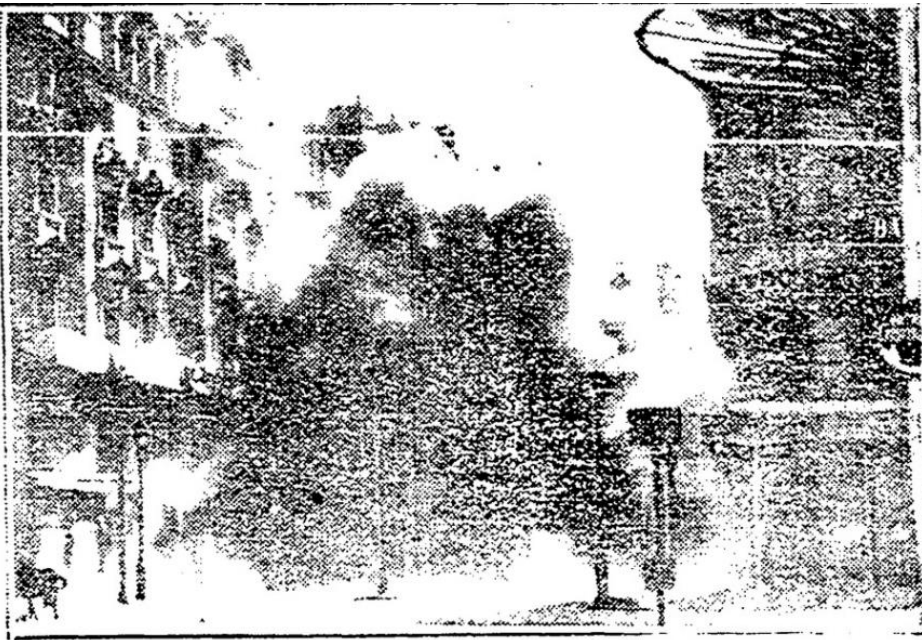
<sup>106</sup> The bombing of the Basque capital of Guernica was conducted by the Condor Legion, a German aircraft working at the time with Francisco Franco. Despite this, nationalist media claimed it was the Basques themselves or Communists allied with them, who had set the town ablaze to prevent its capture and inspire sympathy in the foreign press. For more see Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1961) 419-420.

<sup>107</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, trans. Paul Patton, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.)

with the tragedy elided. The victim essentially is turned into a prop to show the scale of destruction rather than humanized to show the cost.



*Figure 6, "Shell Torn Church in Spain," Chicago Daily Times, Nov 9<sup>th</sup>, 1936. In this image the destruction of a Spanish Church looms large, dwarfing the humans in the foreground. It is left unclear if the five viewers of the destruction are combatants or civilians.*



*Figure 7 "Rebel Bombs Wreck Havoc," Chicago Daily Times, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1937. The cloud of debris takes up the center of this image. Notice the two people running for cover shunted to the far left of the frame.*





*Figure 8* “Seek Bodies After Bomb Raid,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Jun 10<sup>th</sup>, 1937. Taken in the aftermath of a bombing, the survivors face away from the camera searching for bodies. In the resulting tableau the identities of the subjects captured dissolve into a collective mass-identity of victim.

While destruction of property dominated much of the photography from the *Times*, loss of life was far rarer. Images of combatants depicted soldiers of both sides diving for cover or aiming weapons but never using those weapons to inflict harm. When injuries were photographed, they were those inflicted on innocent by-standers such as children. In these photographs the war was depicted simultaneously as bloodless and destructive, a conflict capable of destroying buildings and injuring civilians but lacking violent confrontations.



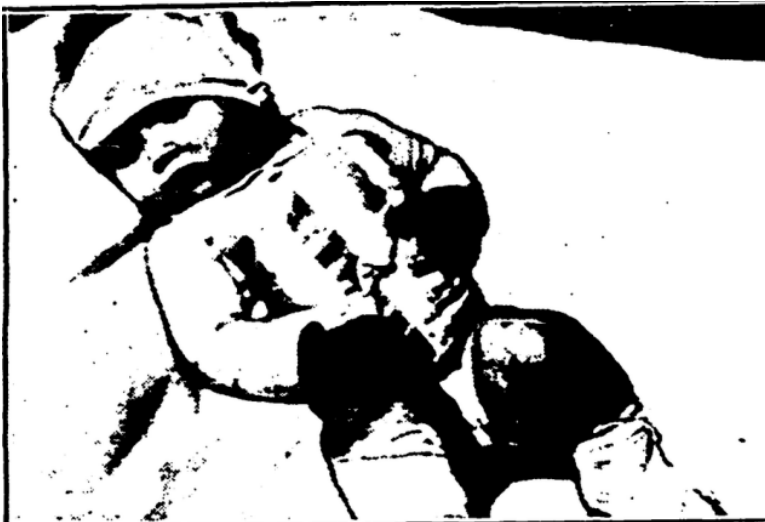
*Figure 9* “Under Fire In Spain’s Red Riots,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Apr 29<sup>th</sup>, 1936. While covering political violence in Spain before the Civil War this image demonstrates what coverage of the Spanish Civil War would look like. Taking up most of the photo are members of the police diving for cover from shooters lurking presumably out of sight of the camera. Likewise, the exchange of gunfire and ensuing injuries are not captured and left to the viewers imagination.



*Figure 10* “Bullets For The Rebels,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Jul 21<sup>st</sup>, 1936. Standing atop a stone building, combatants aim rifles rightwards. The caption identifies the combatants as Government forces.



*Figure 11* “Air Warfare in Spain,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Jul 20<sup>th</sup>, 1936. Two soldiers aim an anti-aircraft gun at an empty sky. Once again, the focus of the photo is the weaponry, not the combatants.



*Figure 12* “Slaughter of Malaga Refugees Told,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Feb 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1937. When injuries were shown, they were often borne by those considered outside the war such as civilians and, in this instance, a child.

Photos of the Spanish Civil War were often presented alongside un-related images creating an in-authentic amalgamation of narratives. Images of combatants were placed alongside photos of beauty contestants, and ads of all subjects sat next to images of refugees on the page. In formatting photography this way, the *Times* presented the Spanish Civil War to their readers not as a topic to be followed and understood but as a series of images to be consumed and promptly forgotten.



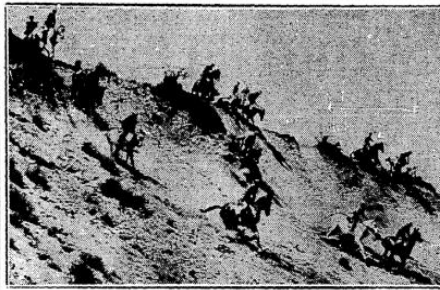
Figure 13 “Women Battle In Spain & Girls Who Would Be Queen,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Aug 11<sup>th</sup>, 1936. This image of female combatants, rare in a period where most militaries were sexually segregated, is placed alongside the image of beauty contestants.

# SPAIN'S LABOR ARMY TO FIGHT REBELS

## EXPECT CLASH BEFORE NIGHT NEAR MADRID

(Continued from page 2)  
 nouncements of victories, sources outside the country, notably at Gibraltar and Rabat, French Morocco, said rebel forces under the command of Gen. Francisco Franco were pushing northward from the southern coast of Spain. They were said to be in possession not only of

## REBELS BUCK THIS CAVALRY



## Is Oscar Pixilated? Science Has Remedy

By JACK MORRIS  
 Is little Oscar a pixilator in his reading habits? Does he wiggle from side to side, rock back and forth on his heels when he attempts to read? Or is he merely one of those kids who looks at all of the pictures?  
 Whatever he is, there is a cure for him. Be he ever so backward, he can be given an overhauling. No parent will recognize his child after the lad has been gone over and the proper mental monkey-wrenches used by skilled mechanics. Science will give Oscar a new intellectual wheelbase.  
 Such is the testimony of modern educational research as explained by noted University of Chicago teach-

adults who perform a dozen or so physical gyrations while they are going through the physical experience of reading.  
 "To interest properly the small boy or his father in attaining the reading efficiency that each should have, I would probably have to get them started on the sporting page," he said.

Figure 14 "Rebels Buck This Cavalry" *Chicago Daily Times*, Jul 21<sup>st</sup>, 1936. The image of Spanish Cavalry charging down a hill is placed alongside a article about a new scientific approach to child-rearing.



THEIR faces aged with the sorrow and hardship of recent months, refugee children from beleaguered Bilbao, Spain, arrive in La Pallice-Rochelle, France, aboard S.S. Helms. They are awaiting identification cards. Germans had stalled against the reformed defense line in its thrust from fallen, half-mired Amorobietta, about eight miles east by southeast from the tottering Basque capital.

This advance line was about five miles from Guadiana, a key point in the city's "little Maginot line" of steel and concrete fortifications and trenches forming a protective semicircle against the push of the insurgent legions.

The semi-autonomous Basque government, which has seen Moha's forces pushing for nearly ten months through the mountainous Basque country until it almost reached Bilbao, lashed at what it termed "the German criminal action" in the drive.

The government has charged that large numbers of Italian and German are in the insurgent ranks.

The Basque authorities despatched a strong note to the 27-nation non-intervention committee in London, denouncing the German aviation at the service of the rebels continues action against Guernica, Larrauri, Mirren, Larranbeu and Pineda (Basque towns), dropping a great number of incendiary grenades and machine-gunning the civilian population which, menaced by death, must flee into the fields, thus causing numerous victims, especially women and children.

Moha threatens to turn Vitoria (the central Basque province) into a cemetery through his "aerobombardments," the note charged.

An indication of growing anti-fascist sentiment in Bilbao, where more than 500,

houses within an hour, driving six families to the streets. More than a dozen other families, houses were menaced and sparks fell near the substitution of light and gas companies serving the district.

The flames, lapped at several nearby plants, but firemen did not know if they were abandoned or still being used.

The flames spread through the plant of the Keystone Lumber Co. in adjoining blocks were the south

**MADRID AREA**  
 Madrid, May 20 (AP)—Gen. Jose Mola, commander-in-chief of all Madrid forces, was reappointed to supreme authority over the entire central Madrid area, excluding the city.

The civil director of general security remained in charge of Madrid.

The stations of the Dupuyre Light Co. and the Equitable Gas Co.

**FREE LUMBER OR BRICK**  
 Property close to beautiful homes, schools and stores. Excellent transportation. Price includes clear title. Write to:

**BOX 377 DAILY TIMES**  
 See REAL Color Photo of Quaint in SUNDAY TIMES!

**STOUT WOMEN • WOMEN • MISSES**  
**FRIDAY! at 9:30 a. m. Lane Bryant Scoop!**  
**Another Purchase and Sale!**

**UNLINED CREPE COATS**  
**\$2.95**

Every Coat Fashioned to Sell for Considerably More!

Repeating a Sell-Out with Another New Shipment! . . .

Smartly styled! Beautifully tailored! With lots of swing and dash. Crepe styles and sleeve models. Just the thing you need and can use now and all Summer long. Four style successes to choose from in Black or Navy. Come early and be sure you get yours. Only a sensational purchase makes possible this low May sale price . . . \$2.95.

**SIZES 38 to 44**  
**46 to 56 • 14 to 20**

**MAIL AND PHONE ORDERS RANDOLPH 7900**

**BRAND NEW DRESSES**  
 New Style, New Details, Newest colors. Sizes 14 to 20 and 38 to 56. **2 FOR \$5**

**Relax!**

You know, if your nerves are all "shot," you are headed for some real trouble—unless you can RELAX!

Another thing—you cannot do your best work with jangled nerves.

And if you are run-down—have no appetite—cannot sleep well, may we suggest that you start drinking the vitalizing food drink—Melvoz.

Melvoz is a delightful Malt Drink, brewed under the most exacting controlled temperature, so rich and mellow, so nourishing, exhilarating and refreshing that it can hardly fail to be useful to anyone.

Try a carton at our risk. If you feel it cannot benefit you after drinking several bottles — we will accept its return and refund your money.

We invite you RELAX with Melvoz. Phone Canal 6500.

Carton 24 Bottles \$2.75  
 Six 6-packs of 4 bottles at special price  
 Carton 12 Bottles \$1.40  
 25¢ allowed for return of cartons

Melvoz is Brewed by the Brewers of Monarch Beer

Monarch Brewing Co.  
 Phone Canal 6500

Figure 15 "Basques Assail Nazis; Block Foe," *Chicago Daily Times*, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1937. The image of refugee children, described as bearing "faces aged with sorrow and hardship," is cornered by advertisements for clothing sales and an ad seeking to help the reader to "relax" with a drink.

**Photography's Effects on Reporting**

Much like its usage of photography, for the *Daily Times* foreign correspondents were used to garner attention rather than inform readers of developments in the war. The *Times* was unique in running advertisements for upcoming dispatches, advertising reports as "gripping" and "exciting" i.e. the spectacular nature of the reports rather than the educational.

**WAR** in Spain! . . . death! . . . destruction! Mrs. Melanie Pflaum, wife of the United Press correspondent at Madrid, who only a month ago returned to her home in Chicago with her two children, writes for the *TIMES* the exciting story of her experiences and observations on the Spanish front. She tells of the birth of her son while rebel shells rained upon Barcelona . . . of seeing personal friends shot down before her on the streets of Madrid . . . of riots and assassinations. From the pages of her diary comes the true story of Spain's bloody civil war . . . told graphically by this Chicago mother who lived and suffered its horrors . . .

Read the Gripping Story Written by This Chicago Mother Beginning Monday in  
**THE TIMES**  
 CHICAGO'S LIBERAL NEWSPAPER

Figure 16 *Chicago Daily Times*, Jan 24<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

Due to the nature of the field, it is not unusual for foreign correspondents to include their experiences in their reporting. For instance, when reporting on the battle over Irun, United Press correspondent Harold Ettliger began by describing himself hearing “the shrill singing of bullets above me” before going on to describe the fighting.<sup>108</sup> Yet, the reporting was about the event being covered, not the reporter, except for in the *Times*. The *Times* printed reports that were about their writers; Melanie Pflaum wrote five stories about her experience as a mother in Madrid during the bombing and John Desandt wrote about his experiences losing a friend in the

<sup>108</sup> Harold Ettliger, “Death and Gore Stalk Fight for a Rubbish Heap,” *Chicago Daily News*, Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1936.





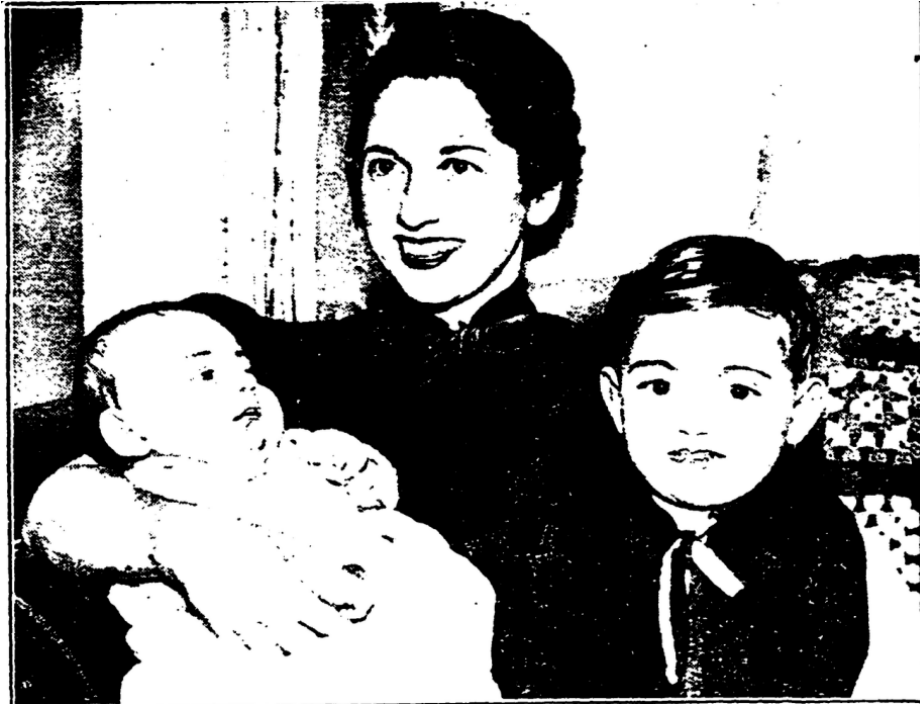


Figure 18 Pflaum, “War Diary,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Jan 25<sup>th</sup>, 1937. Each issue of Pflaum’s war diary was accompanied by a photo reinforcing her status as a mother, either sitting beside her children or husband.

The *Times* treated its reporting similarly to dispatches from its correspondents, as a consumable object for entertainment. The *Times* printed some of the most sensational stories of the war, with bombings and other acts of destruction regularly making the news.<sup>110</sup> The connection between reports of bombings driving interest in photos of their destruction was occasionally made blatant, one article titled “Fascists Die in Bomb Trap” advertised at the end that “for the COMPLETE STORY of the fight in NEWS AND PICTURES- don’t miss tomorrow’s *Times*.”<sup>111</sup> The *Times* often re-printed propaganda in order to further the sensationalism, such as describing the forces facing the Nationalists as the “Spanish proletariat, summoned by communist and socialist leaders.”<sup>112</sup>

<sup>110</sup> “Rebels Threaten to Bomb Madrid,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Jul 20<sup>th</sup>, 1936; “A Crime of Civilization,” *Chicago Daily Times*, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1937.

<sup>111</sup> “Fascists Die In Bomb Trap,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Jun 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1937.

<sup>112</sup> “Spanish Rebels Mass For Decisive Battle,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Jul 21<sup>st</sup>, 1936.

While the war clearly interested the *Times*, it did not always treat the war as a serious topic. The Spanish Civil War regularly appeared as a topic in the *Time's* Quiz of the week, in questions such as “Radical groups defied government orders, seized estates of large landowners and burned a number of churches recently in?” and “Thousands have been slain in the fighting between government and rebel forces in July in?”<sup>113</sup> For one Spanish themed bar, advertisements ran promising a bit of Spain “minus the bullets” and comics ran comparing auto-mobile deaths to the victims of bombings in Spain.<sup>114</sup>

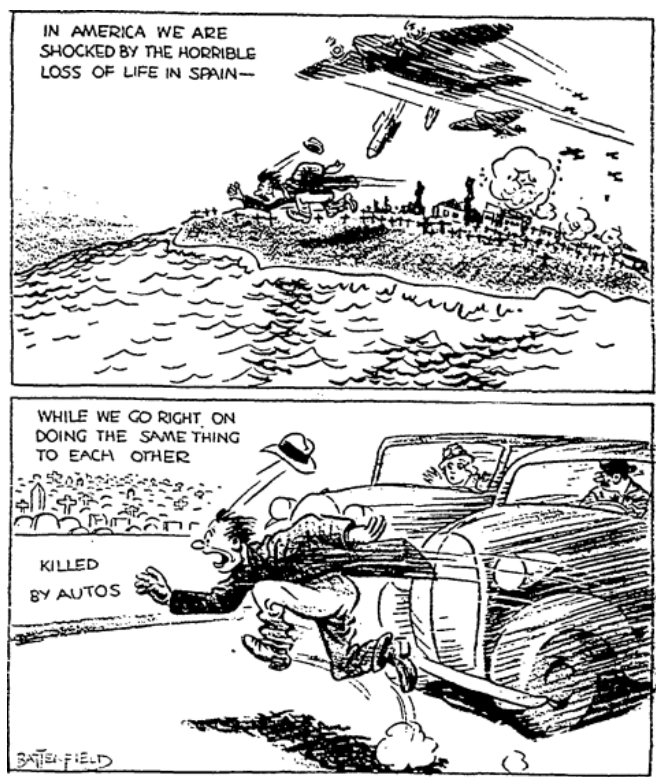


Figure 19 Field, “In War and Peace,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Apr 12<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

<sup>113</sup> Elmo C. Wilson, “Quiz of the Week,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Mar 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1936; Elmo C. Wilson, “Quiz of the Week,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Jul 26<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>114</sup> “Here’s Bit of Spain Minus the Bullets,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Aug 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1936; Batter Field, “In War and Peace,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Apr 12<sup>th</sup> 1937.

The sensational production of news, objectification of correspondents into stories themselves, and the lighthearted and inconsistent tone of coverage all stemmed from the *Times* heavy usage of photography in their news coverage. As evidence of this connection the editorial section, which utilized photography the least, did not share these issues and are more comparable to other periodicals than the other sections of the *Times*. Unlike their coverage of the war that focused on spectacle at the sake of nuance, editorialists such as Jay Franklin, Rodney Dutcher, and Herbert Agar examined American neutrality in Spain from multiple angles; Franklin argued that neutrality had been shown to be a Roosevelt policy rather than one from the State Department, Dutcher on the other hand claimed neutrality stemmed from a pro-fascist clique in the State Department.<sup>115</sup> Despite these differences of opinion, the editorial section maintained a consistency of view that sharply contrasts with the unfocused reporting of the *Times*. Franklin, Dutcher, Agar, Gail Borden, and George Seldes all supported the Republic. Seldes blamed stories of red atrocities on reactionary press lying to support the Nationalists and Borden went further in claiming he knew of two “demon reporters for old Marse Hearst who were working the Fascist side” blatantly lying in favor of Franco.<sup>116</sup> Franklin described neutrality as “morally shabby and diplomatically discredited” and Agar argued that neutrality is inherently anti-American as “There is not a more contentious or a more nose people than Americans...we do not seem to be capable of neutrality in regard to the rest of the world.”<sup>117</sup> Despite these strong views the editorialists were never part of their stories the same way foreign correspondents were with the content always about the subject and not the conveyer of the news.

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<sup>115</sup> Jay Franklin, “Sec. Hull and Spain,” *Chicago Daily Times*, May 17<sup>th</sup> 1938; Rodney Dutcher, “Check Envoy’s Clique Meddling in Spain War,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Mar 19<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

<sup>116</sup> George Seldes, “Fascist ‘Red Baiting’ Campaign Discredited,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Mar 14<sup>th</sup>, 1937; Gail Borden, “War Has Its Humor,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Jul 27<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

<sup>117</sup> Franklin, “Sec. Hull and Spain,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Mar 17<sup>th</sup>, 1938; Herbert Agar, “American Neutrality,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Jan 28<sup>th</sup>, 1938.

Readers of the *Times* were far more split on who to support in the Spanish Civil War than most papers. In the section “What the People Say” readers regularly wrote about the Spanish Civil War with opinions split. Some argued that a Republican victory was inevitable as the people of Spain fought on their behalf.<sup>118</sup> Others were pro-nationalist, arguing that those who volunteered to fight in Spain should have their citizenship stripped from them and that anti-Francoism stems from the communism of Hollywood circles.<sup>119</sup> While these views were not novel it is strange for readers of the same paper to hold such contradictory views, especially when the editorial line of the paper remains consistently pro-Republican. This indicates that potentially the photo-led news coverage which focused on the spectacular may have inherently supported the Nationalists despite often focusing on the destruction they had wrought. An answer as to why their coverage may have un-intentionally favored the Nationalists may lie in what was captured on camera. The focus on the destruction of private property, rather than loss of life, may have horrified the middle-class readership of the *Times* to the point of supporting the Nationalists, who were fighting in part to protect private property from the Spanish state.

## Conclusion

During the Spanish Civil War, the *Times* was a paper in transition. Much of the content began to feature photography more prominently as the *Times* moved to become Chicago’s first tabloid, a transition which would be completed in the late 40s. As such, their coverage was limited by the restrictions and realities of photography. Photos showed destruction divorced from context, written reporting was utilized to heighten the war to drive interest in the

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<sup>118</sup> “What the People Say,” *Chicago Daily Times*, May, 17<sup>th</sup> 1937; Rebecca E. Fisher, “What the People Say,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Apr, 20<sup>th</sup> 1937

<sup>119</sup> “What the People Say,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Jan 8<sup>th</sup>, 1937; “What the People Say,” *Chicago Daily Times*, Nov 7<sup>th</sup>, 1937.

photography section, and foreign correspondents were reduced to easily noticeable traits to be marketed. The connection between these flaws and photography is evidenced by the fact that the editorial section, which utilized photography the least, did not suffer from these flaws.

Photography has a power in its authenticity, but it requires careful stewardship as to not lose its context behind the spectacle of its presentation. The *Times* did not provide that stewardship, and as such the war became presented by a series of images, signifiers with no sign, incoherent and spectacular.

### **Herald-Examiner: “A Paper For People Who Think.”**

Created in 1914 after a merger between the *Chicago American* and the *Chicago Record-Herald*, the *Chicago Herald-Examiner* circulated to an average of 347,666 households between 1936-39.<sup>120</sup> The *Herald-Examiner* was part of the media empire of William Randolph Hearst, drawing on the newspaper magnate’s resources to compete with larger city papers such as the *Tribune* and *Daily News*. Subscription costs for the *Herald-Examiner* were relatively low, only higher than the *Defender*, which allowed it to compete in circulation figures with larger periodicals, only being beaten by the *Tribune*. Occasionally, the *Herald-Examiner* advertised itself on its masthead as “a paper for people who think” but in reality, it was a paper designed to carry primarily the thoughts on one man, that of its owner, William Randolph Hearst.<sup>121</sup> So, when readers turned to the *Herald-Examiner* between 1936-1939 to learn about the Spanish Civil War what they read was Hearst’s Spanish Civil War.

And Hearst did not care about the Spanish Civil War, at least not in a traditional sense. While supportive of Franco’s anti-Communism, Hearst was not invested in the ideological conflict in Spain beyond that, certainly not to the degree of other periodical editors such as Robert Abott of the *Chicago Defender*. Instead, Hearst busied himself with a different conflict, pitting himself against Franklin Delano Roosevelt over control of the Democratic Party. Hearst initially supported the New Deal, as FDR’s Gold Reserve Act, which raised the price of gold

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<sup>120</sup> Figure taken by averaging figures provided in N.W. Ayer & Son’s *Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer & Son, 1936-1939).

<sup>121</sup> Hearst frequently utilized the papers he owned to push for policies that directly served his own interests, such as when his papers fabricated news of a plot by the Mexican government to bribe U.S. officials in response to an attempt by the Mexican government to force foreign property owners, of which Hearst was, to relinquish underground property rights. For more on the man described as the “keystone of American fascism” see Ferdinand Lundberg, *Imperial Hearst: a Social Biography*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1936.)

directly helping Hearst's mining empire. This support though quickly dissolved once the New Deal expanded to include subsidizing farmers and strengthening unions which Hearst vigorously opposed.<sup>122</sup> Coverage of the Spanish Civil War became a tool for Hearst in this conflict over the democratic party, allowing him to connect supporters of the New Deal to stories of atrocities committed in Republican Spain. After losing this conflict once FDR won re-election in 1936, coverage of the Spanish Civil War greatly lessened but in the nine months between the start of the conflict and the 1936 election coverage of the Spanish Civil War was a near constant in the *Herald-Examiner*, as was the message that the radicals that had plunged Spain into war were the same group forcing the New Deal onto the American People.

### **Radicals, Spanish and Otherwise**

The *Herald-Examiner* was the only paper in Chicago to regularly refer to the Republican forces as radicals. The decision to do so is strange as the usefulness of the term is questionable. Those sympathetic with the republic would likely use the term "Republican" or "Loyalist" forces to reinforce the democratic nature of the Republican forces, those sympathetic with Franco would instead reach for more damning language, referring to their enemies as "Communists" or "Anarchists," and non-invested reporting would use more neutral and informational language such as "Government forces." Radical as a term went against the interests of pro-republican propaganda, was too mild for pro-Nationalist propaganda, and was too confusing a term to be used in neutral-reporting and yet, "radical" as a descriptor for loyalist forces was repeatedly and vigorously pushed forward by the *Herald-Examiner*.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Lundberg, *Imperial Hearst*, 343.

<sup>123</sup> For an example of the usage of the term in one month alone, see: "Radical Artillery Firing," *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1936; "Radical's Flee to France," *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1936; Karl H. Von Wiegand, "1,000 Quit to Join Radicals, Madrid Claims," *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>,



To understand why the *Herald-Examiner* insisted on referring to the Republican forces as “radical” it is critical to understand who else the paper branded with that term. Outside of reporting on the Spanish Civil War, the term radical was most often used by the *Herald-Examiner* when discussing American politics and, more specifically, New-Dealers. One editorial, titled “The Radical Brand on the New Deal,” warned readers that “the Roosevelt administration has the endorsement of every natural and avowed enemy of the American system.”<sup>124</sup> The enemies referred to in that passage were primarily communists who, according to the *Herald-Examiner*, had infiltrated the American labor movement and pushed it to endorse FDR and militarize against capital. The *Herald-Examiner* saw communism as the cause of both the Spanish Civil War and labor unrest in America, and the use of the term “radical” allowed the paper to make that connection. That connection was strengthened by the placement of stories on the broadsheet where reporting on radical New-Dealers often sat beside reporting of radicals in Spain. The editorial “The Radical Brand on the New Deal” was besides a story describing the defeat of socialist forces in Spain, a story reporting on communist support for FDR was placed directly below the headline “Radical Troops Close in on Alcazar,” and reporting on the Nationalist’s defense march on Madrid was provided directly above reporting examining how the New Deal “adopted communistic policies.”<sup>125</sup> The placement clearly intended to physically

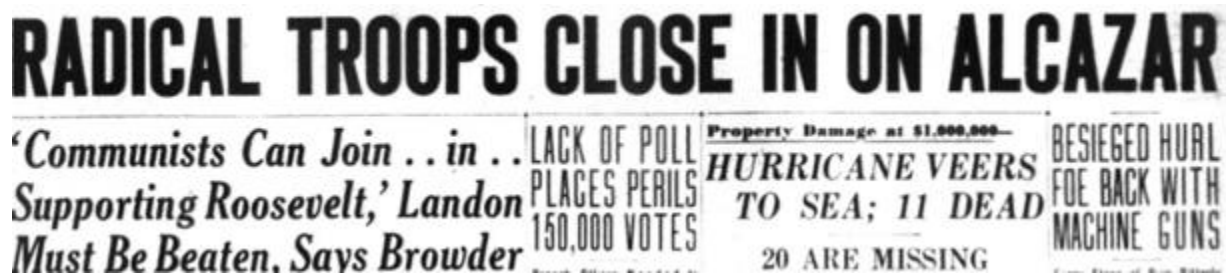
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1936; Lee Dickson, “Forty Radicals Slain by Their Captors,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1936; “Alcazar Captured by Reds,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 7<sup>th</sup>, 1936; “Radicals Rush Fresh Army to Battle Franco,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 13<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>124</sup> “The Radical Brand on the New Deal,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 6<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>125</sup> Lee Dickson, “Surrender of San Sebastian Expected Without Battle; Irun Captured Amid Horror,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 6<sup>th</sup>, 1936; “Communists Can Join..in.. Supporting Roosevelt,’ Landon Must Be Beaten, Says Bowder,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 20<sup>th</sup>, 1936; “Radical Troops Close in on Alcazar,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 20<sup>th</sup> 1936; “Insurgent Armies Spread ‘Ring of Steal’ Around Madrid,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 28<sup>th</sup> 1936; “Peek Discloses How New Deal Adopted Communistic Policies,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 28<sup>th</sup> 1936.

connect stories the *Herald-Examiner* felt to be connected thematically, instilling in the mind of its readers that these two stories were in fact one larger inter-connected story.



As the election drew nearer the supposed connection between New-Dealers and Spanish Radicals was made more blatant. Earl Browder, the Chairman of the Communist Party of the United States of America, endorsed FDR which the *Herald-Examiner* took as evidence of a communist scheme to create a popular front government as had existed in Spain.<sup>126</sup> The New Deal began to be described in the pages of the *Herald-Examiner* as socialistic, no longer manipulated by savvy hidden communists but communist from its inception. The equating of Spanish Radicals and New Dealers became most blatant by October, one month before the election. On Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1936, the *Herald-Examiner* published what they described as

<sup>126</sup> "Reds Plan 'People's Front' on Ruins of Democratic Party in 1940," *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 27<sup>th</sup>, 1936.



for Fascists to seize power leading to the *Herald-Examiner* to claim that “THE ONLY PERSONS WHO ARE ACTUALLY FORMENTING WAR ARE THE COMMUNISTS.”<sup>128</sup> In Spain the *Herald-Examiner* claimed blamed communism for “contaminating” the Spanish government and causing the political violence which tore the republic apart.<sup>129</sup>

Communism was threatening not only as an ideology, but as a Soviet conspiracy. The appointment of two communists to the Spanish cabinet was viewed as Soviet rule over Spain, and Browder’s endorsement of FDR was described as part of a Soviet initiative to weaken America from within.<sup>130</sup> This conspiratorial impulse made the *Herald-Examiner* a natural ally of Francoist propaganda, which sought to paint the Spanish Republic as threatened by Soviet infiltration and in need of saving by the strongman. While France, which was under a similar Popular Front government as Spain, debated sending the Spanish Republic aid the *Herald-Examiner* printed an expose revealing a supposed communist coup being planned for France.<sup>131</sup> These type of claims about impending French civil-war, which originated from the French right-wing press and were legitimated through re-printing by the international press, succeeded in drumming up enough opposition to prevent the French government to send military aid to the Spanish Republic despite both being ideologically sympathetic.<sup>132</sup>

As both ideological allies and allies of convenience, the *Herald-Examiner* naturally depicted the Nationalist forces favorably. Franco’s forces were regularly described as

<sup>128</sup> “Communism the War-Fomentor,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sep 12<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>129</sup> “Radical Terrorism in Spain Barred,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Oct 10<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>130</sup> Karl H. von Wiegand, “*Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 5<sup>th</sup>, 1936; “Reds Plan ‘People’s Front’ on Ruins of Democratic Party in 1940,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 27<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>131</sup> Jacque Bardoux, “Red Plot to Seize France Revealed,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 13<sup>th</sup>, 1936. The author of this piece, Jacques Bardoux would go on to later serve in the Vichy government of France.

<sup>132</sup> M.D. Gallagher, “Leon Bloom and the Spanish Civil War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 6, no. 3 (1971): 63.

“insurgents,” rather than fascist or Nationalists as other periodicals called them, perhaps in an effort to distance the subject from their ideology which might push away the average midwestern reader. The Hearst reporters embedded within the Nationalists often reported on their heroic baring and daring tactics, going as far as to thank “the kindness of general Fransisco Franco” for allowing them to report from the front.<sup>133</sup> When Republicans succeed in defending a Nationalist attack the *Herald-Examiner* described their effort as grim and glibly described loyalist troops being “blown into the air,” whereas Nationalist defenses were described regularly as gallant.<sup>134</sup> The Siege of Alcazar, in which Nationalist defended a fortress from Republican forces for 70 days became a focus in the *Herald-Examiner’s* coverage during September as it allowed the Nationalists to be depicted as both heroic and on the defensive despite the Nationalist forces trapped in Alcazar having been the instigators of violence. The refusal by Nationalists to allow the women and children trapped in the fortress to leave, which was offered by the Republican besiegers, was described in the pages of the *Herald-Examiner* as:

About 400 Spanish women, true to their ancient traditions of loyalty and courage, have elected to die unflinchingly with their husbands, fathers and brothers who compose the gallant little insurgent garrison which has withstood a Red militia siege of historic Alcazar fortress for fifty-six days.<sup>135</sup>

By late September to early October the *Herald-Examiner* began printing articles from active Nationalist combatants, in essence furthering Nationalist propaganda. While other periodicals, for instance the *Chicago Defender*, had printed reports from Americans who had volunteered in Spain the *Herald-Examiner* was alone in printing reports from non-American military

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<sup>133</sup> H. R. Knickerbocker, “Writer Views Reds’ Defeat,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1936.

<sup>134</sup> “Guns Slaughter Iron Reds: Defenders Rush Forth to Die in Shell-Battered Trenches; Chained Hostages Under Fire,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1936; “Alcazar Captured by Reds: Madrid Hears Siege is Ended; Insurgents Drive on Toledo Hurlled Back by New General,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 7<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>135</sup> Karl H. von Wiegand, “Women in Alcazar Scorn Mercy From Reds for Death With Mates,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 16<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

combatants in Spain.<sup>136</sup> One author, Lieut. Juan Mosado, wrote about his experience as one of Alcazar's defenders, resisting "Marxist attacks" and living in tunnels.<sup>137</sup> Another author, Prince Ludovic Pignatelli de Aragon, was described by the paper as descending from "one of Spain's most illustrious families" and as such was taken as a credible source in his article "Reds Make Savage War Upon Women," which described Nationalist troops becoming appalled at the Republican's treatment of women.<sup>138</sup>

Strangely, the *Herald-Examiner's* support of the Nationalists became tied to its support with Alf Landon. As mentioned previously, reports of radicals in Spain were often placed beside reports of radical New-Dealers in the United States. For instance, a report Republican troops closing around Alcazar was placed beside a report of communists supporting FDR, highlighting the shared theme of communists gaining ground. Reports on Nationalist victories similarly began to share space with reports of American Republican victories. The supposedly damning report that proved that an FDR elector had funded the Republic sat beside an article claiming Landon to be within two states of victory.<sup>139</sup> In late October, the announcement that "Landon Will Be Elected" was placed beneath a report that Nationalists had entered the suburbs of Madrid.<sup>140</sup> By regularly placing these reports together the *Herald-Examiner* was attempting to tell its audience one story, that radicals in Spain and America had caused havoc, and that the Nationalists and

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<sup>136</sup> These combatants turned reporters were given by-lines, implying they themselves wrote for the *Herald-Examiner* rather than giving their accounts to *Herald-Examiner* reporters.

<sup>137</sup> Lieut. Juan Mosado, "Survivor's Story of Siege," *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 30<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>138</sup> Prince Ludovic Pignatelli de Aragon, "Reds Make Savage War Upon Women," *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Oct 26<sup>th</sup>, 1936. Prince Ludovic was later, according to the *New York Times*, the "First member of his rank to be indicted by a grand jury" for the charge of blackmailing his cousin for 500,000 dollars.

<sup>139</sup> John T. Lambert, "Two States Hold Landon's Fate," *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Oct 4<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>140</sup> "Insurgents Enter Madrid Suburbs," *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1936; "Landon Will Be Elected! Al Smith Tells Cheering Thousands in Speech Here," *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1936.

American Republican party were going to put a stop to it. Communism would be crushed by conservatism, God would stay in heaven, and all would be normal on earth.

### **On the Spanish Race**

As a paper so allied to the Nationalist cause in Spain, the *Herald-Examiner* struggled over how to report on Spanish atrocities. When stories of the slaughter of non-combatants came out of Republican Spain, the *Herald-Examiner* was quick to reprint the story and even add to it, for instance placing within a report of communist sailors mutinying and slaying their naval officers an un-related reminder that 112 priests had also been killed within the Republic.<sup>141</sup> But when the stories came out of Nationalist Spain the *Herald-Examiner* faced an obstacle; How could the paper which claimed “the only persons who are actually fomenting war are the communists,” then report on atrocities conducted by anti-communists?<sup>142</sup>

One strategy was to deny that atrocities had occurred. The slaughter of Badajoz, which was first written of first by a foreign correspondent for the *Herald-Examiner's* main competitor the *Chicago Tribune*, was not mentioned once within the pages of the *Herald-Examiner*. Another strategy utilized by the *Herald-Examiner* was to attempt to discredit reports of Nationalist atrocities. Reports of Nationalists bombing civilians in Madrid were re-framed as “Insurgent Plane Scores Bull’s-eye on Socialist Garage,” and further reports of Nationalist atrocities were described by a former Spanish official writing in the *Herald-Examiner* as propaganda by the Republican government.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> “Red Slaughter on Spanish Ships: Massacre of Naval Officers by Mutinous Crew Bared,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Oct 17<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>142</sup> “Communism the War-Fomenter,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 12<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>143</sup> “Graphic Story of Night Air Raid on Madrid,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 1<sup>st</sup>, 1936; “Radical Terrorism in Spain Bared,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Oct 12<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

To compliment these strategies the *Herald-Examiner* relied on racism and misogyny to further paint any reports of atrocities in Spain as peculiarities tied to the Spanish people and not specifically an ideology. In one remarkable editorial seeking to explain how a western civilized nation could have such a brutal civil war the *Herald-Examiner* explained:

Some dangerous racial strands have produced individual Spaniards of extreme cruelty. There are numerous descendants in Spain of ancient Carthaginians, who were addicted to the worship of Moloch, human and child sacrifice. The nation also contains a large element derived from the Moors who were mainly mongrel Arabs mixed with barbarous North African tribes.<sup>144</sup>

The article then claimed that this inter-mingling of the blood of Carthaginian demon worshipers and “barbarous” Moors could explain stories of rightists crucified and lunatics being freed from asylums and armed by the Republican military. In an editorial seeking to explain the phenomenon of female militants the *Herald-Examiner* claimed that the women joined the Republican because they “are inclined to be most childish in their emotional outbursts and childish in seeking revenge.”<sup>145</sup>

To clarify, the *Herald-Examiner* did not resort to racism to report on Spanish atrocities exactly. The *Herald-Examiner* viewed world-events through an explicitly racist lens and did so when not reporting on the Spanish Civil War. The people of the Soviet Union were described as “Asiatic hordes” desiring to conquer the world.<sup>146</sup> Phrenology occasionally occupied the *Herald-Examiner’s* front page, where convicts’ appearances were broken into individual parts to be analyzed as in indicator of guilt.<sup>147</sup> The *Herald-Examiner* was prone to racism before the Spanish Civil War, but that proclivity enabled them a certain freedom in reporting on the war that other

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<sup>144</sup> “Brutal and Bloody History of Spain,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Oct 11<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>145</sup> Dr. Donald A. Laird, “Why Gentle Women Become Ferocious Tigresses,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 27<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

<sup>146</sup> “Red Russia’s Militarism,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1936.

<sup>147</sup> “Analysis of Slayer’s Psychology,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1936.



periodicals did not have. Stories of atrocities that were in line with the paper's anti-communism were examples of the savagery that communism inspired, and examples of Nationalist atrocities were explained by references of Spanish savagery meaning that the *Herald-Examiner's* politics were never challenged by the facts of the Spanish Civil War.

### **“Not a Pleasant Beach Scene:” Photography in the *Herald-Examiner***

While a smaller paper when compared to many in the Chicagoland area, the *Herald-Examiner* was able to draw on the wealth of the Hearst media empire to provide far more photographs of the Spanish Civil War than most periodicals. These photos tended to focus on the scale and destruction of the war. Destruction of buildings by bombings or artillery was the most common photo, but the *Herald-Examiner* did not shy away from depicting the victims of this violence as other papers did, up to and including displaying dead bodies. These victims were displayed, but not shown sympathy by the *Herald-Examiner*, which regularly captioned evidence of their death glibly to utilize it to push their world view. One photo, displaying a field of dead bodies, was described as “not a pleasant beach scene,” and the destroyed city of Irun was described as a victim of “red wrath.” The photography of the war by the *Herald-Examiner* was sensationalist, and while it may have included pictures of both Nationalist and Republican destruction it certainly provided more evidence of Republican destruction than Nationalist.



“Red Wrath Wrecks Iron,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Sept 13<sup>th</sup>, 1936.



Not a Pleasant Beach Scene, but a Square in Spain Covered by the Bodies of Men and Women, Innocent Fugitives Who Were Shot in the Back by Militia or Troops as They Tried to Run Away.

“Brutal and Bloody History of Spain,” *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, Oct 11<sup>th</sup>, 1936. The caption begins by describing the photo first as “not a pleasant beach scene” before describing the photo as pictures of victims of either the militia or troops.

## What War?

When compared to other Chicagoland papers, the extent to which the *Herald-Examiner* backed the Nationalist side becomes almost astonishing. The *Daily News*, by far the most neutral periodical in the Chicagoland area, never once referred to the Republicans as “radicals” nor the Nationalists as “insurgents.” Even on subjects in which the two papers agreed, such as the heroism of the defender of Alcazar, the *Daily News* referred to the Nationalists as “Fascists,” a characterization the *Herald-Examiner* never used.<sup>148</sup>

The *Herald-Examiner* was willing to ally with the Nationalists over a shared anti-communism, but that alliance was one of convenience. By late November FDR had won a resounding electoral victory and attacking him over connections to the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War was no longer beneficial to the *Herald-Examiner's* owner, William Randolph Hearst. As such, reporting on the Spanish Civil War was subsequently dropped in the pages of the periodical, indicating that the shared anti-communism between Hearst and Franco had endeared no loyalty between the two men. The Spanish Civil War was, to the *Herald-Examiner*, a weapon by which to attack Hearst's domestic enemies. Once the opportunity to bleed New-Dealers had passed, the war and its victims were quickly forgotten in favor of the newspaper magnate's next interest.

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<sup>148</sup> “Loyal Troops Slaughter 600 Toledo Priests,” *Chicago Daily News*, Sept 29<sup>th</sup>, 1936.

## Conclusion

When Americans read reporting about the Spanish Civil War, they were doing more than simply informing themselves on world events, they were seeking to learn about themselves. Liberal New Dealers could, and did, relate to the liberals of the Spanish Second Republic who had attempted to create economic reform to stave off crises. The poor and oppressed, as well as members of organized labor, believed they shared a solidarity with the peasants and oppressed proletariats in Spain. And the American right wing, despite often lacking the Catholicism driving Franco, viewed in the strong man a “Law and Order” response to liberal reform that could be applauded. Even for those that felt no sympathy for Spain lessons could be learned from the conflict, be it the dangers of rapid economic and political reform or of inner-left infighting. This desire, to understand themselves through a Spanish lense, instilled a sustained interest in Americans for coverage of the war.

Chicagoland periodicals knew that they would draw attention if they covered the conflict in ways that helped Americans understand themselves, and so they did. Some did so solely in pursuit of their pecuniary interests while others took the opportunity the attention provided to pursue tangentially related objectives. Regardless of intention, their audiences made it clear that should a paper’s coverage of the war not align with their own beliefs they would not hesitate to criticize and even leave their papers for periodicals that did.

The consolidation that had recently occurred in the news industry meant that it was the major newspaper publishers that held the most power in shaping how coverage of Spain would mediate how Americans understood the political and racial conflict they experienced. Had the profession of journalism been better organized and unified perhaps this impulse for a paper’s coverage to match its audiences pre-conceived ideological stance could have been checked. And yet, alongside pressure from the publishers in the industry, political polarization in part caused by its members taking different stances on the Spanish Civil War prevented unions like the Newspaper Guild from presenting a strong and unified front. It would

seem that the strife Americans were experiencing pre-determined that reporting on the Spanish Civil War would be sublimated into a culture war by the press.

The American audience, due to perceived similarities between the American political situation and Spain's, were primed to be receptive to certain kinds of messages about the Spanish Civil War, namely those that connected it to conflict in America. Meanwhile, consolidation in the newspaper industry, alongside America's avowed neutrality on the war, allowed periodicals significant room to maneuver in their reporting, only bounded by the expectations of their audiences. As such, coverage of the Spanish Civil War became detached from the facts of the conflict and was shaped to fit the goals of specific papers and the demands of their audiences. Because of this no one singular message capable of drumming up support could materialize.

Instead, the Spanish Civil War as a narrative became part of an American Culture War. Perhaps this partially explains why conflict over the New Deal remained largely non-physical, as tension could be released in arguments over Spain rather than left to build. If so, then it was a Faustian bargain. Class Conflict over the New Deal was sublimated into a less destructive Culture War, but the process was bought with the blood of Spain, whose cries for help went unheard.

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