

PUBLIC MEETING REPORT

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Foreign Nationalities Branch
Number M-122

Office of Strategic Services
28 December 1943

Event: MEETING OF THE ~~COMITE~~ COMITE DE UNIFICACION
HISPANA

Speakers: Antonio de la Villa, Oscar Antonio de Sudder,
Ernestina Gonzalez, Jesus Robles Toyo,
Soto Velez, Clifford McAvoy

Place: Club Obrero Espanol, New York City

Date: 19 December 1943

Attendance: 75-100

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The newly formed Junta of Liberation in Mexico City came in for biting attack at a meeting of the Comite de Unificacion Hispana held at the Club Obrero Espanol in New York City, 19 December 1943. All but McAvoy spoke in Spanish.

Don Antonio de la Villa, former Spanish Republican consul in Puerto Rico, was the first of several speakers to discuss "Spain and its Problems." He complimented the Comite for asking him to speak without inquiring into his party affiliation; they knew him as an anti-Fascist and were therefore willing to work with him. His brief speech attacked the Junta de Liberacion for refusal to accept representatives of all political parties.

The speech which evoked from the audience enthusiastic expression of hostility to the Mexico City Junta was delivered by Oscar Antonio de Sudder, secretary-general of the Spanish Section of the Free World Association.

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De Sudder wanted to know "Who are these people who make up the membership of the Junta de Liberacion?" Well, there were some friends of ~~Indalecio Prieto~~ and some friends of ~~Martinez Barrio~~. Then there were some people for ~~Accion Cataluna~~, and one or two others.

The first announcement of the Junta, said de Sudder, had made it appear that it stood for the one thing all Spanish Republicans had been working toward -- unity. But events had belied the first impression. The Junta could not represent the Spanish people; it refused to accept all anti-Fascist parties and failed to give representation to the majority of Spanish thought today. The people in Mexico City had set themselves up as a Committee without any authority whatsoever. The CNT, the UGT, a large part of the Socialists, and the Communists had not been included. Who then was in the Junta?

Prieto did not represent the Spanish people, de Sudder went on to say. Perhaps it could be said he represented two or three, he was so fat; perhaps a few sycophants. Martinez Barrio was charming, well-mannered. One could spend a delightful half-hour with him. But "he will have to give proof that he will not again betray Spain as he did in 1933 when he delivered Spain into the hands of the reactionaries!"

It was impossible to refuse representation to those parties which fought against Franco. "We must have unity," he repeated, unity of all anti-Falangists.

De Succar recalled that the Committee had aspirations to become a government-in-exile. How could it hope for that when the true government of the Spanish Republic had never died? "The Spanish Government is still alive in the person of Dr. Negrin." If we did not accept the continuity of the Spanish Republic with its Prime Minister Negrin and everything that the Constitution implied, then we denied all that the Spanish Republic and its Constitution stood for; unity must be based on legality. The Committee in Mexico City was not based on legality, and its members were simply appeasers. In order to please certain elements in Great Britain and the Department of State, it had refused to accept Communists, Socialists, and others, the very elements which represented the real Spain of today, de Succar charged.

De Succar ended by stating his conviction that no decision could be made on post-war Spain which had not been taken up with the Soviet Union. Roosevelt and Churchill had gone all the way to Teheran to talk to Stalin; how could Spanish Republicans overlook Stalin when planning the Spain of the future?

Another speaker, Ernestina Gonzalez, reiterated the attacks on the Junta, and urged Spanish anti-Fascists to take the "new French Popular Front" as a model. During these war years, she declared, the French had come to accept all anti-Fascists irrespective of their political coloration.

The last speaker on Spain and its problems, Jesus Robles Toyo, Chancellor of the Mexican Consulate at New York, spoke for the Mexican Consul General, Ricardo G. ~~Hill~~, who could not attend. Toyo called for unity of all Spanish anti-Fascists to get rid of Franco and the Falange. He wished to put forward one concrete proposal: that the Club Obrero and the Comite de Unificacion Hispana approach all Spanish organizations in New York City with a view to achieving as much unity as possible.

Mr. Soto Velez appeared on the program to make a special plea for the independence of Puerto Rico. Clifford McAvoy, legislative attorney for the CIO, attacked the United States Congress as reactionary and urged the audience to write its Congressmen in support of subsidy legislation.

During the meeting announcement was made that the Archbishop of Canterbury's book The Secret of Soviet Power was available, and several people circulated through the audience offering it for sale. A mimeographed handbill, headed "La Conferencia de Teheran," which attacked "reactionary" politicians in the United States, was circulated by the Club Eugenio Ma. de Hostos -- Communist Party, United States. Copies of Hispana Popular, a Mexico City paper, were also sold at the meeting.

According to the conservative New York daily La Prensa of 24 December the assembly agreed to send a telegram to Indalecio Prieto and Martinez Barrio, expressing satisfaction for the degree of understanding which had been brought about among the Republican factions, but registering disapproval of the narrow frame within which the Junta had been conceived. A telegram of support was sent to the Spanish workers and syndicalist organizations in Mexico.