**Canute Frankson**

Frankson was born in the Parish of St. Catherine, Old Harbor, Jamaica on April 13, 1890. In 1917, together with his wife, Rachel, he emigrated to Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, where Frankson worked as a machinist. Frankson eventually settled in Detroit, where he worked in the auto industry. Frankson joined the Communist Party in 1934. He sailed for Europe aboard the Queen Mary on April 21, 1937.

In Spain, skilled machinists were scarce and Frankson with his proven ability was rapidly promoted. He was appointed Head Mechanic at the International Garage in Albacete. Fellow International Garage veteran, Marion Noble, noted that Frankson's fluency in Spanish was a great asset and that many hours of his free time were spent teaching engine repair classes to young Spaniards.

Frankson returned to the United States aboard the President Harding on September 24, 1938. Frankson was killed in an auto accident in either 1939 or 1940.

**Citation:**

Cary Nelson and Jefferson Hendricks, *Madrid 1937* (New York, 1996), pp. 33-35.

*Excerpts from letter*

Albacete, Spain

July 6, 1937

My Dear Friend,

I’m sure that by this time you are still waiting for a detailed explanation of what has this international struggle to do with my being here. Since this is a war between whites who for centuries have held us in slavery, and have heaped every kind of insult and abuse upon us, segregated and jim-crowed us; why I, a Negro who have fought through these years for the rights of my people, am here in Spain today?

Because we are no longer an isolated minority group fighting hopelessly against an immense giant. Because, my dear, we have joined with, and become an active part of, a great progressive force on whose shoulders rests the responsibility of saving human civilization from the planned destruction of a small group of degenerates gone mad in their lust for power. Because if we crush Fascism here we’ll save our people in America, and in other parts of the world from the vicious persecution, wholesale imprisonment, and slaughter which the Jewish people suffered and are suffering under Hitler’s Fascist heels. All we have to do is to think of the lynching of our people. We can but look back at the pages of American history stained with the blood of Negroes; stink with the burning bodies of our people hanging from trees; bitter with the groans of our tortured loved ones from whose living bodies ears, fingers, toes have been cut for souvenirs¾living bodies into which red-hot pokers have been thrust. All because of a hate created in the minds of men and women by their masters who keep us all under their heels while they suck our blood, while they live in their bed of ease by exploiting us....

...We will crush them. We will build us a new society - a society of peace and plenty. There will be no color line, no jim-crow trains, no lynching. That is why, my dear, I’m here in Spain.

On the battlefields of Spain we fight for the preservation of democracy. Here, we’re laying the foundation for world peace, and for the liberation of my people, and of the human race. Here, where we’re engaged in one of the most bitter struggles of human history, there is no color line, no discrimination, no race hatred. There’s only one hate, and that is the hate for Fascism. We know why our enemies are. The Spanish people are very sympathetic towards us. They are lovely people. I’ll tell you about them later....

Don’t think for one moment that the strain of this terrible war or the many miles between us has changed my feelings towards you. Our friendship has meant a great deal to me, and still means much to me. I appreciate it because it has always been a friendship of devoted and mutual interest. And I’ll do whatever is within my power to maintain it.

No one knows the time he’ll die, even under the most favorable conditions. So I, a soldier in active service, must know far less about how far or how close is death. But as long as I hold out I’ll keep you in touch with events. Sometimes when I go to the fronts the shells drop pretty close. Then I think it’s only a matter of minutes. After I return here to the base I seem to see life from a new angle. Somehow it seems to be more beautiful. I’d think of you, home and all my friends, then get to working more feverishly than ever. Each of us must give all we have if this Fascist beast is to be destroyed.

After this is over I hope to share my happiness with you....

So long. Until some future date. One never knows when there’ll be time to write. There’s so much to do and so little time in which to do it. Love,

Salud,

Canute