Partisanship in Balance: *The New York Times* Coverage of the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939

Julie Prieto

jprieto@stanford.edu
208 Rosse Lane #105
Stanford, CA 94305
(650) 380-6286

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Introduction

In 1896, *The New York Times* was a small, conservative newspaper tottering on the brink of death with a readership of only 9,000 and years of mounting financial losses. Within three years of its purchase by Adolph Simon Ochs though, the paper had increased its readership to 25,000 and was on firm financial footing, having changed its format to eliminate the short fiction, comics, and gossip columns in favor of a heavy emphasis on news and book reviews.[1] Ochs and his managing editor Carr Van Anda revitalized the paper not by competing directly with their main rivals, Hearst and Pulitzer, but by changing the paper to attract a different readership, one that was more interested in "hard" news with a heavy emphasis on foreign reporting. Particularly in the years after WWI, the *New York Times* under Ochs focused on increasing the number of foreign bureaus and correspondents around the world, even opening in 1924 its own radio station in order to receive messages direct from Europe.[2] By the late 1920s, *The New York Times* had a reputation as being one of if not the most important news source in the United States for both national and international news. It was almost the national newspaper of record, with a readership of 780,000.[3] No other newspaper came close in readership, scope of reporting, and importance in the national sphere. As Max Frankel, reporter at the *Times* from

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[1] Merrill, John C. and Harold A. Fisher. *The World's Great Dailies: Profiles of Fifty Newspapers*. New York: Hasting House, Publishers, 1980. This is an updated version of a previous book entitled *The Elite Press,* by John C. Merrill. The later revision discards the rankings of the earlier book and covers more papers, though the Times is covered in both.

[2] Gay Talese's history of the *Times*, *The Kingdom and the Power*. New York: Ivy Books, 1992. Provides an account of Ochs' strategy for the *New York Times* during his time the paper's owner though it is critical of the growth of the Times during the years from 1900-1930, noting that an increase in the quality of reporting could but did not necessarily follow the increase in the number of correspondents assigned to foreign posts.

[3] Figures taken from Alex S. Jones and Susan. E. Tifft. *The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind the New York Times*. Boston: Little Brown, and Co., 2000.

1956 to 1972 and executive editor from 1972 to 1994 said, the paper "is like a supermarket of news" with the reporters offering a constantly evolving stock each day in order to keep customers returning for the information and analysis of the day's events.[4]

During the Spanish Civil War, *The New York Times* reinforced this strong commitment to foreign news reporting cultivated over the previous three decades by permanently assigning three reporters to cover the war. At a time in which most newspaper outlets only assigned one or two reporters who would each stay for only a period of a couple of weeks or months to cover specific issues, this was an exceptional amount of coverage on the conflict, and it made the *Times* one of the most cited contemporary sources on the war in the United States.[5] Although the *Times* also used several other reporters for shorter periods of time, these three, Herbert L. Matthews, reporting from Madrid, Lawrence A. Fernsworth, reporting from Barcelona, and William P. Carney, assigned to the Nationalists, wrote the bulk of the material on the war for the paper. All were already seasoned, experienced foreign correspondents, and each journalist presented a highly partisan view of the Spanish Civil War. These views were based not only on previous political beliefs but by their experiences during the war and were far from static, changing as the conflict progressed.

The New York Times therefore presented a wide range of political perspectives in its coverage of the Spanish Civil War. Rather than rely on neutral reporting from the front, the *Times* balanced articles of different partisan slants in order to escape criticism that the paper favored one side over the other in the war. This strategy of presenting a balance of political views maximized the number of readers who could find the information that they wanted to read;

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[4] Edwin Diamond. *Behind the Times: Inside the New York Times*. New York: Villard Books (1994), 4.
[5] John Hohenberg. *Foreign Correspondence: The Great Reporters and Their Times, 2nd ed*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press (1995) 181-2.

that is, information that matched their own partisan leanings. Although it never eliminated criticism that the *Times* spread propaganda, particularly from conservative Catholic newspapers and their contributors, the strategy of providing a range of partisan, political views did provide some protection for the elite paper. But while the process of creating balanced news appeared to present a fair picture of the conflict, the *Times* manipulated the news coming out of Spain throughout the war. Matthews' and Fernsworth's articles were cut and changed, while Carney's articles were given prominence despite his known attempts to fabricate and misrepresent his stories. This attempt at balance also meant that *The New York Times* never achieved anything approaching a unified, editorial stance on the war. Instead, paper's stance towards the war varied according to who captured the headline on any particular day. Reports on the war could vary widely from one day to the next and create contradictory views of the progress of the war within the same news week or even the same news day. There was no one view presented by the *Times* that could be said to represent the paper's objective stance on the war. Although Ochs and his successor Arthur Sulzberger, maintained a commitment to the ideal of objectivity in reporting so as to distinguish them from their tabloid competitors, in practice Matthews, Fernsworth, and Carney each wrote highly partisan articles on the war that reflected their individual political sympathies. Objectivity was not present in any of their reports nor was it particularly encouraged by the news staff in New York.

The process of manipulation of the news occurred not just as a result of a dialogue between the editor and the correspondents but at several points in the news-making process. This is not to say that correspondents and editors were not key figures in the process. The war correspondents were vital in not only presenting their interpretation of the war to the *Times* but in fighting for the integrity of their articles and for space in the paper. The managing editor was

also a key figure in setting standards for the news and for communicating with the correspondents. But in addition to this must be added the influence of the bull-pen, a collection of the copy editors, readers, and editorial staff members. These members of the news staff filtered the news and made decisions about content and length before the actual stories ever reached the managing editor. Also of key importance was the influence of Sulzberger, who was the ultimate authority in settling any grievances that arose in the various levels of the *Times* hierarchy even if he had less control over many of the day-to-day activities of his news-staff.

Although there are several comprehensive histories of the *Times*, there has been little focus on the *Times*' news coverage and the multiple levels at which the news can be altered and interpreted. Instead, the focus in the scholarship has been on the Ochs family and other high level officials within the paper. Elmer Holmes Davis' study *History of the New York Times, 1851-1921*, first printed in 1921 when Davis was a reporter for the *Times*, focuses almost exclusively on the internal dynamics of the paper and the Ochs family's role in revitalizing the paper. In the book, Davis celebrates Ochs credits him for establishing the business model that ultimately allowed the *Times* to expand into more reporting of news.[6] Gay Talese's more recent study *The Kingdom and the Power,* based upon an earlier book published in 1969, also focuses on the impact of Ochs and his successors Arthur Hays Sulzberger, Orvil Dryfoos, and Arthur Ochs Sulzberger but locates power also among the editors that stand at the head of the news-staff. Talese is most concerned with showing how intra-organizational struggles and the quest for personal power among these editors and for these positions shaped news making.[7] Alex S. Jones and Susan E. Tifft's *The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind the New York Times,* moves away from this narrow focus on the top levels of power within the newspaper itself

[6] Elmer Davis. *History of the New York Times, 1851-1921.* New York: Greenwood Press, 1969.
[7] Gay Talese. The Kingdom and the Power. . New York: Ivy Books, 1992.

to argue that *The Times* coverage of the Holocaust was colored by the Ochs family's desire to distance themselves from their own identity as Jews so as to appear part of the mainstream of American life both in the pre-war era and during the war. But there is little analysis of how this pressure to renounce Judaism was established and from where it emanated, leaving the focus reliant on the personal rather than on the interactions between media sources and their impact on the *Times*.[8] External influences on the paper and how they interact with institutional factors have therefore been ignored in favor of a more narrow focus on the internal structure of the *Times*, with an emphasis on the top echelons of the paper, namely the presidents and top editors, instead of a focus on reporters and staff members, such as the cable editors and copy clerks, who filter the news before it is even seen by the editor.

The few journalists and scholars who have written in particular about *The New York Times* coverage of the Spanish Civil War share this bias towards looking at only a piece of the news-making process by focusing in almost exclusively on the war correspondents themselves at the expense of the news-staff and editors in New York. Alejandro Pizarroso's article about the creation of propaganda by foreigners on and for both the Republican and Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War, spends a great deal of time outlining Carney's various fabrications. Given the number and degree of the journalistic dishonesty displayed, Pizarroso is incredulous about the continued reliance on Carney as a source on Franco throughout the war. For Pizarroso, it is only comprehensible if explained by internal politics in the paper, especially given his high regard for Matthews, but he does not have a sense of what those internal factors

[8] Alex S Jones and Susan E. Tifft. *The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind the New York Times.* Boston: Little Brown, and Co., 2000.

may have been.[9] Meanwhile, Matthews is praised for his accurate and objective reporting on the Republic and is held up as a model foreign correspondent during the war, one who resisted the urge to create propagandist articles, a temptation that did not elude Carney and other reporters. But Pizarroso mistakes Matthews' pro-Republicanism for neutrality and takes for granted that because Matthews visited the front frequently, he must have adhered to other journalistic ideals of integrity, independence, and objectivity. George Seldes, who spent time in Spain working for *The New York Post*, was more correct, if a bit alarmist, when he argued that press manipulation occurred at the *Times*, positing that Catholics groups during the Spanish Civil War were "able to control the news of a great war in a neutral press," but he also was too ready to believe that because Matthews and Fernsworth shared his own political sympathies that they were somehow more independent or correct than Carney.[10]

Also largely unexamined is the mutability of the concept of objectivity for elite papers such as the *Times*. Studies, such as Michael McGerr's *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865-1920*, present objectivity and independent journalism as increasingly becoming the norm into the 20th century. For McGerr, starting after the Civil War, journalism in the North fractured into three different types: partisan, independent, and sensational. Like the pre-war press, partisan newspapers supported political parties and pushed particular ideological stances, while the independent press represented a new development in which the paper claimed to present objective facts independent of party affiliation. This claim of independence was based in part on the development of the "professional consciousness of the press" and of independent

[9] Alejandro Pizarroso. "La intervención extrajera y propaganda: la propaganda exterior de las dos Españas" *Historia y Comunicación Social* 6 (2001), 79-81. (Foreign Intervention and Propaganda: Foreign Propaganda in the Two Spains)
[10] George Seldes. *The Catholic Crisis*. New York: J. Messner, inc (1939) 210.

editors who depended more on hard news stories than on editorial pieces.[11] McGerr argues that the new independent press "separated reportage and editorial, fact and opinion, thought and emotion" and appealed to educated upper and middle class Northerners.[12] Meanwhile, the development of sensational journalism, particularly by William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, challenged both of these categories of news by appealing to the working classes and rejecting the intellectualism of independent journalism. While he argues that all three categories of the press survived into the 20th century, McGerr concludes that independent journalism grew at the expense of partisan journalism. As this type of journalism grew, so did the norm of objectivity in journalistic and editorial practice, particularly in elite newspapers like the *Times*.

Like McGerr, Daniel Hallin conceives of the press as being largely independent of partisan political leanings and careful to protect the ideals of objectivity. In Hallin's study of media in the Vietnam War, *The 'Uncensored War': The Media and Vietnam*, he argues that journalists adhered so strongly to the ideal of a professionalized, independent press that they undermined their own ability to criticize the government during the Vietnam War. For Hallin, by relying on "facts" rather than editorial commentary on U.S. policy in Vietnam, journalists were forced to depend on information supplied by the government. In this way, the supposedly independent press "open[ed] wide the channel through which official influence flowed" and made themselves subject to official manipulation.[13] Hallin argues that the exception to this was the few war correspondents who were in South East Asia covering the conflict. Because they had direct access to information on the war, they did not compromise independence for objectivity, but Hallin argues that they still adhered to professional standards of journalism,

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[11] Michael McGerr. *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865-1920*. New York: Oxford University Press (1986) 109.
[12] Ibid, 135.
[13] Daniel C. Hallin. *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam*. New York: Oxford University Press (1986), 25.

meaning that they sought to present an unbiased view of "the story" in Vietnam.[14] This only changed with the Tet offensive when the government itself became internally divided over escalation in Vietnam. Then the "objective" press could finally find "reliable sources," meaning government sources, which provided a critical view of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia.[15] The press therefore never abandoned objectivity during the war, but this adherence to the journalistic ideal could compromise both journalistic independence and the ability of reporters to write critically about the war.

Instead of McGerr and Hallin, the *Times* and their construction of objective journalism during the war conforms more to Richard K. Kaplan's *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920* and his view of the relationship between objectivity and the elite media. For Kaplan, "the media's selections and interpretations are not a matter of free choice by the free press." Objectivity is not a fixed category but instead is formed at least in part by the relationship between media institutions and the political sphere.[16] This means that the concept of an independent press is largely a myth. The press naturally responds to the political context in which they produce news, including correspondents and editors. But while Kaplan sees objectivity as a mutable concept and argues that politics will invariably effect what journalists write, he argues that journalists since the Civil War have increasingly made the effort to divorce themselves from partisan politics. Even though they can never achieve full objectivity or independence, they still hold this to be the ideal and use it as the measure of effective journalism. Kaplan argues that journalists, particularly in the 20th century, "became professional technicians, experts at gathering information and separating truths from half-truths, distortions, and outright

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[14] Ibid, 9.
[15] Ibid, 88. Hallin locates this change in the latter half of 1965 and states that before then the debate over Vietnam in the *Times* was narrow and focused only on the majority view of policy in Southeast Asia.
[16] Richard K. Kaplan. *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity*. Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press (2002), 3.

lies" instead of being the political advocates and slaves to private interest that they had been before the Civil War.[17] Therefore, Kaplan's argument does allow that politics have a strong influence on the reporter, but like McGerr and Hallin, he sees correspondents as necessarily adhering to at least the ideals of objectivity and as implicitly rejecting partisanship.

Three Partisan Journalists

Herbert Lionel Matthews was born in 1900 in New York to middle class parents. Like many other young men of his generation, Matthews volunteered for service in WWI and the age of eighteen was shipped off to France with the last of the doughboys. Eager and excited to be away from home for the first time, Matthews longed to see action, but the young volunteer reached his tank coups in Langres too late to see any fighting. Although he would later become fascinated with politics and political movements, Matthews wrote of his time in France that his greatest distinguishing characteristic from the French who surrounded him was his "constant indifference and [his] ignorance of the political issues of war and peace."[18] After his stint in the army, a disillusioned Matthews attended Columbia University, studying Italian literature. Upon his graduation, Matthews joined *The New York Times* as a secretary and stenographer for Business Manager, Edwin Friendly, a post he received after answering an ad in the paper. After three years in the business department, Matthews took a leave of absence from the *Times* and traveled to Italy and France, spending two years studying Dante and Italian literature on a Bayard Cutting Taylor fellowship from Columbia. This time as well, Matthews remembers having little interest in French culture or politics, but he reminisces: "A process of osmosis was at work for me. Instinctively, I was absorbing French civilization and learning to understand the complex,

[17] Ibid, 192.
[18] Herbert Matthews. *Education of a Correspondent*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co. (1946), 6.

sometimes abrasive, but much more often warm and friendly character of the French people."[19] Matthews returned from France in 1926 determined to leave the business department of the *Times.*

Matthews' original idea was to join the book review department, but then Vice-president Arthur Sulzberger directed him instead to a post as an assistant to Frederick Birchall, the acting managing editor. This move was crucial to Matthews' future career growth as it allowed him to enter the news side of the *Times*.[20] It also allowed Matthews to travel abroad again on a tour of Japan, Korea, and China funded by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Japanese government. Matthews, just after WWII, recalled of his and the other newspapermen's experience on the trip: "I believe it is a fair statement to make that after visiting Peking, Tientsin, and Shanghai, and then returning to Japan, everyone of us went back to the States much more sympathetically disposed toward the Japanese than toward the Chinese."[21] Matthews was impressed by Japanese industry and infrastructure in China, particularly the railroads of Manchuria, and left believing that the Japanese would be a positive, modernizing influence on East Asia.[22] In 1931, Matthews was assigned to the Paris bureau of the *Times* as second man under Percy Philips, joining a staff that also included William Carney and Lansing Warren. Matthews covered politics in Paris, and he saw his job as one that put him in an "unimportant rut."[23] Despite his move toward more political stories, Matthews balked at Philips' leadership and jumped at the chance to become a war correspondent when the Italo-Ethiopian war broke out in 1935.

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[19] Herbert Matthews. *A World in Revolution*: *A Newspaperman's Memoir*. New York: Scribner (1972) 57.
[20] Ibid, 62-63. Matthews' memoir provides an account of his early life from the time that he arrived back in New York from Europe to the time that he was sent to Paris by the *Times*.
[21] Herbert Matthews. *Education of a Correspondent*, 16.
[22] Herbert Matthews. Letter to Birchall. June 21, 1929. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection. Matthews wrote from Tankantzu, Manchuria about his favorable impression of Japan and argued that even though his trip was long, the knowledge he was gaining was justified in light of the future use his expertise would be to the *Times.*
[23] Herbert Matthews, Letter to Birchall, September 21 1936. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection.

Even before the official outbreak of hostilities, Matthews had written positive stories about Italy from his Paris byline. Matthews wrote of League attempts to condemn Mussolini and aid Ethiopia: "The best thing for all concerned, it appears to be accepted, is to circumscribe that loss as much as possible and above all to avoid a catastrophic European conflagration."[24] He was against sanctions for Italy, minimized the importance of Ethiopian autonomy, and argued that the Italian invasion would be helpful to the Ethiopian people because of "the civilizing influence Italy is bringing here"[25] Matthews even argued that the majority of Ethiopians were in favor of the Italian take over and still maintained even after WWII that the Italians had improved material conditions in the country.[26] Though he declined to talk in depth about his experience covering the Italo-Ethiopian War later in his life, through the 1950s, Matthews was unapologetic about his previous support of Italian fascism and admiration of Japan. Writing during the Spanish Civil War in 1937 his warning that Spain might lead to a second general European war, Matthews mused that he might not be able to stand by all that he wrote in Ethiopia but that he could not be convinced that Fascism had been bad for Italy or that Mussolini had not dealt properly with the League of Nations. Plus, Matthews quipped about the Italo-Ethiopian War, "I never could withhold my admiration at seeing a difficult job superbly done."[27]

With the end of the Italo-Ethiopian War in 1936, Matthews returned to Paris and continued to write articles on French politics and French reactions to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. His articles from this period were starkly anti-Republican and stressed popular French opposition to the Republic, arguing in one piece written when the war was already three

[24] Herbert Matthews. "Sacrifice to Peace is Ethiopia's Role." *The New York Times*, 14 August 1935, 6.
[25] Herbert Matthews. "Italians Foresee Stand By Seyoum" *The New York Times*. 26 October 1935, 9.
[26] Herbert Matthews. *Education of a Correspondent*, 28.
[27] Herbert Matthews. *Two Wars and More to Come*. New York: Carrik and Evans, inc. (1938) 18.

months old that the French "are not by any means united in their sympathies for the Loyalists."[28] In this sentiment, Matthews was supported by Edwin James, then Managing Editor in New York but previously in the Paris bureau with Matthews. James wrote occasional pieces on the war from New York which were also starkly partisan, in which he argued that Europe and the U.S. should maintain a policy of non-intervention and minimized reports of Italian and German intervention on behalf of Francisco Franco's Nationalist forces. Though James expressed regret after the war about the demise of the Republic to Milly Bennett, reporter in Spain for the United Press, The Associated Press, he maintained that the repeal of non-intervention would have been a mistake for the U.S., France, and Great Britain.[29] After spending approximately three months in Paris, Matthews asked to be assigned to Spain on the rebel side, a post that had been held by Frank Kluckhohn until he was forced to flee Franco's Spain after publishing reports confirming that Italian and German planes had arrived in Nationalist Spain.[30] Matthews was instead sent to cover the war from Madrid, but as he wrote to James, the correspondent was simply pleased to be out of Paris, declaring that he "wouldn't have missed this for a million."[31]

Matthews joined *New York Times* reporter Fernsworth, who was already in Spain covering the war from Barcelona and Valencia. Like Herbert Matthews, Lawrence A. Fernsworth was a veteran reporter by the time he began covering the Spanish Civil War, who had extensive experience in both the news and business side of the newspaper industry. Fernsworth was born in Portland, Oregon in 1898. A practicing Catholic, Fernsworth attended the University of Santa Clara, a Jesuit-run institution. Upon graduation, he joined the *Morning*

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[28]Herbert Matthews. "Large Group Favors Rebels." *The New York Times*. 5 September 1936, 2.
[29] Edwin L. James. Correspondence to Milly Bennett. 1941. Hoover Institution Archives: Milly Bennett Papers. A pseudonym, Milly Bennett was a correspondent in China before coming to Spain in 1936. She became heavily involved in covering the International Brigades and married a brigade member, Hans Amelie.
[30] Frank Kluckhohn. "Bombing Raids Expected." *The New York Times*, 12 August 1936, 1. Story recounted also in Robert W. Desmond. *Tides of War: World News Reporting, 1940-1945*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1982.
[31] Herbert Matthews. Correspondence to Edwin L. James. Madrid, December 5, 1936. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection.

Oregonian as a reporter. In 1920, Fernsworth moved to the *Chicago Herald*, for which he covered Washington D.C. Fernsworth left the *Daily Mail*, the successor paper of the *Herald*, in 1930 to travel Europe.[32] After several months of travel, Fernsworth briefly settled in Andorra and began a manuscript on Andorran culture. When the Second Republic was declared in Spain in 1931, Fernsworth moved to Barcelona to cover Catalonia for *The New York Times* and *The London Times.*

During the Republican period, Fernsworth wrote articles on regional politics, the development of the Catalonian autonomia, and occasional pieces on Andorra. He had a great respect for Francesc Macia i Llussa, the leader of the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, the leftist party of Catalonia, crediting the former military leader with providing stability to the fledgling provincial autonomous government.[33] After Macia's death in 1933, Fernsworth became increasingly critical of the autonomous government of Catalonia, accusing the Left of terrorizing the populace, interfering with subsequent elections, and of placing restrictions on freedoms. Fernsworth also became increasingly critical of anarcho-syndicalists in Catalonia and warned during the 1934 revolt in Catalonia:

> "The revolt of the Catalan government was, aside from its regional significance, an act of solidarity with other 'revolutionary Republicans' in Spain who had just issued pronouncements severing all relations with the Spanish Government which they considered to have surrendered to the Fascists and Monarchists."[34]

Fernsworth feared that anarcho-syndicalist groups, though strongest in Barcelona and the rest of the industrialized, urban north, would ultimately destabilize the Republican government if not checked by Madrid. At the same time though, Fernsworth was critical of Madrid for infringing

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[32] Nothing but Danger. Ed Frank Hanighen. Early information also from Stein, M.L. *Under Fire: The Story of American War Correspondents*. New York: Julian Messner, 1968.
[33] Lawrence Fernsworth. "Question of Power Disturbs Catalans." *The New York Times*, 5 March 1933, E2.
[34] Lawrence Fernsworth. "Barcelona Rising a Double-Header." *The New York Times*, 4 November 1934, E2.

on Catalan autonomy and for allowing a dramatic increase in military control after 1934. This is because he believed it to be counterproductive to the project of controlling political radicals. Fernsworth's admiration of Manuel Azana during the Republic and the subsequent civil war stems in part on their agreement on this point, as the Republican political leader seemed to repudiate violence and repression in favor of political union between socialists and republicans to control anarcho-syndicalist groups.[35]

But Fernsworth's most notable contribution to reporting during the Republican period was his articles on the economic development of Spain. For Fernsworth, the development of movements for autonomous regions in Spain was directly related not only to cultural and political developments but to industrialization and economic development in these regions. Fernsworth argued that Catalonia, Galicia, and the Basque provinces wanted autonomy so that they could more effectively engage in economic trade and reorganize their systems of landholding and tenure. The reporter therefore interpreted autonomy as being a positive force for the economic development of not only the northern provinces, but all of Spain under the Republic:

> "Thus Catalonia becomes at once a militant and leading partisan in the battle for all that will bring about a revolution in Spain's internal economy. It becomes a champion of agrarian reform, of better conditions for the peasants, of higher wages for the workmen, of whatever will increase the wealth, and thereby the buying power, of the people and improve their standards of living."[36]

Fernsworth therefore believed strongly in the Republic's transformative potential for Spain but only if they accepted both on paper and in practice a decentralization of political control.

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[35] Lawrence Fernsworth. "Azana Repudiated Armed Resistance." *The New York Times*, 16 December 1934, E2. In his book *Spain's Struggle for Freedom*, 130, 156. Fernsworth also talks about his admiration for Azana, leadership qualities, understanding of the Spanish "character" and repudiation of violence in favor of political mobilization of the left and left of center.

[36] Lawrence Fernsworth. "Catalonia Scans Business Outlook." *The New York Times*, 12 March 1933, E2.

Fernsworth's articles on politics and economic issues were not neutral but favored leftist political groups that favored autonomous regionalism.

Instead of sending Matthews to Burgos to cover Nationalist Spain, Sulzberger sent William Carney, then resident in Madrid. William Carney had much in common with both Matthews and Fernsworth in the years leading up to the Spanish Civil War. Like his colleagues, Carney was also a veteran reporter, who had spent the better part of his career abroad. Born in San Antonio, Texas in 1898, Carney was a devout Catholic, who had attended parochial school as a child and went on to study for three years at the University of Nebraska before joining the army. In 1928, Carney joined the *Times* after serving as a correspondent for *The Associated Press* in Green Bay, Wisconsin and the Chicago area.[37] He was assigned to the Paris Bureau then under Edwin L. James as part of the four member news staff and wrote articles about French politics and cinema. Carney was still working in the Paris Bureau when Matthews arrived in 1931, which by then was under the direction of Percy Philips.

After the declaration of the Republic in 1931, Carney was assigned to cover Madrid. Still under the auspices of the Paris office, Carney would travel to Madrid for a period of a few weeks or months and then travel back to Paris to file stories that were free of the increasingly harsh Republican censorship.[38] Despite the censorship that he encountered in Madrid, Carney's articles throughout the Republic were starkly anti-government. Even in the first days of the Republic, Carney criticized the new government for failing to keep order and for encouraging violent political outbursts in Spain. He was particularly critical of the series of church burnings that occurred in the summer of 1931, blaming the government for the disorder.[39] Like

[37] New York Times Biographical Edition. "William Carney Newsman, 73, Dies." New York: The New York Times Company, (1972) 487.
[38] M.L. Stein. *Under Fire: The Story of American War Correspondents*. New York: Julian Messner, 1968. 87.
[39] William P. Carney. "Republican Spain Ends Wild Month." *The New York Times*, 17 May 1931, E2.

Fernsworth, Carney also became adamant that anarcho-syndicalist groups were a destabilizing force in Spain and that a political reorganization had to occur in order to prevent the complete dissolution of parliamentary government. But unlike Fernsworth, who saw the solution in granting greater autonomy to the provinces, Carney came to argue that the far leftist groups in Spain were controllable only by turning to a union under Catholic Social Action.[40] Carney did not support the fledgling fascist group in Spain under Primo de Rivera, stating that they "attend the sessions of the Cortes merely to seize every opportunity to make its proceedings seem ridiculous" disrupting governmental function, but he did support other groups on the right including the Gil Robles' group Accion Popular.[41]

In Madrid during the early days of the civil war, Carney continued to write stories that were anti-Republic. Despite the pressures of censorship, Carney's articles continued to place blame on the government for violence and anti-clericalism in the cities. In a front page story, Carney even accused military officials who stayed with the Republic of being Masons, implying that they joined the cause of defense in order to destroy Catholicism in Spain.[42] Carney also wrote extensively about the city of Madrid as a desperate place calling it a "shabby, proletarian city," wrecked by war and populated by hopeless and violent people.[43]

During the whole of the war, foreign correspondents to the *Times* filed their stories with the Bureau in London. These stories were then forwarded to the Cable Desk in New York, which was an appendage of the Telegraph desk. Clarence Howell was the head of the desk and Neil McNeil, Harvey Getzloe, and Raymond McCaw formed the rest of the group. These men

[40] William P. Carney. "Spanish Republic at Stake in Crisis." *The New York Times,* 2 October 1934, 10.
[41] William P. Carney. "Left Forces Urged to Unite In Spain." *The New York Times,* 14 January 1934, E2.
[42] William P. Carney. "Boys and Men of 50 Guard Madrid Road." *The New York Times,* 17 August 1936, 1.
[43] William P. Carney. "Life In Madrid: A City of Stalking Death" *The New York Times,* 24 January 1937, 113.

were all under Joseph Tebeau, who headed the "bull pen" as it was called.[44] It was the Bull Pen's responsibility to do the major cleaning of the articles, and it is they who usually then informed the reporter whether or not his story would be in the paper that day and if so where it would be printed.[45] These men operated with a high degree of autonomy in cutting and rewriting the copy that was received from Spain. They routinely made decisions to change content by adding or subtracting text, and they made both implicit and explicit judgments about the quality or relevancy of different articles. All four of the men in the bull pen were Catholics. In his history of the *Times*, Guy Talese calls them a "Fascist Phalanx" for their conservative political opinions. Matthews also believed that these men were politically and religiously conservative. Writing about the war after his retirement from the *Times*, the correspondent blamed these men, at least in part, for cutting his articles and burying stories because they were on the whole sympathetic to Catholics.

Even if these men were not themselves as religious or conservative as they have been remembered, they must have felt the pressure of Tebeau's superior Edwin L. James, who was in favor of non-intervention for Spain and questioned the Republic's ability to maintain order and grant democratic rights to the Spanish people. As managing editor of the *Times*, it was James' responsibility to oversee the bull pen, and he was normally the final arbiter of conflicts within the bull pen and between the bull pen and reporters. Although the bull pen had a considerable amount of freedom in deciding the day-to-day content of the paper, James had the power to approve major changes in content in articles and policies affected the overall content of the paper. His support or lack thereof for the war correspondents reporting from Spain could make a major difference in whether or not their articles reached the general audience as they were

[44] Herbert Matthews. *A World in Revolution*, 62.
[45] Ruth Adler. *A Day in the Life of The New York Times*. Philadelphia: The New York Times Company (1971) 12-13.

written. James was also ultimately responsible for the content of the newspaper to the president Arthur Sulzberger. Though Sulzberger did not participate in the daily interactions between James and the bull pen, he did occasionally intervene in disputes between the various members of the hierarchy of the news department of the *Times*. As president, Sulzberger was the ultimate authority in these matters and had the potential to exert a high degree of influence on James and members of the bull pen. Therefore, in New York there were at least three levels of people attached to the hierarchy of the news department who could use their positions to filter the news stories that came through from Spain and who affected what articles made it into the paper, where they would be placed, and what would be the final content of those articles.

Continued Partisanship, Balance, and the Catholic Controversy in the United States

With Carney's reassignment to Nationalist Spain in late 1936, his articles became even more obviously anti-Republican. He continued to accuse the Republic of harboring "red terrorists" and of recruiting members of the International Brigades among the indigent of Europe.[46] Carney also tended to minimize the intervention of Italian and German forces, despite the fact that *The New York Times* had been among the first newspapers to report that material aid and personnel had arrived from Italy. Meanwhile, he emphasized Soviet intervention on the Republican side of the conflict and accused France of aiding the Republican air force, though it is difficult to see how he could have had first hand information about intervention on the Republican side of the war from his post in Salamanca.[47] Although the change in Carney's articles can in part be explained by the added restrictions of Nationalist censorship, even the articles that Carney filed from Gibraltar display a strong conservative tendency. In fact, they

[46] William P. Carney. "62,000 Slain in Madrid, Say Rebels; Held Foes of 'Proletarian Regime.'" *The New York Times*, 1 April 1937, 4.
[47] William P. Carney. "Rebels Say French Train Foe's Fliers." *The New York Times,* 13 April 1937, 5.

were little different from the stories that he filed from Salamanca and from the Nationalist capital of Burgos.

Carney's articles were notable not only for their conservative bias but for their use of suspect journalistic sources. Particularly early in the war, Carney appears to have visited the front infrequently, if at all. Instead of gathering first hand information and accounts of battles and troop movements, Carney's main source for most of his articles appears to have been dispatches from the Fascist government in Burgos. This did not stop Carney from writing about troop movements and including predictions of early dates for the fall of Madrid, but it did mean that his articles could be inaccurate, anticipating actual events by a few days or weeks.[48] Meanwhile, Matthews' articles are filled with first hand accounts of the front around Madrid, the Jarama river valley, and eventually Guadalajara. As Matthews wrote to Edwin James: "the beauty of the assignment…has always been the ability to get out to the front or wherever one wants to go, and get the news firsthand."[49] With time, Matthews was also able to evade the censors on at least some of his dispatches. Fernsworth too, spent much time traveling between Barcelona and Valencia, covering both politics and troop movements as the advancing Fascist army entered the northern provinces. The veteran of Catalan affairs also eventually set up an elaborate scheme to evade censorship, boarding a British Navy ship every couple of weeks to "visit the captain" who would then take him to France to file his stories. The ship would then bring him back to the port of Barcelona without anyone knowing that he had left the country. Fernsworth even created the fiction that two reporters were covering Barcelona for the *Times* in order to explain how reports kept on appearing about the city without him having filed any with

[48] For a good example see, William P. Carney. "Drive On Almeria Half Way to Goal." *The New York Times,* 23 February 1937, 15. In this article, Carney gives the expected date for the fall of Madrid as March 2nd and describes in detail Rebel advances on the Guadalajara front.
[49] Herbert Matthews. Correspondence to Edwin L. James. August 18 1937. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection.

the censors.[50] Although both Matthews and Fernsworth also relied to some degree on government dispatches, they relied far more on personal experience and on interviews with Republican officials for their articles throughout the war.

Despite Carney's dubious journalistic standards, the reporter became well known within the U.S. as a conservative reporter. As Carney's fame grew, Catholic and other religious publications began to cite his articles in their own materials on the Spanish Civil War. Though he remained ambivalent about the Republic during the war, Unitarian scholar John Haynes Holmes' pamphlet "Spain! Is Armageddon Coming?" used Carney's "unimpeachable testimony" to decry that "the Russians are again at large," threatening to plunge the world into the end of times.[51] *The Pilot*, the official newspaper of the archdiocese of Boston, also referenced Carney in their stories. In one article, Carney was quoted as saying that "honest supporters of the present regime [the Republic] have allowed themselves to be deceived by labels," and further suggested that liberal support within the U.S. would fade for the Loyalists if only they were called "Reds."[52] Carney was even more explicit in his support of the Nationalists in an article in the *Commonweal* published early in the war in which he was quoted as calling for the overthrow of the "Communist and Anarchist government" in Madrid.[53]

Along with using his articles as the basis for pieces, Carney's articles were reprinted frequently in Catholic newspapers. The *Catholic Digest* reprinted his part of the article that became the basis for the pamphlet, "No Masses in Madrid" in 1936.[54] Other condensed articles followed in the same newspaper, while *Catholic World* also reprinted excerpts from longer

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[50]Lawrence Fernsworth. *Nothing but Danger*, ed Franklin Hanighen. New York: Robert McBride & Co. (1939), 46. Also recounted in, M.L. Stein. *Under Fire: The Story of American War Correspondents*. New York: Julian Messner, 1968. 88-90.
[51] John Haynes Holmes. "Spain! Is Armageddon Coming?" Hoover Institution Library: Spanish Civil War Pamphlets, 11.
[52] "Last Year's Election" *The Pilot*, February 20, 1937, 4.
[53] "The Lesson of Spain." *Commonweal,* 18 December 1936, 204.
[54] William P. Carney. "No Masses in Madrid." *Catholic Digest*, April 1936.

articles that had either appeared previously in the *Times* or were from edited versions of several articles compiled together. In this way, even those Catholics who only read the religious press could read Carney's version of the events of the war and take comfort that the Church position on the war was supported by *The New York Times*, the elite newspaper in the 1930s.

Carney's articles were even edited and reprinted into a series of pamphlets by The America Press, an arm of the Catholic newspaper *America*. Edited by Francis X. Talbot, *America* was a weekly Jesuit magazine that because of its affiliation was generally considered to be moderate but during the war took a position that was favorable to the Fascist government. This series of pamphlets by Carney, "No Democratic Government in Spain," "Russia's Part in Spain's Civil War," and "Murder and Anti-Religion in Spain" denounced the Republic as violent and repressive to the people and emphasized the Communist influence in Spain. Carney argued that in the Republic there "is no freedom whatever allowed journalistic investigation, and the strictest censorship imaginable is imposed on all news dispatches sent out from Madrid," and cited this as the chief reason that people in the U.S. could still support the Republican regime.[55] Also included in the pamphlets are details of atrocities and repressions for "no other crime than their affiliation with some political group or social caste, and the systematic campaign against the Church" and descriptions of Madrid that portrayed it as being a city destroyed by mob violence and bullied into mobilizing for the Republic.[56]

Other pamphlets put out by *America,* reinforced many of these points, particularly the idea that the Republic was repressive, anti-democratic, and anti-religious. A pamphlet by Umberto Olivieri entitled "Democracy! Which Brand, Stalin's or Jefferson's?" argued that the

[55] William P. Carney. "No Democratic Government in Spain." New York: The America Press. Hoover Institution Library: Spanish Civil War Pamphlet Collection, 1.
[56] William P. Carney. "Murder and Anti-Religion in Spain." New York: The America Press. Hoover Institution Library: Spanish Civil War Pamphlet Collection, 18.

Republic was essential communist and that it denied freedom of religion to its citizens.[57] A similar pamphlet written by Arnold Lunn and published by the Paulist Press repeated this argument but further argued that Franco's army was in fact democratic and that Franco was welcomed "as a deliverer" across Spain.[58] These pamphlets were issued in large part in order to create publicity for the *America* run charity The American Committee for Spanish Relief. Although this charity claimed to be impartial in the Spanish Civil War and stated that the money would be distributed evenly among children and refugees on both sides of the conflict, the proceeds were destined for Cardinal Goma y Tomas, a rabid supporter of Franco.[59] The Spanish Relief Committee also advertised in the *Times*, purchasing frequent spots to solicit donations and encourage readers to order numbers from their pamphlet series. Carney's participation in fundraising activities for this group clearly marked him as a partisan actor in the war on behalf of Catholic that sought both to aid Fascist Spain and to sway American opinion towards their cause.

This upsurge in Carney's popularity was accompanied by an increase in the prominence of the reporter's articles in the *Times*. As a reporter at the Paris Bureau, Carney's articles had mostly appeared in the international section rather than in the front of the paper. Part of the reason for this is that many of the plum stories had gone to Matthews, who ranked above Carney in Paris, but in Spain this hierarchical advantage had suddenly disappeared. Both Carney and Matthews' articles provided important angles in the reporting of the Spanish Civil War, and Carney began to surpass Matthews in the headlines he received. Even though the *Times* knew that there existed a disparity between the reporting styles exhibited by Carney on the one hand and Matthews and Fernsworth on the other, they consistently placed a higher premium on the

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[57] Umberto Olivieri. "Democracy! Which Brand, Stalin's or Jefferson's?" San Francisco. Hoover Institution Library: Spanish Civil War Pamphlet Collection.
[58] Arnold Lunn. "Spain and the Christian Front." New York: The Paulist Press. Hoover Institution Library: Spanish Civil War Pamphlet Collection, 11.
[59] "American Committee for Spanish Relief." *Commonweal*, 14 May 1937, 57.

news from Nationalist Spain, particularly in 1936 and 1937, before the major Nationalist advances on the front had occurred. Meanwhile, Carney's articles continued to garner praise in Catholic newspapers. *America* argued that *The New York Times* was purposely suppressing positive news about Francisco Franco but praised the paper for continuing to feature Carney prominently.[60] The *Commonweal* also published a series of Open Letters to the Press, written by Michael Williams, in which the author argued that the secular press was full of "unconscious propagandists" and were critical of the *Times* for not featuring more articles by Carney.[61]

This surge in popularity and in prominence in the *Times* was hardly quelled even when Carney became mired in journalistic scandal. In December of 1937, he wrote a series of articles about the Republican attempts to capture the provincial capital Teruel claiming that the city had ultimately been won by the rebels. Carney even described the final air attacks and the joy of the populace returning home to their town upon the recapture.[62] The problem was that Teruel had not been recaptured and was still in Republican hands, a fact that was reported on December 20th by Matthews who visited the front along with Ernest Hemingway and Sefton Delmer.[63] Carney had relied on dispatches from the Nationalist government to write his stories instead of visiting the front himself, a point that was not clearly made in the articles. Although this represented a serious breach in the credibility of the reporter and his articles from Fascist Spain, the *Times* chose to only lightly reprimand the reporter, giving him warnings about committing the same errors in the future. But Carney's articles did not slip from the front pages as a result of the

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[60] "Nationalist Spain Comes Through the War." *America*, Vol. 58 No. 10 (December 11, 1937) 225. Owen McGuire. "The Truth About Spain" *America*, Vol. 55 No.1 (May 2, 1936) 82.
[61] Michael Williams. "Open Letter to the Leaders of the American Press on Spain." *Commonweal*, Vol. 26 No. 3, (May 7, 1937) 74. Michael Williams. "Open Letter to the Leaders of the American Press on Spain No. 4" *Commonweal*, Vol. 26 No. 6 (June 4, 1938), 152.
[62] William P. Carney. "Franco Is Hopeful of Britain's Hand." *The New York Times*, 28 November 1937, 71. William P. Carney. "Rebels Victorious in Big Air Battle." *The New York Times*, 11 December 1937, 2.
[63] Herbert Matthews. "Teruel Still Held By Loyalist Army, Visit There Shows." *The New York Times*, 5 January 1938, 1.

scandal, and little changed in Carney's reporting style. Late in the war, Carney made a similar mistake when he declared the capture of Borjas Blancas, a key town in the defense of Barcelona, about a week before it occurred.[64] This slip in reporting was less scandalous because the Loyalists were retreating throughout the Northern sector, and the fall of Borjas Blancas seemed inevitable, but it signifies Carney's continued reliance on official fountains of information, even when proven to be faulty. Even as these slips in journalistic honesty continued to mount, Catholic newspapers paid little attention to problems with Carney's credibility as a reporter, continuing to reprint and praise his articles.[65]

While Carney's articles garnered increasing praise from the Catholic establishment, in spite of his questionable journalistic integrity, Matthews' articles began to change dramatically. Matthews, who had come to Madrid as a supporter of Franco's Fascist government in Spain, quickly reversed his opinions on the Spanish government. Within weeks of being in Madrid, Matthews began writing optimistically about the Republic's prospects in winning the war against Franco's regime, arguing that, "only a rash prophet would predict an insurgent success in the coming attack."[66] This contradicted articles being written and published by Carney at the same time that emphasized the supposedly "desultory" condition of the military situation in Madrid.[67] Though some of his articles contradicting Carney's did appear prominently in the paper, Matthews had a difficult time convincing the New York office that his was the correct version, to

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[64] William P. Carney. "Loyalists Drive on In Southern Spain." *The New York Times*. 7 January 1939, 1. This article recounts advances in the South by the Loyalists and advances in the north by the insurgents. It claims that Borjas Blancas razed to the ground and then captured.

[65] For an example of praise for Carney's coverage late in the war see, "After Barcelona." *Commonwea*l, Vol. 29 No. 16 (February 10 1937) 439-440, which argues that though *The New York Times* was overly negative in its reports on the fall of Barcelona, Carney's articles present an accurate account of Franco's new state and fair analysis of the probable postwar fate of Spain.

[66]Herbert Matthews. "Madrid is Braced for New Assault." *The New York Times*, 7 December 1936, 17. In May, Matthews confirmed to Edwin James that he believed that Madrid would not fall in the foreseeable future, Herbert Matthews. Correspondence to Edwin L. James. May 8, 1937. UT Austin: The Herbert Matthews Collection.

[67] William P. Carney. "Madrid is Rocked By Sharp Fighting." *The New York Times*, 24 November 1936, 1.

the point that Matthews was even ordered once to leave Madrid because the office feared the city's fall was imminent. Matthews took the order as a suggestion and stayed in Madrid, which indeed was the last urban center to fall in the war.

In addition to contradicting Carney's articles on Madrid, Matthews also began to write about the International Brigades in a positive light, minimizing their reliance on Russian aid in the first days of the war. While Carney was writing about these volunteers as the flotsam of Europe, Matthews portrayed them as being men of conviction, arguing in the *Times Magazine*: "Whatever they may or may not be, they all hate fascism."[68] Matthews also shifted the issue away from anti-religion and communism and toward the fascist nature of the Nationalist government by twisting accounts of destruction in Madrid and lurid descriptions of "weeping faces of terrified and grief stricken women standing on corners or hurrying forlornly through the streets" into indictments against Fascist aerial bombing of civilian populations.[69] Despite aerial bombing, Matthews argued vehemently that the Loyalist morale was strong and that the people of Madrid were indeed prepared to fight for the Republic if not materially than morally. These dispatches were so favorable to the Republic that references to them and quotations started appearing in press releases from the Bureau of Information of the Spanish Embassy in Washington D.C., particularly in those related to German and Italian intervention in Spain and the aerial bombing.[70] This is at the same time that the Bureau of Information of the Spanish Embassy began coming under attack by Catholic writers in the U.S., who charged that the

[68] Herbert Matthews. "Free Lances of Madrid." *The New York Times*, 3 January 1937, 120.
[69] Herbert Matthews. "100 Killed, 200 Hurt in Madrid Air Raid" *The New York Times*, 5 January 1937, 5.
[70] Bureau of Information, Spanish Embassy, Washington D.C. "Nazi Intervention in Spain" "Incontrovertible Facts Regarding the Destruction of Guernica." Hoover Institution Library: Spanish Civil War Pamphlet Collection.

agency was a "veritable propaganda factory" funded by stolen gold from the Bank of Madrid and dedicated to spreading communist literature in the United States.[71]

Although some of this change can be attributed to censorship, Matthews' transformation from Fascist supporter and Italophile to Republican sympathizer was both profound and genuine. Throughout his life, Matthews wrote about his arrival in Spain as being a moment of change in his life that deeply affected his future writings and the course of his career. Even in 1937, he wrote of his assignment to Madrid as a moment of revelation, and after WWII he remembered it as the moment that he was "converted" to anti-Fascism.[72] Matthews also eventually found ways to avoid at least some of the censorship in Madrid by filing his stories by phone at the American-owned Telefonica Building while the censor was at his leisurely, two hour Spanish lunch.[73] But Matthews argued that censorship in any case was only a minor issue in his dispatches. As he argued to James, "don't let anybody think that because my stuff is censored that is isn't true."[74] Matthews also traveled to Paris and London to file stories every few months, where he wrote long series of more in-depth stories on the conflict. These tended to be slightly more critical of the Republic and more skeptical of the government's chances of winning the war, but overall they were still highly supportive of the war effort. In fact, the greatest change in the articles written outside of Spain is not in their level of criticism for the Republic but in their criticism for the U.S., France, and Great Britain. This is because outside of Spain, Matthews was able to provide more detailed reports of shortages on the Republican side, arguing, "The Spanish conflict is a poor man's war. There were no soldiers or material to spare and those were critical

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[71] Joseph B. Code "The Spanish War and Lying Propaganda." New York: The Paulist Press, 1938. Hoover Institution Library: The Spanish Civil War Pamphlet Collection.
[72] See, Herbert Matthews. *Two Wars and More to Come*, 67. and Herbert Matthews. *Education of a Correspondent*, 185.
[73] Herbert Matthews. *Education of a Correspondent*, 119.
[74] Herbert Matthews. Correspondence to Edwin James. January 23, 1937. UT Austin: The Herbert Matthews Collection.

days when it appeared that Madrid might be circled."[75] These shortages he attributed to a lack of support for the Republican government on the part of the Western democracies. Matthews was particularly critical of France for not lending aid over the border, especially in the failure to provide airplanes and spare parts for the Loyalist Air Force, which he considered to be a key factor in the possibilities for the continued defense of Madrid. Instead, he argued, the Republic was obtaining parts and machines from Russia, which was increasing the dependence of the government on a Communist nation.[76]

This change within a period of just a couple of months in Matthews' position on the war was fueled not only by his firsthand experience in Madrid around the front but by the relationships he made with other correspondents based in the capital. During the greater part of his time in Madrid, Matthews stayed in the Hotel Florida, also the war-time home of a number of other notable correspondents and made famous by Ernest Hemingway. There he made fast friends with Hemingway, Martha Gelhorn, Sefton Delmer, and a number of other correspondents.[77] Although Hemingway's articles were more concerned with descriptions of battles than with politics, he was famously pro-Republican and fascinated with the International Brigadesmen, even writing the eulogy of the Brigade, "On the American Dead in Spain," which was reprinted frequently by groups such as the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the U.S. and became an important symbol to former Republican supporters. Matthews also knew Milly Bennett, who made arrangements while in Spain to lend her writings to the North

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[75] Herbert Matthews. "American Fighters in Spain Decimated." *The New York Times*, 23 April 1937, 4. Matthews and James also discussed this in a series of cables. Edwin L. James. Cable to Herbert Matthews. April 17, 1937. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection. James followed up a previous message to Matthews ordering to do an article on Russian and French intervention and materials to express his pleasure with the result.
[76] Herbert Matthews. "Leftists Split Up Foreign Fighters." *The New York Times*, 22 April 1937, 4.
[77] Matthews occasionally talked about his association with Hemingway and others in his communications to the *Times*. See Herbert Matthews. Telegram to Edwin L. James. April 5, 1937. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection.

American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy for fundraising purposes.[78] Jay Allen, of the *Chicago Tribune* was also in Madrid at this time. Allen was active in the struggle to repeal neutrality legislation, writing to Congressmen and the President about the "sinister farce" of the Non-Intervention Pact [79] Matthews therefore became part of a community of reporters who were politically involved not just in Spain but in promoting and aiding the Republic abroad. They were actors in the war who did not conform to the ideal of the neutral, independent, politically aloof journalist, but instead were actively involved in supporting the Spanish Republic and in attempting to convince the American public and the U.S. government to support the Republic and repeal Non-Intervention.

Of course not every reporter in Madrid was active in favor of the Republic. Edward Knoblaugh, who was also in Madrid at the time, wrote the conservative account of the siege of the capital in his 1937 book, *Correspondent in Spain.* Knoblaugh's book describes in sometimes lurid detail the "fearful martyrdom" of the city, and like Carney's pamphlet series, characterizes the Republic as being anti-democratic and anti-religious.[80] Also like Carney, Knoblaugh's dispatches for the *Associated Press* were frequently reprinted in Catholic newspapers and pamphlets, particularly in regards to foreign assistance on the Loyalist side of the conflict.[81] But even this and other conservative reporters were politically active and in the attempt to influence popular opinion at home.

Matthews had never been neutral and completely un-biased in his reporting, but his experiences with these journalists affirmed for Matthews that objectivity and political neutrality

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[78] Milly Bennett. Correspondence to the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy. 1937. Hoover Institution Archives: Milly Bennett Papers.
[79] Jay Allen. Correspondence. Hoover Institution Library: Spanish Civil War Pamphlet Collection.
[80] Edward Knoblaugh. *Correspondent in Spain*. London: Sheed & Ward (1937), 105.
[81] Joseph B. Code. "The Spanish Civil War and Lying Propaganda." New York: The Paulist Press. Hoover Institution Library: Spanish Civil War Pamphlet Collection, 25.

were not only impossible but undesirable in journalism. As Matthews argued after the war, "in condemning 'bias' one rejects the only factors which really matter—honesty, understanding, and thoroughness."[82] In order to write about a subject, the journalist has to identify with it and care about the events that he covers. Matthews rejected the idea that objectivity was necessary or even possible for journalists and embraced the idea that the writer could be a political actor. The correspondent therefore justified his dispatches even though they had a clear political leaning because he believed them to be the truth even if favorable to one side rather than the other.[83] In this interpretation of objectivity, Matthews was more or less in accord Fernsworth, who believed that having personal sympathies toward the Republic was not an impediment to covering the war. But Fernsworth also believed that having personal sympathies towards the Republic should not prevent a reporter from writing negative stories about the government when they were true.[84]

With Matthews' transformation from a conservative, pro-Fascist newspaperman into a liberal, advocate of the Republic, criticism began to pour into the *Times* over his reporting. The first letters that the *Times* printed tended to be short critiques of specific pieces, but as the war continued the invectives grew, much of it focusing on Matthews's coverage of the Catholic Church and anti-clericalism in the Republic. One reader in 1938 wrote:

> "The reports of Herbert Matthews from Barcelona have not been impartial nor have they been free from contradictions and unwarranted euphemisms. Mr. Matthews writes what is pleasing and acceptable to the Barcelona government. He is not free to write about what he sees and what you would like to receive from him. A specific instance in which Mr. Matthews' cables are incompatible with The Times's tradition of adhering to the factual news values and resemble the stock propaganda of the Communists concerns his reports of the religious conditions in Leftist Spain. Whether or not your correspondent deems the destruction of Catholicism in Spain justifiable may be a matter of personal

[82] Herbert Matthews. *The Education of a Correspondent*, 69.
[83] Herbert Matthews. Correspondence to Edwin L. James. August 18, 1937. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection.
[84] Lawrence Fernsworth. *Nothing But Danger*. ed. Frank Hanighen, 46.

> opinion, but he, as a correspondent of The Times, should not assume the role of apologist for the destroyers."[85]

Critiques of Matthews did not stand alone but were always published next to a critique of Carney's coverage of the war. No matter the number of letters supporting one reporter rather than the other, the *Times*' policy was to give equal weight to criticism on both sides of conflict over the paper's war reporting. Therefore, the editorial staff at the *Times* created a vision of detached neutrality from the conflict refusing to openly support either Matthews or Carney. Instead the *Times* let the contradictory articles by the two journalists stand, supposedly leaving it up to the reader to decide which version of events they thought was more valid.

But while the editorial staff made it appear that he was receiving equal treatment in the paper, Matthews' articles were edited and buried with increasing frequency. As the second man in the prestigious Paris Bureau, Matthews' articles had frequently been featured on the front page from 1931 on and his reporting in Ethiopia also had a prominent place in the paper. His stories from Paris had been particularly successful in gaining space in the paper in the lead up to the Italo-Ethiopian War, appearing almost daily on the front page. After his arrival in Madrid, Matthews' articles continued to be printed for the most part in the front section of the paper, but he did not capture headlines on the front few pages with the frequency that he once had. Matthews' articles also began to have long inserts that could be longer than the text of the article itself.[86] These inserts often presented material that was contradictory to the material as presented by Matthews or provided analysis on groups or individuals that the author mentioned that presumably would not be universally familiar to an America audience.

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[85] CF Carsley. "The Letters to the Times: The News From Spain." *The New York Times,* 6 April 1938, 22.
[86] For a good example of this see, Herbert Matthews. "Rebels Seize Road, But Are Driven Off." The New York Times, 23 February 1937, 1. In this article, the brackets also contained conflicting account about the advance of Loyalist troops from that presented in the body of the article.

Matthews' articles were also edited to minimize the references to Italian and German intervention. His dispatches from both the Jarama and Guadalajara fronts are largely absent of references to Italians, and when they are included it is only to mention technical advisors or the use of German made artillery.[87] This minimization of the international dimension of the war happened at the cable desk. As Matthews learned upon his return to Madrid from the Guadalajara front, Raymond McCaw had ordered the bull pen to systematically replace the word "Italian" with "Insurgent" in all of Matthews' cables from the frontlines. The veteran correspondent was furious, writing several letters to McCaw and Edwin James protesting the changes in his cables, but McCaw insisted on retaining the change.[88] At the same time, Matthews was pressured by Raymond McCaw to stop calling Franco's forces Rebels in favor of a more "neutral" term.[89] Matthews was highly disillusioned by these developments and began to believe that *The New York Times* was not providing the most accurate and complete news regarding the Spanish Civil War. Matthews even declared that if the cable desk did not believe his stories than they should recall him. James calmed Matthews down by agreeing to talk to McCaw himself and to reduce the amount of editing that was occurring in his dispatches, while assuring his reporter that he was certain that Matthews was not simply inventing propaganda. But at the same time, James pointed out in McCaw's defense that Nationalist reporters could not confirm his stories.[90]

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[87] Herbert Matthews. Correspondence to Edwin L. James. April 11, 1937. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection. Confirmed in a letter that Edwin L. James sent to Sulzberger. April 22, 1937, in which James argues that the bull pen was justified in editing the dispatches because Matthews made no mention of internationals on the Republican side of the war.

[88] Edwin L. James. Cable to Herbert Matthews. March 17, 1937. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection. Herbert Matthews. Cable to Edwin L. James. March 17, 1937. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews

[89] Raymond McCaw. Telegram to Herbert Matthews. March 17, 1937. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection.

[90] This exchange is contained in, Herbert Matthews. Telegram to Edwin L. James. March 21, 1937. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection, and Edwin L. James. Telegram to Herbert Matthews, March 22, 1937. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection.

Even after this debacle though, Matthews continued to have problems with the men in the bull pen. McCaw wrote to James in May of 1937 regarding one of the correspondent's articles:

> "I was going to let this go with just a marginal note, but the further you go into it the more it smells to heaven of propaganda. In fact it is an editorial piece one hundred percent. This sort of stuff, which Matthews himself says and which The Times must stand responsible for I think should not be printed even under a byline. There is certainly no news in it." [91]

McCaw continued to edit Matthews' dispatches to reflect less foreign intervention and he doubted the correspondent's stories about the political situation in Madrid and then Valencia. The leader of the bull pen even suggested to James that Matthews should be reassigned to Paris; though there is little evidence that James took the suggestion seriously, if only because the *Times* clearly needed a man in Madrid.[92] McCaw also accused Matthews of plagiarism in September of 1937, even putting together a detailed side-by-side comparison of Hemingway and Matthew's articles. Matthews protested bitterly to Edwin James and involved Sulzberger in the dispute, eventually causing McCaw to back down from his allegations after a second round of comparisons between the two articles seemed to show sufficient differences between the pieces.[93] Although Edwin James eventually took Matthews' side in the disputes with McCaw, the managing editor expressed reservations about Matthews to Sulzberger, accusing him of holding back information about the whereabouts of the Bishop of Teruel, presumably because the truth could be harmful to the Republican image abroad.[94]

Meanwhile, Matthews was criticized heavily in the Catholic press for his articles on Spain. A letter to the *Commonweal* called his articles, and *The New York Times* in general,

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[91] Raymond McCaw. Correspondence to Edwin L. James. May 20, 1937. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection.
[92] Raymond McCaw. Correspondence to Edwin L. James. June 29, 1937. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection.
[93] This exchange is contained in, Raymond McCaw. Telegram to Paris Bureau. September 15, 1937, and Herbert Matthews. Telegram to Edwin L. James. October 3, 1937. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection.
[94] Edwin L. James. Memorandum to Arthur Hays Sulzberger. April 14, 1938. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection.

"piles of neutral junk."[95] For some Catholics, the *Times* was not taking a strong enough stand on the war by not committing itself openly to Carney's position. They could see that the coverage of Spain was "a civil war within a civil war," but one which Matthews still might have a chance of winning because he still held an important place in the paper and in the *Times* coverage of Spain.[96] While most Catholic papers criticized the *Times* for standing by Matthews even as much as they did, the radical paper *The Catholic Worker* criticized the *Times* and its reporters for even covering Catholic issues at all. They argued that secular papers in the U.S. "abandoned themselves to propaganda, fanning the flames of partisanship" and as a result should have kept out of commenting on Catholic matters entirely.[97]

In addition to criticism in Catholic newspapers and magazines, much of the criticism against Matthews also came from Dr. Joseph Thorning, a Catholic priest and professor of Latin American history at Mt. St. Mary's College. In addition to teaching, Thorning wrote regular articles for the magazine *America* during the 1930s and was active in the magazine's relief efforts on behalf of the Fascist government of Spain. Thorning wrote a series of editorials to the *Times* and made speeches criticizing their coverage of the war. At the end of 1937, *The Times* quoted him as saying in a speech in Philadelphia:

> "The reporting of Mr. William P Carney for The New York Times showed a high degree of journalistic responsibility and personal courage…It should be noted that he confined himself to strait news stories and never allowed himself to become a propagandist for either Largo Caballero or Generalissimo Franco. On the other hand The New York Times has kept Mr. Matthews as its special correspondent in Madrid long after he had abandoned any pretense to serve as anything more or less than a rabid Red partisan. Upon analysis his dispatches are revealed to be nine-tenths 'interpretations' of official policy or 'human interest' narratives of events behind the Red front."[98]

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[95] "Letters: Spanish Art" *America,* Vol. 57 No. 2 (November 5, 1937) 50.
[96] "Comment." *America*, Vol. 57 No. 19, (August 14, 1937) 57.
[97] "Some Reasons for Regretting the Attitude of our Catholic Newspapers in Regards to the Spanish War." *Catholic Worker*, July 1937. "Liberals Blow War Bugles in Spanish Key." *Catholic Worker*, October 1937.
[98] "Dr. Beard Argues New Historical Basis: Dr. McIlwain at Philadelphia Warns of Peril—Dr. Thorning Hits Spanish War News." *The New York Times*, 30 December 1937, 17.

This speech was followed up by pamphlet series criticizing Matthews. The first of these called "Why the Press Failed on Spain!" again argued that Matthews' articles were propaganda pieces for the Republic.[99] A second, "Mercy and Justice!" argued that the *New York Times* was at least partly responsible for misleading Protestant clergymen and causing them to turn away from Fascist Spain in support of the Republic.[100]

In addition to his pamphlet series, Thorning continued to send letters to the editor of the *Times* criticizing the paper's coverage, in particular of the bombing of Guernica. In these letters, Thorning argued in to 1938 that the damage in Guernica had been "wrought by the retreating reds" rather than caused by the German aerial bombardment, as the *Times* itself had reported in an article written by George Steer on April 28, 1937.[101] The pressure was so intense that on December 26, 1937, the *Times* retreated from Steer's earlier article and declared in an article entitled "Balancing the Press From Spain" that, "The New York Times does not pretend to know how Guernica was destroyed since competent correspondents in Spain emphatically disagree." Like its stories on Italian intervention that the *Times* had broken but then had backed away from as the war progressed, the paper refused to support its reporter in the Basque Provinces and retreated from reports that the paper itself had broken first.

Fernsworth also was increasingly criticized in the Catholic press. At the beginning of the war, there were few pieces of criticism about his reporting, and in fact, he was even praised by Owen McGuire in *America* along with Carney for his reports from Barcelona.[102] But as the war

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[99] Joseph Thorning. "Why the Press Failed on Spain." New York: International Catholic Truth Society. Hoover Institution Library: Spanish Civil War Pamphlet Collection, 4.
[100] Joseph Thorning. "Mercy and Justice." New York: Peninsular News Service. Hoover Institution Library: Jay Allen Collection, 17.
[101] Joseph Thorning. "Letter to the Editor." *The New York Times*, 10 January 1938, 16.
[102] Owen McGuire. "The Truth About Spain." *America*, Vol. 55 No 3 (May 2, 1936) 82.

continued on and it became increasingly clear that despite the occasional piece criticizing the Republic, Fernsworth was sympathetic to the government, the Catholic press increased their attacks on the reporter. He received particular attention for being a supposed traitor to his religion. As a Catholic, Fernsworth was expected to provide an interpretation of the Spanish Civil War that was favorable to Francisco Franco's government in Burgos and that condemned the Republic for Communism and anti-religion. Instead Fernsworth's articles tended to praise the government for cutting the "Gordian knot for the Generalidad" through their reinstatement of the system of regional autonomy, a move he credited with undermining the power of radical groups such as the anarcho-syndicalists.[103] Fernsworth was particularly positive about the Republic after its reorganization under Negrin and wrote stories about the resumption of religious worship in Barcelona and the respect of the government for property rights.[104] For this, *America* reported sardonically that Fernsworth, "thinks reds are angels" and was accused of being a propagandist for the *Times*.[105] His coverage of the fall of Barcelona was also criticized for being too negative and for ignoring statements by Franco declaring his intention to be neutral in Europe rather than joining in alliances with Germany and Italy.[106]

Just as Matthews' articles were being cut and edited to appear less hostile to Franco's nationalist government, Lawrence Fernsworth's articles were buried in the paper. His articles tended to alternate with Matthews' pieces on the war, but they appeared more infrequently than the Madrid correspondent's articles. His articles also tended to be located towards the back of the front section, instead of being displayed in the first few pages. Most notably though, towards

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[103] Lawrence Fernsworth. "Anarchists End Barcelona Rising But Seize Towns." *The New York Times*, 8 May 1937, 1.
[104] Lawrence Fernsworth. "Priests Are Active In Barcelona Area." *The New York Times*, 23 March 1938, 5. and "Spain Restricting Collectivization." *The New York Times*, 13 February 1938, 59.
[105] "Comment." *America*, Vol 57 No. 1 (April 10, 1937) 3.
[106] "After Barcelona." *Commonweal*, Vol. 29 No. 16 (February 10 1937) 439-440.

the end of the war there was a major drop off in the number of articles by Fernsworth that were published, at least under his name. As the war approached Barcelona and the rest of Catalonia, Fernsworth's articles became short and, when they were published, they sometimes appeared after an article by Carney or in between a number of other short pieces from the *Associated Press*. This is particularly notable because with the major front of the war moving to the north, Fernsworth would have been in an excellent position to cover the news for the *Times*, having been based there since 1931. Towards the end of the war George Seldes recalls that Fernsworth actually cabled Edwin James his dismay at the difficulty that he was having being recognized in the *Times*. James cabled back that he accepted Fernsworth's resignation. When Fernsworth cabled again to argue that he had not resigned, James insisted that he had, thus ending the correspondent's association with the paper.[107]

After the end of the war, Fernsworth returned to the U.S. and left foreign correspondence in order to take a position as part of the correspondents' corps in Washington D.C. He also continued to write and lecture on Spain, attending reunions of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigades and writing the book *Spain's Struggle for Freedom*, which argued that Spain's democratic traditions were deep and had been awakened by the civil war such that Franco's government could not continue to flourish on the Peninsula.[108] Meanwhile, Carney continued to publish pro-Franco articles from Madrid that heavily minimized the purges and reprisals that swept a united Spain in 1939. These he attributed to natural process of consolidation of the regime and the establishment of order after three years of civil war.[109] With the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, Carney, like Fernsworth, returned to the U.S. and covered New York for the *Times* with special assignments in Latin America, eventually becoming the paper's regular

[107] George Seldes. *The Catholic Crisis*, New York: Julian Messner, Inc. (1939), 200.
[108] Lawrence Fernsworth. *Spain's Struggle for Freedom*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1957.
[109] William P. Carney. "Franco Planning Adieu to Allies." *The New York Times*, 9 April 1939, E5.

correspondent in Mexico City. There, Carney maintained ties with the Spanish exile community, but as Juan Antonio de la Camera, Vice President of the Association of Spanish Exiles, recalls, lingering tension existed due to the journalist's support of Franco during the Civil War.[110] Carney retired in 1952 but stayed in Mexico City until his death twenty years later.

Immediately after the end of the Spanish Civil War, Matthews was sent to run the Rome Bureau for the *Times*. He continued there as a correspondent until 1943 and then served in India, Great Britain, and Latin America. Matthews gained notoriety when in 1957 he interviewed Fidel Castro. The correspondent wrote after his retirement that this experience made him the "principle journalistic scapegoat" for the success of Castro in Cuba.[111] Like Fernsworth, Matthews continued to write about Spain and the Civil War, both personal memoirs, and a study exploring the domestic causes of the war, *Half of Spain Died*, published in 1973.

Conclusion

After WWII, Herbert Matthews wrote of his time in Spain: "Those years could not help being an education—but an education, like ordinary newspaper work, can only supply the material. The important thing is what you do with it, what conclusions you reach, what judgments you make."[112] Covering the war in Spain had a profound affect on Matthews and his personal political beliefs. He had begun the war believing that Fascism was a positive force for Italy and could be successfully exported abroad while the Second Spanish Republic an unpopular and anti-democratic regime. But within a short time of arriving in Madrid, Matthews' experiences on the front and in the capital living in a community of politically minded journalists in Madrid changed his political beliefs and made him into a vehement supporter of the Republic

[110] Juan Antonio de la Camera. Personal interview with author. 5 May 2006.
[111] Herbert Matthews. *A World in Revolution*, 293.
[112] Herbert Matthews. *Education of a Correspondent*, 19.

and a foe of Fascism. For Matthews though making judgments on a story meant little if they were not shared with his readership. As he had done in Ethiopia and Paris, Matthews wrote partisan articles that reflected his own positive experience in Republican Spain. Many of his articles were the result of difficult and dangerous first hand experiences at the front, but Matthews presented these experiences not in a neutral or objective way but as his own to which he attached his own interpretations. This could create conflicts, as when Edwin L. James and other members of the news staff in New York disbelieved Matthews. James even cabled Matthews at the end of the war, "unable to agree with you that your dispatches for past week have been purely factual,"[113] while Matthews' reply was to start his vacation without informing the home office. But Matthews continued to produce partisan articles that reflected his own political beliefs as they evolved.

The other two regular correspondents for the Times, Lawrence Fernsworth and William Carney, were also highly partisan and politically active. Fernsworth had come to Spain in 1931 and wrote articles about Republican and Catalonian politics that were increasingly hostile to Madrid, but he continued to believe in the potential for stable Republican rule in Spain as long as the government proved willing to delegate power to the various autonomous regions. He continued during the war to write articles that were occasionally critical of the Republic until the reorganization of the Republican government under the leadership of Juan Negrin, when his articles became increasingly supportive of the government. Even after the war, Fernsworth was supportive of the Republican government in Spain, writing in 1957 that "the soil of popular government was richer and deeper in Spain than anywhere else in Europe" leading into the century and that Spaniards would recapture this heritage and found a new Republic.[114] Also in

[113] Edwin L. James. Telegram to Herbert Matthews. February 9 1939. UT Austin: Herbert Matthews Collection.
[114] Lawrence Fernsworth. *Spain's Struggle for Freedom*, 69.

Spain when the war broke out, Carney's articles for the *Times* during the Republic had been negative toward the government and had accused the regime of supporting public violence. With Carney's reassignment to Nationalist Spain, his articles became even more anti-Republican while playing down the role of Italians and Germans in aiding Franco. During the war, Carney was active in lending his support to Catholic organizations that raised money to aid the Nationalists and received a great deal of praise from the Catholic press for these efforts and his reports from Spain.

The experience of the three regular correspondents to the *Times* clearly illustrates that even in an elite newspaper, the partisan nature of war correspondence during the Spanish Civil War. The *Times* did not present a "neutral" or "objective" view of the war, opting instead to avoid criticism by providing a variety of partisan views in the paper throughout the war. The paper therefore attempted to create a balance in their reporting in order to satisfy both their liberal and conservative readership. This did not prevent controversy from arising, particularly among Catholics, but it did allow the *Times* to protect itself from some accusations that the paper was not presenting a fair and accurate picture of events. Arthur Hays Sulzberger said in a speech in 1938 defending the *Times*: "Back and forth this contest has been waged in the letters columns of The New York Times and other journals. Speeches are made and passions inflamed, all because we are attempting to perform our proper function of giving the news of both sides."[115]

Balanced news coverage clearly did not squelch controversy, but Sulzberger defended the action as both proper and necessary. Balance allowed the *Times* to cater to a wide political cross section of Americans by giving them reporting that matched their own political beliefs. This allowed the paper to remain flexible and avoid being tied to one interpretation of the war that would inevitably alienate part of their readership. Even while manipulating the news to fit the

[115] Arthur Hays Sulzberger, at a meeting of the Newspaper Institute in Chapel Hill, N.C., January 20, 1938.

framework of balance, the *Times* could appear to simply be fulfilling its obligation to the readership to present fair and evenhanded coverage of the Spanish Civil War. Balance though was not simply a byproduct of the presentation of differing political views; it was created throughout the structure of the news side of the paper. There were multiple points at which decisions were made about content structure of coverage. The correspondents themselves, the members of the bull pen, the managing editor, and even Sulzberger all contributed to creating and defining balance, a process that involved manipulation of press dispatches and the publishing of articles that were journalistically dishonest. But while balance did not completely eliminate criticism of the *Times*' coverage of the war among the American public, particularly the Catholic press, neither did it eliminate dissent within the organization. Matthews in particular was critical of New York's editorial policies and decisions. During his career he remained largely silent, but after his retirement he wrote of the *Times*' Spanish Civil War coverage: "The *Times* failed its readership and posterity because although it gave them much it could have given more and better."[116]

[116] Herbert Matthews. *A World in Revolution*, 40.

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