

Harlem Ball Player Now Captain in Spain

Basilio Cueria, Head of Machine Gun Company, Called One of the Best Officers

Thirteenth of a series of weekly articles written especially for The AFRO-AMERICAN newspapers on Spain and colored people in Spain, interviewed at the Spanish front.

By LANGSTON HUGHES

Basilio Cueria, well-known colored Cuban baseball player and resident of Harlem, is now the captain of a machine gun company in Loyalist Spain. More than a year ago, Cueria went to Spain to enlist in the International Brigades.

For five months he was with the Lincoln Battalion on the Jarama front during the hardest of the battles there, holding off the Italian and Moorish troops of Franco's Fascist legions who sought to enter Madrid.

At present Cueria is with an all Spanish brigade under the leadership of the famous peasant general, "El Campesino." While this brigade was training new recruits at Alcala de Henares, ancient birthplace of Cervantes, I often visited them and talked frequently with the tall fine looking young captain who was immensely popular with the officers and men under his command.

One of Best Officers Campesino himself told me that Cueria was one of the best of the officers in his brigade, the 1st Shock Brigade, 4th Battalion, 46th Division of the Spanish People's Army. And when General Miaja, heroic defender of Madrid and member of the Spanish general staff, inspected the Campesino troops, Cueria and his company were singled out for special attention.

On the field, they gave a stirring demonstration of

how quickly a machine gun may be assembled. Cueria and his men put their machine guns together with rapidity, from the various parts which each man carries, that they were declared a model unit.

Back home in America, old baseball fans often speak of Cueria. A baseball player in Havana (before he moved to the United States ten years ago, Cueria has long been associated with the game. He was a catcher with the Cuban Stars. Then in 1929 he became manager of the Miami Red Sox. And later he was with the Cuban Giants.

Would Develop Sport He has also played with a number of other clubs, and in New York he formed the Julio Antonio Mella Baseball Club in the Latin-American section of Harlem. Cueria is now interested in developing baseball as a recreational sport for the Spanish soldiers.

True Veteran

A year in Spain, and Cueria is already a veteran of many battles. In the early days, the Jarama front was one of the most active in Spain. Transferred from there, Cueria took part in the great battles at Quijorna and Brunete last spring. For days he was under one of the most terrific artillery and air bombardments known in history.

At Brunete, near Madrid, the rebels put into action the largest air force yet used in modern warfare up to that time. Trenches, troop concentrations, convoys, roads, all were bombed hour after hour, day after day. From Brunete the government was forced to retreat, leaving a ruined city that Fascist explosives had destroyed.

Emerges Unscathed Today Brunete is no-man's-land, the government lines being just outside the town. But the offensive gained important objectives for the government, including the town of Quijorna, and Cueria came through it all unscathed. Now his division is reported in action at Teruel.

Captain Cueria says that his



BASILIO CUERIA

men are fine fellows to lead, and that all of them are proud to be fighting under Campesino, who is a worker-peasant commander right up from the ranks of the people. Campesino is indeed Spain's most colorful military man, and in a year and a half of warfare has become almost a folk-hero.

The people say that he rides into battle with his men, often mounted on a tank in full view of the enemy. And another story is that once, badly wounded, he was carried behind the lines to a dressing station where his wound were given emergency bandaging, and placed in an ambulance to be rushed to a hospital at the rear. The ambulance started off. But the next thing the attendant knew was that there was no Campesino. He had opened the door, stepped out, and was shortly back in the midst of the battle with his men, bandages and all.

The soldiers laugh at him and love him, and follow him without question, so I could easily believe Cueria when he told me that everybody wants to fight with Campesino.

Sometimes Mistaken

Since there are a large number of Cubans fighting in Spain on the government side, many of them colored Cubans, I asked Cueria how they were received, and whether any of them had ever been taken for Moors, or had encountered any color prejudice. Cueria laughed and said

that sometimes dark Cubans were asked by Spaniards whether they were Moorish, but never in an unfriendly way, since the Spaniards have no color feeling about the Moors. (And there are Moors on the loyal side, as well as with Franco.)

But toward Cubans, who are a Spanish speaking people themselves, Spain has always been most hospitable. Before the revolt many Cubans lived in Spain.

And Cubans, of color especially, who sought another homeland, often preferred Spain to the United States where they might run into difficulties on the basis of complexion. But Cueria himself assured me that he liked Harlem and would be coming back to America when the war is over. His family is in New York.

"Sure to Win"

"Our side is sure to win," he said. "We can't let the Fascists put it over on us. They'd put all the worst old prejudices back into force and probably even introduce new ones, like Hitler and his Aryanism in Germany. No, we're not going to let them win!"

"Anything else you'd like to say to the folks back home?" I asked as I said goodbye just before the Teruel offensive. "Well, tell all the baseball players hello for me," Cueria said. "And tell the Mella Club to keep up that team in Harlem, so I can play with them when I get back. Tell all those Harlem baseball players hello!"

Teachers' Eq Pay Drive H ATA Support

WASHINGTON The executive committee of the American Teachers' Association endorsed the campaign waged by the N.A.A.C.P. local State teachers' groups to equalize salaries, at a meeting here, Saturday.

Thurgood Marshall, representing the N.A.A.C.P., told the committee of the fight for equalization of salaries. The committee pledged co-operation of A.T.A. with the N.A.A.C.P. and other agencies in this end.

The committee outlined a program for the Tuskegee in July 26-29, whose theme center around "The Negro Looks at Occupations in America."

Members Attending The drafting of a program left to President A. Neal and the executive committee were: W. W. Sanders. Those present were:

Mr. Henningburg, North Carolina; H. H. Long, Garnet, S. C.; Mrs. Willis C. Kinison, Washington; George B. M. Sr., Carrington, L. Davis, Anderson, F. M. Wood, a seph C. Parks, Maryland; Sanders, West Virginia; C. S. Long, Jr., Florida.

Nation Mark

NEW YORK. — Operation 1938 among 150,000 colored men and boys in seventy-eight transportation and rural camps, the YMCA is celebrating its semi-centennial of work among this racial group.

A half century has since the late William A. ton arrived from Ottawa, Canada, to become the first secretary at Norfolk, V. 1888.

To Hold Conference

The celebration will be high-water mark next November, when a national conference is held in Washington, D.C. line with the conference is the \$125,000 campaign for expanding the work of the association in the South, in the States and colleges throughout the country, and for paying the salary of a national organizer and boys in industry.

YMCA work among colored people is directed from the national headquarters at 347 son Avenue here, by Dr. ning H. Tobias, senior secretary, who came into association work in 1911. He is taking his task by three assistants.

They are: Robert B. DeFranz, personnel secretary; H. King, student secretary;

Gong Ring

MUSCULAR RHEUMATIC PAIN

It takes more than "just a salve" to draw them out. It takes a "counter-irritant" and that's what good old Musterole is—soothing, warming, penetrating and helpful in drawing out the local congestion and pain when rubbed on the sore, aching spots.

Muscular lumbago, soreness and stiffness generally yield promptly to this treatment, and with continued application, relief usually follows.

Even better results than the old-fashioned mustard plaster. Used by millions for 25 years. Recommended