“For the liberty of the nine boys in Scottsboro and against Yankee imperialist domination in Latin America”: Cuba’s Scottsboro defense campaign

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In the spring of 1931, death sentences imposed on nine young African Americans arrested on trumped-up rape charges in Scottsboro, Alabama, ignited a worldwide wave of protest. This article explores Cuba’s Scottsboro defense campaign and argues that Scottsboro protests were a means of criticizing rising anti-black racism on the island from within the narrow confines of permissible racial dialogue in Cuban society. Additionally, it contends that the communist-led defense campaign became a vehicle for a broad range of actors to condemn imperialism and participate in a wider pan-American surge in oppositional politics. Ultimately, popular outrage over the convictions and sentences boosted the communist party’s appeal in Cuba during a time of heightened restiveness on the island and cemented the ideological link between anti-racism and anti-imperialism for future generations of radical activists.

On 25 March 1931, nine young African Americans were pulled off a freight train near Scottsboro, Alabama, and charged with raping two white women who, like the young men, had been illegally riding the rails. Despite no evidence of rape and despite contradictory testimony from the women, juries quickly convicted all of the defendants and sentenced eight to the electric chair. This travesty of justice was far from unique in the US south. Rather, the Scottsboro case – based primarily on a fear of black male sexuality, tried by all-white juries, and continually disrupted by the threat of mob violence – was emblematic of Jim Crow justice. What made the

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incident exceptional, however, was the worldwide attention it garnered when the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) took up the young men’s defense and launched a global campaign demanding their release, firmly establishing the “Scottsboro Nine” among the most well-known victims of American racial injustice in the twentieth century.

A vast body of historical scholarship reflects Scottsboro’s significance in the history of race and civil rights in the United States, focusing largely on the case as “the most celebrated racial spectacle in the history of the United States” (Miller 2009, 3). Indeed, Scottsboro has formed the basis for countless American cultural productions in the realms of music, fiction, poetry, and theater. The case also falls firmly into histories of American communism, as the CPUSA-affiliated International Labor Defense (ILD), an organization founded in 1925 to provide legal counsel to and build support for political prisoners, led the young men’s defense and orchestrated mass protests on their behalf. Occurring at the height of the CPUSA’s new-found attention to the plight of African Americans, the case cemented a close ideological relationship between black liberation and the radical Left in the 1930s (Gilmore 2008; Howard 2008; Kelley 1990; Naison 2004; Solomon 1998). Scottsboro, however, was more than a key episode in American history. It was also a defining moment in the history of Leftist internationalism during the interwar period, as demonstrations protesting the convictions took place in Latin America, Europe, South Africa, Australia, and Japan (Solomon 1998, 197). Scholarship on Scottsboro’s international ramifications, however, is still in its early stages, initiated by James A. Miller, Susan D. Pennybacker, and Eve Rosenhaft’s seminal article on the European travels of Ada Wright, mother of two Scottsboro defendants. In this article, I take a cue from their move to “reinterpret the dynamics of the international Scottsboro campaign as a central episode in the global racial politics of the 1930s” (Miller, Pennybacker, and Rosenhaft 2001, 389).

Specifically, I focus on Cuba and the groundswell of support for the young men that erupted on the island from the earliest days of the trial. Like the US south, Cuba in the 1930s was a post-emancipation society still deeply immersed in systemic racial discrimination and a pervasive racism that not infrequently led to violence; the issues that rendered the Scottsboro case salient in the United States were quite familiar to Cubans. Moreover, the Cuban Communist Party, like the CPUSA, was similarly in the midst of an energetic campaign to reach black workers, and the Scottsboro defense was a hallmark of these efforts. Despite these similarities, however, Cuba was fundamentally distinct from the United States in that it was a neocolonial society locked in a relationship of economic dependency and politically beholden to its northern neighbor, which, through the 1902 Platt Amendment, maintained the right to intervene in Cuban domestic affairs at the slightest sign of turbulence. The communist insistence that the Scottsboro convictions implicated not just southern racism but also imperial aggression would have a profound resonance on the island.

Although this article focuses on Cuban responses to events in the United States, I am less interested in “transnationalizing American history” than in exploring the Scottsboro case through a perspective rooted specifically in the history of race and activism in republican Cuba, and, more broadly, in the history of Latin America’s Old Left.² Doing so sheds light on the myriad meanings attached to Scottsboro, as defending the nine young men in Alabama came to embody the local battle against racism at a time when such discussions were highly circumscribed, a pan-American call for unity in the face of imperial aggression, and global anti-capitalism. Although this intersectional struggle against racism, imperialism, and class exploitation predates by decades revolutionary Cuba’s ideological role as a haven for African American radicals in the 1960s, later
figures such as LeRoi Jones and Robert F. Williams would reformulate the American struggle against racism within the broader context of global anti-colonialism in ways that clearly echoed the Scottsboro campaign. Indeed, the roots of what Besenia Rodriguez and others have called “Tricontinentalism” – that is, the anti-racist, anti-imperial political sentiment of Third World solidarity captured most clearly at the 1966 Havana Tricontinental Congress – can be found in the island’s 1930s Scottsboro defense movement, which theorized the relationship between American racism and imperial aggression for an earlier generation of Cubans (Rodriguez 2005).3

Popular outrage over the Scottsboro convictions was widespread in Cuba, leading to a significant campaign to defend the young men. News about the trials was ubiquitous, appearing in local dailies, internationally-circulated newspapers such as the New York-printed communist Mundo Obrero, and in flyers distributed at demonstrations. As in the United States, the local communist party, the Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC), and the ILD’s Cuban arm, Defensa Obrero Internacional (DOI), led the island’s Scottsboro defense campaign. DOI instructed supporters to organize “small ACTIVIST BRIGADES” in solidarity with the Scottsboro Nine, demonstrate near the American embassy and consulates, and hold letter-writing assemblies.4 Party-affiliated labor unions heeded these instructions early on, sending letters to the US Embassy as early as July 1931.5 The Confederación Nacional de Obreros de Cuba (CNOC) demanded the men’s release in a statement mailed to Alabama’s governor and signed by an “endless” list that included local worker associations from across the island as well as national unions of drivers, typographers, commercial employees, carpenters, and metallurgical workers (Diario de la Marina, July 8, 1931). Smaller groups of workers often took their own initiative in sending protest messages, such as when several employees of the Nazábal sugar mill sent a cable pleading “for the lives of the nine negros of Scottsboro”.6

In addition to the letter-writing campaign, Scottsboro-related demonstrations erupted across Cuba, with solidarity protests frequently taking place near spaces symbolic of American power (Mundo Obrero, June 1, 1932). On the evening of 22 May 1932, for instance, between 40 and 50 young men “of the laboring class” gathered outside the US consulate in the south-eastern port city of Manzanillo, demanding liberty for the young defendants, throwing rocks and bricks, and chanting “down with Yankee imperialism!” On another occasion, in April 1933, a group of “approximately twenty boys and young men, all coloured and of the peon type” attacked the American consulate at Santiago, throwing stones through the office windows. They left behind circulars that condemned fascism and addressed other issues, but included “of course the Scottsboro case”, according to the local consul, whose choice of words reflects the extent to which agitation around Scottsboro had become a regular concern for American foreign service personnel.8

Historian Pedro Serviat (1986, 112) wrote that at least one Scottsboro demonstration ended in fatal violence when authorities opened fire.

Participation in Scottsboro defense crossed multiple social boundaries, including those of class, race, and nationality. Sympathy for the young men was not limited to the “peon type[s]”, as even the conservative Havana-based Diario de La Marina, which gave the story regular front page coverage, claimed that the “entire world is interested in acquittal from death sentences” (Diario de La Marina, October 14, 1932; see also November 7, 1932). Significantly, black activists of all strata in Cuban society mobilized around the case. Members of an exclusive Afro-Cuban society, the Club Atenas in Havana, sent a telegram to the governor of Alabama, protesting the incarcerations and calling the case an example of “racial prejudice and capitalist cruelty” (Guridy 2010, 135). In an intriguing incident, an “unknown Cuban negro” entered a soup kitchen for destitute Spaniards in
Santiago de Cuba in July 1931 and called for a protest, addressing, among other matters, “the sentence of death imposed upon several negroes in Scottsboro, Alabama”. The agitator waved a red flag and suggested a march, but police began firing, wounding five individuals and arresting 10. The informal nature of this man’s protest suggests that the campaign resonated beyond inner party circles. Moreover, that a black Cuban could mobilize or even consider mobilizing (presumably white) Spaniards around Scottsboro indicates that condemnation of the convictions spanned racial and national lines. Finally, the unidentified man’s choice of venue suggests he may have seen a link between the Scottsboro defendants, poor young men riding the rails in search for work – a point continually highlighted by the communist press – and Cuba’s own Depression-era poverty, which sent many to food banks.

Such incidents of black activism around Scottsboro in Cuba are particularly striking in light of limitations on black organizing and increasing violence against Cubans of color in the 1930s. As others have demonstrated, with the 1910 Morúa Amendment outlawing racially-exclusive political parties still on the books and with the massacre of Afro-Cubans in the aftermath of the Partido Independiente de Color’s 1912 uprising a recent memory, possibilities for black political mobilization were severely limited in Republican Cuba. Those who denounced racism risked repression and violent retaliation, as white Cubans labeled such protest unpatriotic and divisive (de la Fuente 2001; Helg 1995, 16–17, 185–6, 245–6). Black Cubans, like their counterparts in the United States, continued to experience political, social, and economic exclusion in the early 1930s. Although early twentieth-century public expressions of racism in Cuba tended to sidestep the biological notions of race common in the United States, reflecting instead a coded language of culture (including, for example, ordinances against witchcraft and requirements that job applicants be “cultured” persons), anti-black mob violence and public lynching were far from unheard of. As in the United States, accusations that black men had raped white women justified violent attacks, and in 1919 sensationalized press coverage of supposed brujería triggered a wave of anti-black violence (Bronfman 2004, 83, 99–104). By the time the Scottsboro story unfolded, openly racist language modeled along the lines of North American white supremacy was increasingly common, most clearly with the founding of Ku Klux Klan Kubano branches in 1928 and 1932 (Bronfman 2004; de la Fuente 2001; Guridy 2009, 55). In the turbulent months leading up to Cuba’s Revolution of 1933 and the overthrow of President Gerardo Machado, racial violence peaked as white Cubans of differing political affiliation cast their opponents as “black” (Guridy 2009). Bombs exploded in buildings housing Afro-Cuban societies in Havana, Cienfuegos, and Santa Clara. During the revolution itself, rumors of an imminent black uprising circulated on the eastern part of the island, as they had during the Cuban Independence Wars and the Independiente protests of 1912, and increased racial tensions. In short, in the context of ongoing racial struggles and a spike in racist violence, defending the Scottsboro Nine was, for Cubans of color, a clear and straightforward opportunity to speak out against racism from within the narrow strictures of permissible racial dialogue in Cuban society.

That black Cubans entwined denouncements of racism with concerns about poverty and “capitalist cruelty” and increasingly found common cause with the PCC is unsurprising. Founded in 1925, the PCC had spent its infancy overlooking the specific problems of inequality and discrimination faced by black workers, implicitly suggesting instead that racial problems would be resolved through class struggle. The 1928 Sixth Congress of the Communist International (Comintern), which launched the “Third Period” of international communism and an era of increased contact between Moscow and Latin America,
however, marked a change in the global communist approach to race. The Sixth Congress declared that black subjugation was a nationalist matter and called constituent parties to organize black workers. While historians cannot and should not credit Moscow alone with a newfound commitment to black liberation—rather, a host of New Negro intellectuals (including Surinam-born Otto Huiswoud, Jamaican Claude McKay, and Americans Lovett Fort-Whittman and Harry Haywood) aggressively pushed Moscow to address matters of racial oppression—the new stance undoubtedly compelled reluctant, white-dominated communist parties to address the unique obstacles faced by black workers rather than subordinate racial concerns in an ideological commitment to class struggle (Adi 2009; Kelley 2002; Sullivan 2012, 208–12). By the early 1930s, with the Comintern addressing head-on the “Negro Question”, black participation in and leadership of radical Leftist movements was on the rise globally, and Cuba was no exception.

At its 1932 First World Congress in Moscow, the International Red Aid advised the DOI and other Caribbean affiliates to become “true parties of the masses” and to expand their on-the-ground reach, instructions which Cuban communists interpreted as a call to organize black workers. The Cuban Communist Party’s transition to an expanded rank-and-file and a more inclusive popular base, however, was not always smooth. Across Latin America, this push into popular politics entailed reaching previously-neglected constituencies such as rural wage laborers (particularly those working for powerful American sugar and fruit companies), peasants, Indians, and people of African descent. During this time, the PCC sought to mobilize Cuba’s working classes around an ideal of transracial, transnational proletarian solidarity that by late 1932 included Afro-Caribbean immigrants working in the island’s sugar industry. The party avidly defended antillanos in the face of labor nationalization laws and forced deportations during and after the Revolution of 1933. In another attempt to appeal to black workers, the PCC followed the CPUSA’s lead and declared itself in favor of the right to self-determination in the black-majority regions of Oriente Province (Arredondo 1939; Grobart 1985; Serviat 1986, 116–21). These efforts, however, proved unpopular, as the “black-belt” policy was quietly removed from the platform within a year, and widespread support for labor nationalizations pushed the PCC not only to drop its defense of immigrant workers but to reverse abruptly its position and become a vocal proponent of labor nationalization in 1935.

The failure of these other attempts to build support from among Cuba’s racially- and nationally-diverse working class puts into sharp relief the popularity of the Scottsboro case. Quickly, the campaign to free the young men in Alabama became fundamental to the PCC’s working classes around an ideal of transracial, transnational proletarian solidarity that by late 1932 included Afro-Caribbean immigrants working in the island’s sugar industry. The party avidly defended antillanos in the face of labor nationalization laws and forced deportations during and after the Revolution of 1933. In another attempt to appeal to black workers, the PCC followed the CPUSA’s lead and declared itself in favor of the right to self-determination in the black-majority regions of Oriente Province (Arredondo 1939; Grobart 1985; Serviat 1986, 116–21). These efforts, however, proved unpopular, as the “black-belt” policy was quietly removed from the platform within a year, and widespread support for labor nationalizations pushed the PCC not only to drop its defense of immigrant workers but to reverse abruptly its position and become a vocal proponent of labor nationalization in 1935.

The failure of these other attempts to build support from among Cuba’s racially- and nationally-diverse working class puts into sharp relief the popularity of the Scottsboro case. Quickly, the campaign to free the young men in Alabama became fundamental to party expansion, particularly among black Cubans. Defensa Obrero Internacional regularly updated members on the particulars of the trials and directed local divisions to “take advantage of all events related to the nine youths in Scottsboro to recruit new black members to our ranks”. DOI leaders emphasized the need to recruit black Cubans “through fortifying […] the campaign in defense of the 8 young black workers in Scottsboro”. Their efforts seem to have met with a degree of success, as by 1933 the PCC claimed that over a third of its rank-and-file was black, and the DOI claimed that, of its 500 members, 175 were black, including some 42 Antillean immigrants. Cubans of color led the longshoremen’s union, builders’ syndicate, the sugar workers’ union, and CNOC, and several black activists, including sugar organizer Jesús Menéndez and PCC General Secretary Blas Roca, rose to prominence during this period (de la Fuente 2001; Pappademos 2011, 217). Although a definitive causal relationship is difficult to establish between the Scottsboro defense and increased black membership, with Scottsboro at the forefront of its recruitment efforts the PCC had succeeded in integrating its leadership and rank-and-file by mid-decade.
Scottsboro defense, however, was about much more than recruitment: it was also a tool to promote internationalism. For communist parties worldwide, the Third Period was a time of avowed internationalism. The DOI explicitly claimed that its mission was to “advance the international education of the Cuban masses”, and the Scottsboro defense figured prominently in party plans to educate all Cubans on the importance of worldwide proletarian solidarity. Communist outlets carefully catered individualized messages about Scottsboro to particular constituencies, such as workers, young people, mothers, and intellectuals. To poor peasants, for instance, Mundo Obrero wrote that the same “dominant class” that locked up the nine men “also throws you off of your farms” (Mundo Obrero, October 1, 1932). Most prominently, the party incorporated notions of racial struggle into the global fight against imperialism. The DOI bridged multiple abuses of black people into a singular narrative of expanding US power, arguing that “imperialist Yankees” were “oppressors of black people on an international level” and that US Marine invasions in the Caribbean and mob violence in the US south were “all part of the legal lynching” at Scottsboro. Indeed, party outlets offered supporters of the Scottsboro Nine a systemic analysis of their story as part of a larger drama in which the same “Yankee capitalists” who divided working classes by fostering racial antagonism were also expanding across the hemisphere, exploiting its people and resources, and dominating the region politically and militarily.

Imperialism, then, was the umbrella under which Scottsboro fell and around which the party hoped to lead Cuba’s diverse working classes in protest. Like other international campaigns of the interwar period, most notably condemnation of the Sacco and Vanzetti convictions and the Hands-Off Ethiopia campaign, Scottsboro mobilized thousands in the global struggle against imperialism. The Comintern’s Third Period resolution that “Negroes [everywhere] are oppressed by imperialism” positioned the case under the rubric of “oppressed nations”, a framing that linked the defendants in Alabama with all Latin Americans, similarly oppressed by US imperialism. A Mundo Obrero article claimed that “the same imperialists who murder workers and peasants in the Caribbean, who condemn to hunger and misery millions and millions of workers […] are the ones who have hatched the mass lynching of the nine young negros of Scottsboro” (Mundo Obrero, August-September, 1933). The ILD and others proclaimed that Latin Americans, who had personally “suffered a very great misery and terror at the hands of the US imperialists and their native instruments”, should be particularly driven to fight for the Scottsboro defendants, arguing that “we workers and peasants and honest intellectuals of the Caribbean, as well as of all of Latin America, have a special task to achieve in the fight to save the young Negroes of Scottsboro” (Mundo Obrero, June 1, 1932). In associating Scottsboro with US imperialism in the popular imagination, international communist print outlets made possible the local DOI slogan, “For the liberty of the nine boys in Scottsboro, and against Yankee imperialist domination in Latin America!”, which appeared in dozens of fliers, broadsides, and circulars in the 1930s.

The anti-imperialist message resonated widely, as protestors on the ground largely replicated this narrative. Tobacco workers in Santiago, for instance, condemned “imperialist assassins of the United States”, and signed their Scottsboro protest letter “down with anti-black oppression in the United States and Cuba!”, uniting the struggles for racial equality and against imperialism. Scottsboro protestors in Manzanillo claimed that the American system responsible for the “criminal racial discrimination under which the majority of blacks suffer” served only the interests of “big-time bankers, industrialists, and powerful moguls [working at the outermost] limits of American empire”. The “Yankee bourgeoisie”, they argued, extended across the Americas, “imposing hunger
and terror on the Cuban people.”

Even less formal, spontaneous Scottsboro protests indicate that the defense of the nine young men was associated with wider anger at US economic expansionism. On 22 November 1933, when unknown assailants attacked several American company offices in Havana, including those of the Ward Line, the Grace Line, and the Cuban Electric Company, messages attached to stones used to smash office windows stated: “We demand the release of the Scottsboro Negroes!”

The vandals’ choice of targets suggests that they regarded American private firms operating in Cuba as part of a wider system behind the miscarriage of justice in Alabama.

This big-picture narrative of a transracial, global struggle against imperialism unified diverse regional opposition efforts. The Mundo Obrero contended that the young men in Alabama shared a struggle with workers and peasants waging resistance battles across the region, including those fighting US occupations in Nicaragua and Haiti, strikers massacred on a United Fruit Company plantation in Colombia, and insurgent peasants in El Salvador (Mundo Obrero, May, 1932). Of course, agitation around Scottsboro overlapped with Cuba’s own early 1930s surge in oppositional politics, which entailed unemployment marches, street battles between students and the police, and strikes in the cities and countryside, and which resulted in the dramatic toppling of the Machado administration.

Protestors condemned US “lynch justice” in the same breath as “Machado’s fascist government” in their defense of the nine young African Americans. When Scottsboro supporters argued that their victims of racial injustice in the United States had something in common with their own battle against Machado, as well as with labor activists, anti-imperialist guerrilla warriors, and all Latin Americans subject to politically repressive regimes, they deliberately claimed participation in a united global struggle against racism, political oppression, and imperialism during what Barry Carr has astutely called “the Red Years of the Caribbean and Central America” (2012, 217–40, 233).

An early example of transnational protest, Scottsboro galvanized tens of thousands in condemnation of American racial injustice. In Cuba, sympathy for the young men’s poverty and anger at ongoing racial violence pushed many to the young men’s defense, and the case became a vehicle to critique racism within Cuban society at a time when such discussions were highly circumscribed. With a message heavily filtered by the international communist press, however, Scottsboro was also deeply enmeshed in a wider, transnational struggle against US imperialism. The fact that the communist Left clearly leveraged popular outrage over the Scottsboro convictions to gain support for its wider anti-imperialist struggles makes the campaign no less significant in the history of black Cuban activism. For one, the PCC could not have achieved this maneuver without a degree of popular agreement. After all, even the elite and decidedly non-communist Club Atenas called the Scottsboro convictions a matter of “capitalist cruelty”, perhaps unconsciously repeating the party line. Moreover, the party’s interpretation of the Scottsboro case – and the relative popularity of that interpretation – highlights the distinctive character of Cuba’s oppositional politics in the 1930s, when Cubans of color increasingly joined forces with labor unions and Leftist political parties, and of the global Left during the interwar period, when the line between pan-Africanism and proletarian solidarity was blurred.

As both a unifying symbol bringing people together across class and racial boundaries and a multivalent prism through which various actors could mobilize around distinct causes, the Scottsboro case reinvigorated the ideological appeal of the communist party in the early 1930s and contributed to the restiveness of a nation on the brink of revolution. Further, the Scottsboro defense campaign propelled Cuban participation in pan-Americanism and the rising tide of transnational, transracial activism that characterized the Caribbean and Central America during the interwar years. The nature of the
Scottsboro protests – often spontaneous and led by “unknown” men – illustrates that Cuban involvement in these “red years” was not strictly the domain of those leading activists who traveled widely between hubs of political agitation in Havana, Mexico City, New York, and Moscow. Rather, average men and women living in Cuba’s cities and towns exhibited an internationalist vision and saw themselves as actors at the forefront of the most significant struggles of their time. In many ways, their internationalist vision anticipated a later generation of Cuban and African American radicals who, in the 1960s, similarly positioned the American struggle for civil rights within the context of global anti-imperialism.

Notes

2. In recent decades, several historians have sought to transnationalize US history and particularly that of US Old Left (see McGirr 2007; van der Linde 1999). While this is a worthy project, I seek to decenter the United States in the story I tell here.
3. For the relationship between black radicals in the United States and Revolutionary Cuba, see also Plummer (1998, 133–55).
5. United States National Archives (hereafter USNA), College Park, MD, Record Group 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State (hereafter RG 84), vol. 325, no. 841.1, President and Secretary of the Union de Torcedores, Santiago de Cuba, to American Consul in Santiago de Cuba, 6 July 1931.
6. Instituto de Historia de Cuba, Havana (hereafter IHC), fondo 5, sig. 5/19:104/207/Lit, “Entrevista efectuada a Compañeros que participaron en el Soviet del Central Nazabal: La compañera María Tomasa González”.
7. USNA, RG 84, vol. 23, no. 800, Telegram from Bertot, American Consular Agent at Manzanillo, to Edwin Schoenrich, American Consul at Santiago de Cuba, 23 May 1932.
8. USNA, RG 84, vol. 377, no 600, Schoenrich to Edward L. Reed, American Chargé d’Affaires, Havana, 11 April 1933.
10. This phenomenon occurred again after the initial years of Cuban Revolution, when open discussions of racial problems were again taboo because official discourse claimed that racial discrimination had been overcome (de la Fuente 2001, 279).
12. IHC, Fondo 1, sig. 1/8:223:5.1/1-109, DOI Comité Ejecutivo Nacional, “Circular – Asunto: 3 de Enero, culminación de la campaña contra el terror a los negros y embarque de Haitianos”, 21 December 1933.
13. The practice of discrediting black political mobilizations as incidences of “race war” and “black uprising” has a long history in Cuba (see Castro Fernández 2002; Ferrer 1999; Helg 1995).
14. At its 1934 Fourth Congress, CNOC conceded of its early years: “one of our fundamental failures has been to neglect […] the black question in general”. CNOC, “Resolución sobre el trabajo entre los trabajadores negros”, January 1934, in Instituto de Historia de Cuba (1975, 560–1).
15. So named because it followed a first period of revolutionary upsurge after the Soviet victory and a second period of capitalist restructuring, the Third Period was marked by a highly sectarian “class against class approach” to international communism (Worley 2004). For the relationship between the Comintern and Latin American communist parties, see Carr (1998a) and Hatzky (2008, 147–53).
17. For a summary of Moscow’s instructions, see Mundo Obrero, February 1, 1933.
18. Discussions about organizing among new constituencies took place at two seminal conferences of Latin American communist parties and labor unions: the May 1929 founding congress of the Confederación Sindical Latinoamericana in Montevideo and the June 1929 Primera Conferencia de los Partidos Comunistas de América Latina in Buenos Aires (Caballero 1986; Confederación Sindical Latino Americana 1929).
19. The party shift, from neglecting braceros antillanos to advocating forcefully for their rights, is best demonstrated by comparing two documents: CNOC’s call to organize a sugar workers’ union, which made no specific mention of foreign workers, and the founding document of that union, the Sindicato Nacional Obrero de la Industria Azucarera, which, just 10 months later, advocated explicitly for the rights of immigrant workers (IHC, Fondo 1, sig. 1/8/7:17.1, CNOC “¡Obreros Azucareros, preparan vuestras luchas!”, 8 February 1932; IHC, Fondo 1, sig. 1/8:87/2.1/1-8, “Manifestó de la Primera Confederación de Obreros de la Industria Azucarera”, December 1932).
23. IHC, fondo 1, sig. 1/8:223/5.1/1-109, DOI- Comité Ejecutivo Nacional, “Circular – Asunto: 3 de Enero, culminación de la campaña contra el terror a los negros y embarque de Haitianos”, 21 December 1933 (emphasis in original). Of the nine young men at Scottsboro, all but the 13-year-old Roy Wright were sentenced to the electric chair. Because eight were given death sentences – not nine – defense campaign materials alternatively referred to the “eight young men at Scottsboro”, the “Scottsboro Nine”, and other variations.
25. At its Sixth Congress, the Comintern critiqued member parties for “a certain provincialism” and urged a renewed commitment to internationalism; Sixth Comintern Congress, “Extracts from the Theses of the Sixth Comintern Congress on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Communist International 29 August 1928”, in Degras (1971, 461).
27. IHC, fondo 1, sig. 1/8:223/5.1/1-109, DOI-CEN “Circular – Asunto: 3 de Enero”, 21 December 1933.
29. For example, see IHC, fondo 1, sig. 1/8:223/7.1/1-25 p. 13–14, DOI – Sección Cubana del SRI, Comité Ejecutivo Naciónal, “A Las federaciones obreras, sindicatos, grupos de oposición, sociedades y demás organizaciones”, 26 January 1934.
30. USNA, RG 84, vol. 325, no. 841.1, President and Secretary of the Union de Torcedores, Santiago de Cuba, to American Consul in Santiago de Cuba, 6 July 1931; New York Times, July 8, 1931.
34. USNA, RG 84. vol. 23, no. 800, Liga Juvenil Comunista to Bertot, 11 May 1932.
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