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ARTICLE

Neutrality and Internationalism: The Russian Exiles in Spain, 1914–1920

Arturo Zoffmann Rodriguez

Institute of Historical Research, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Coyoacan, Mexico
arturo.zoffmann@eui.eu

During the First World War, hundreds of exiles and refugees from across Europe arrived in neutral Spain. This article investigates the colony of Russian exiles that settled in the country and their interactions with the Spanish labour movement. It contends that the exiles played a prominent role as conveyors of information on the Russian Revolution, which served as an important source of inspiration during the social upheavals that rocked Spain in 1917–20. The authorities tried to sever the connection between local activists and the Russian exiles through persecution. The article concludes with reflections on the significance of neutral countries as safe havens for internationalists during the war, comparing the Spanish and the Mexican case studies. It contends that neutrality helped preserve transnational radical networks, while contact with exiles rendered the labour movement in these countries more cosmopolitan and knowledgeable of world events and ideological trends.

In the years 1917–23, Spain witnessed episodes of intense social warfare. The country was rocked by strikes, riots, insurrections and terrorist and paramilitary violence. Class conflict in this period contributed to the demise of the semi-liberal Bourbon Restoration regime. Growing political polarisation culminated in General Primo de Rivera's coup d'état in September 1923, which inaugurated a seven-year military dictatorship.[1]

As in other countries, social tumult in these years was connected to the radicalising fillip of the Russian Revolution. Among property owners, events in Russia raised the spectre of their own violent downfall, hardening their resolve to crush organised labour. Conversely, it acted as a beacon flare for the strikes and rebellions that swept the country.[2] Indeed, the period 1917–20 came to be known as the *trienio bolchevique*, the three Bolshevik years. The two largest workers' organisations in Spain, the Social Democratic Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and, especially, the anarcho-syndicalist National Confederation of Labour (CNT), became enamoured with the Russian Revolution. The general secretary of the CNT at the time, Manuel Buenacasa, admitted that the anarchists were 'dazzled by the Russian bonfire'.[3] The authorities identified a close connection between social agitation and Bolshevism. A police report on industrial unrest in Barcelona admitted that 'behind [the strikes] hides a revolutionary passion, which will become increasingly bold depending on what happens in Russia'.[4] However, the honeymoon between Spanish labour and the Soviet Republic was short-lived, its intensity notwithstanding. By 1922 both the PSOE and the CNT had drawn away from Bolshevism and from the Third International.

[1] Francisco Romero Salvadó, 'Between the Catalan Quagmire and the Red Spectre, Spain, November 1918–April 1919', *Historical Journal*, 60, 3 (2017), 785–815.

[2] Arturo Zoffmann Rodriguez, 'Lenin in Barcelona: The Russian Revolution and the Spanish *trienio bolchevista*, 1917–1920', *Slavic Review*, 76, 3 (2017), 629–36.

[3] Manuel Buenacasa, *El movimiento obrero español, 1886–1926: historia y crítica* (Madrid: Júcar, 1977), 71.

[4] 'Consecuencias que se desprenden de la huelga de la Canadiense', no date, L96, N38, Fondo Conde de Romanones, Real Academia de la Historia, Madrid.

Historians have interpreted this fleeting romance through the categories of misunderstanding, confusion and naivety, which were facilitated by the lack of reliable news from Russia. Ignorance of Russian affairs allowed socialists and anarchists in Spain to shoehorn their expectations into the hazy reports arriving from Eastern Europe. These rosy visions did not correspond with reality, as they eventually discovered.[5] Recent investigations have questioned this interpretation.[6] While the fragmentary character of information from Russia helped Spanish radicals lionise the Bolsheviks, this line of argument underestimates the force and durability of the passions awakened by the Russian Revolution and its interaction with social struggles in Spain. In turn, studies on the 'Red Scare' that gripped liberal and conservative public opinion at the time have similarly contended that exaggeration and paranoia warped commentary on foreign-sponsored communist subversion.[7] While anti-Russian xenophobia certainly abounded in this period, the 'Red Scare' should not obscure the real connections between the Spanish labour movement and the Soviet Republic.

This article approaches the perception of the Russian Revolution in Spain from a new perspective. I qualify ignorance of Russian affairs in Spain by probing into the exiles and refugees from Russia that acted as important intermediaries between Spanish socialists and anarchists and the Russian revolutionary process. Much literature has been devoted to Russian émigrés. Most of it has revolved around anti-Bolshevik asylum seekers who abandoned the country after 1917 and, especially, after the defeat of the Whites in the Russian Civil War in 1920. Consequently, inquiries into the politics of this community have often centred on anti-communist militancy.[8] Although most of the literature has focused on major Western powers such as France, Germany and the United States, the work of Mikel Aizpuru has shed light on Russian émigrés in Spain in the 1920s–30s. Yet Aizpuru pays little attention to the politics of this colony, focusing instead on the discrimination with which it was met by local authorities. This article shifts the spotlight to the years 1914–20, and to the left-wing Russian exiles who travelled to neutral Spain during the First World War and its immediate aftermath. I argue this community acted as an important conveyor belt of information on events in Russia for Spanish leftists. After 1914, Spain suddenly became a hub for radical exiles. Their presence strengthened Spanish labour's transnational connections and its knowledge of international affairs and global ideological trends, namely the Russian Revolution and Bolshevism. Local authorities tried to sever this relationship through persecution and harassment. Regardless of the actual prospects for revolution in Spain in this period, the elites were gripped by a feeling of fear and insecurity and identified the Russian exiles as a dangerous source of subversion.

I situate the Russian exile community in the shifting geography of socialism and anarchism. During the First World War, global leftist networks were undermined but not entirely destroyed, as they reoriented to neutral countries where revolutionaries could find (relatively) safe haven and plug into the local labour movement. By way of comparison, I point to the example of neutral Mexico, which by 1918 came to host a vibrant community of internationalists that would play an important role in the origins of communism in the Americas. I thus intend to map the changing landscape of radical

[5] Juan Avilés Farré, *La fe que vino de Rusia: la revolución bolchevique y los españoles, 1917–1931* (Madrid: UNED, 1999), 116, 217; Francisco Romero Salvadó, 'The Comintern Fiasco in Spain: The Borodin Mission and the Birth of the Spanish Communist Party', *Revolutionary Russia*, 21, 2 (2008), 159; Josep Puigsech, *La revolució russa i Catalunya, 1917–1939* (Vic: Eumo, 2017), 49; Julián Vadillo, *Historia de la CNT: Utopía, pragmatismo y revolución* (Madrid: Catarata, 2019), 153–6; Jason Garner, *Goals and Means: Anarchism, Syndicalism and Internationalism in the Origins of the Federación Anarquista Ibérica* (Chico: AK Press, 2016).

[6] Arturo Zoffmann Rodriguez, 'Anarcho-Syndicalism and the Russian Revolution: Towards a Political Explanation of a Fleeting Romance, 1917–22', *Revolutionary Russia*, 31, 2 (Autumn 2018), 226–46.

[7] James Matthews, 'Battling Bolshevik Bogeymen: Spain's *Cordon Sanitaire* against Revolution from a European Perspective, 1917–1923', *The Journal of Military History,* 80 (2016), 725–32; Mikel Aizpuru, 'La expulsión de los refugiados extranjeros desde España en 1919: exiliados rusos y de otros países', *Migraciones y Exilios*, 11 (2010), 113.

[8] Michael Kellogg, *The Russian Roots of Nazism: White Émigrés and the Making of National Socialism, 1917–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Benjamin Tromly, *Cold War Exiles and the CIA: Plotting to Free Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

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politics in these turbulent years, challenging the common notion that 1914 totally destroyed the international scaffold of socialism and anarchism.

A Community is Born

In a report sent to Barcelona's civil governor in November 1918, the Russian consul in the Catalan capital, Alexei Gagarin, who was aligned with the deposed Provisional Government, admitted that prior to 1914 the Russian colony in Spain was 'insignificant'.[9] Spain was an economic and cultural backwater in Western Europe. For refugees, the repressive Restoration regime was no place for exile. Russians settled in large numbers in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy and Britain, but not in Spain. The country was a net exporter of economic migrants and political exiles. In 1910, migrants only represented 0.39 per cent of the Spanish population.[10] 'However, this state of affairs changed rapidly after the outbreak of the war', noted the consul. Most of Europe was engulfed in the conflagration. Liberal democracies cut back on civil rights as society was marshalled for war. State repression targeted internationalists, especially if they were foreign. More dangerously for Russian émigrés in France, Britain and Italy, the Entente was allied with the tsarist regime. Fearing deportation and/or conscription, 'a large number of [Russian] reservists, deserters, and draft-dodgers that were fearful of being called to service headed for Spain', which remained neutral throughout the conflict.[11]

In the course of the war, the phenotype of Russian exiles changed. Initially, according to the consul, most Russians were 'déclassé' elements who lived in 'misery'.[12] A Spanish minister later referred to these refugees as 'social waste', allowed into Spain due to the government's 'excessive leniency'.[13] In fact, it was not leniency but indifference that allowed foreigners to enter Spain's porous borders. The country's migration laws were permissive and, in any case, were poorly enforced. Only with the 'Red Scare' that spread in 1918–19 would foreign radicals become a major source of concern for the authorities.[14] The Russian deserters and conscientious objectors who began to arrive in 1914 were unhappy in Spain, but seldom left the country out of fear of landing in a trench or a jail. Their condition of outcasts meant very few received any support from the tsarist consular corps.[15] Some tried to make their way across the Atlantic. Leon Trotsky, who briefly visited Barcelona in December 1916, was surprised at the number of foreign 'undesirables' that loitered in the city trying to make it to the Americas.[16]

The fall of tsarism did not improve the lot of this community, for the war continued untrammelled. The new liberal regime did not forgive desertion, for it 'could not be equated with political crime'. The consulate remained unwilling to lend assistance to draft dodgers. At the same time, however, the February Revolution served to politicise the colony. Many of these refugees now became 'followers of Lenin and Trotsky'. Under the leadership of Polish Jew Serge A. Gontcharow, they attempted to form a 'Union of Russian citizens' in Barcelona to lobby for material assistance and secure recognition from the Russian and Spanish governments. According to Spanish police, Gontcharow was a Bolshevik who sought to spread communist propaganda in Barcelona.[17] The consulate, suspicious of the subversive aims of the committee, blocked the initiative and denounced it to Spanish authorities.[18]

[9] Russian Consul to Barcelona Civil Governor, 14 Nov. 1918, Ex. 16, L.3024, Exteriores (Histórico), Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN), Madrid.
[10] By way of comparison, in 1931 migrants comprised 6.6 per cent of the population of France. Aizpuru, 'La expulsión,' 109.
[11] Consul to Governor, 14 Nov. 1918, Ex. 16, L. 3024, Exteriores (Histórico), AHN.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Letter by War Minister to Albert Thomas, 9 Oct. 1920, 24, Albert Thomas Papers OIT, AAVV-CI, Fundación Pablo Iglesias (FPI), Alcalá de Henares.
[14] Aizpuru, 'La expulsión', 109–10.
[15] Consul to Governor, 14 Nov. 1918, Ex. 16, L. 3024, Exteriores (Histórico), AHN.
[16] Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky, 1879–1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 241.
[17] Barcelona Civil Governor to Interior Minister, 26 Nov. 1918, Ex. 16, L3024, Exteriores (Histórico), AHN.
[18] Consul to Governor, 14 Nov. 1918, Ex. 16, L. 3024, Exteriores (Histórico), AHN.

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The Russian diplomatic service in Spain, small and understaffed, was disorganised by the February Revolution. The Russian ambassador in Madrid, Prince Koudacheff, was dismissed in April upon request by the Provisional Government. Other more liberal candidates were proposed. The new republican ambassador, Mikhail Stakhovich, eventually took up the position on 24 November, after the Bolsheviks had already overthrown the government he was to represent. Some sources suggest the consul in Barcelona was also replaced after the February Revolution.[19] This staff would formally remain at the forefront of the Russian diplomatic corps in Spain until the early 1920s, despite being 'starved of money' after November 1917.[20] Yet it appears the lower rungs of the consular apparatus remained unchanged. For instance, Barcelona's viceconsul, Alexei Markoff, was referred to by the French government as a 'functionary of the old regime' who only 'pretended to support' the new republican authorities.[21] His reports to the Spanish government reveal he was bitterly hostile to anything that smacked of subversion. At the same time, however, other functionaries of the imperial consular service were impressed by the October Revolution. Alexei Kedroff, who was the tsarist naval attaché in Spain, became a supporter of the Soviet government and posed as 'its only legitimate representative in Spain'.[22] According to the consul, for several months he channelled funds to finance pro-Bolshevik agitation in the Iberian Peninsula. He was allegedly in contact with various groups of Russian radicals across Spain who in turn collaborated with local leftists.[23]

The radicalisation of Barcelona's Russian community was accelerated by the influx of a new contingent of exiles in mid-1918. The October Revolution pitted the new regime in Petrograd against its former allies. The Brest-Litovsk treaty further poisoned the Soviet Republic's relationship with the Entente. Russian exiles residing in Western Europe who failed to make their way to Russia after the February Revolution were now trapped in hostile countries. France and Italy were concerned about the 'burning pacifist and defeatist propaganda' putatively conducted by these émigrés. Fearful they might spread the germ of Bolshevism, these governments expelled a large number of Russians in spring and summer 1918. Some tried to make their way to Switzerland, but were often refused entry. They then headed to the more porous Spanish border, 'wishing to set up their general staff' south of the Pyrenees.[24] Similarly, a number of leftist Russian migrants in Argentina attempted to return to Russia via Spain after the fall of the tsar, but were often stranded upon their arrival in Europe.[25] The overwhelming majority of these rebels settled in Barcelona. The city was well connected due to its port and its proximity to the French border, and hosted a vibrant, cosmopolitan subculture. 'Here', observed minister Burgos y Mazo, 'converge all sorts of wrongdoers from all quarters of the earth, who find . . . extraordinary possibilities to meet foreign comrades, to hatch their schemes, and to flee if necessary'.[26] In contrast, very few travelled to Madrid.[27] Social historians have pointed to the exploitative, backward character of Catalan industry and to a conflictive urban geography to explain the militancy of Barcelona's working class. While these factors are crucial, the city's vibrant transnational connections also provided access to revolutionary ideas and models that helped radicalise local activists.[28]

According to the consul, the new exiles possessed 'a certain level of culture, they are professional organisers, and they rapidly succeeded in banding together all the malcontents who had previously

[19] Ambassador in Paris to Interior Minister, 21 Nov. 1918, Ex. 16, L. 3024, Exteriores (Histórico), AHN.
[20] 'A. Markoff – Confidentiel' (no date), Ex. 34, L. 96, Fondo Conde de Romanones, RAH, Madrid.
[21] Ambassador in Paris to Interior Minister, 21 Nov. 1918, Ex. 16, L. 3024, Exteriores (Histórico), AHN.
[22] Guipuzkoa Police Chief to Interior Minister, 15 June 1919, L. 34, Gobernación A, AHN.
[23] Interior Minister to Foreign Minister, 3 Dec. 1918, Ex. 6, L. 3024, Exteriores (Histórico), AHN.
[24] Consul to Governor, 14 Nov. 1918, Ex. 16, L. 3024, Exteriores (Histórico), AHN.
[25] Ibid.; A. A. Dementyev, 'Padenie samoderzhavia i russkie emigranty v Argentine', *Vestnik Sankt-Petersburgskogo universiteta. Istoria*, 63, 4 (2018), 1204–5.
[26] Manuel de Burgos y Mazo, *El verano de 1919 en Gobernación* (Cuenca: Pinós, 1921), 58.
[27] See the comments in: Mikhail Borodin, 'First Conversation', 23 Dec. 1919, 1–2, Internacional Comunista (IC), AAVV-CV-16, FPI.
[28] Angel Smith, *Anarchism, Revolution and Reaction: Catalan Labour and the Crisis of the Spanish State, 1898–1923* (New York: Berghahn, 2007), 11–103.

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lacked a leadership'.[29] In another report to the Spanish prime minister, viceconsul Markoff described how 'the situation radically changed with the constant and rapid growth of a new element: those expelled from the Allied countries'. In 1918 the Russian colony in Barcelona was flooded with 'false intellectuals' and 'professional agitators'.[30] They directed 'the wrongdoers, the deserted soldiers and workers'. The viceconsul lamented the 'absolute lack of religious sentiments' among them. He numbered the city's community of Russian rebels at 760. Politically, he claimed this colony was dominated by Bolsheviks and social revolutionaries.[31] The Spanish government similarly calculated there were 'around 800 Russian subjects' in Barcelona in November 1918.[32]

After November 1918, this community melted away as travel through Europe became easier. More importantly, in 1919–20 the Spanish authorities carried out several mass deportations of Russians and other suspicious Eastern Europeans. A French police informant claimed there were only nine Russian communists operating in Barcelona in late 1920.[33] By 1921, the Spanish foreign ministry admitted 'there must remain very few Russians in Spain', evincing this question had ceased to be a source of concern for the authorities.[34] Yet the brief formation of a radical Russian community during the war, which reached its acme of numerical strength and political influence in late 1918, was consequential for Spain's *trienio bolchevique* of social upheaval.

Transmission Belts

The Russian Revolution initially awakened vivid interest in anarchist and socialist milieux in Spain. It invigorated their efforts to kickstart the Spanish revolution. It also elicited theoretical debates, particularly among the anarchists, about questions such as revolutionary violence and authority.[35] Historians have often interpreted this through the prism of ignorance and misunderstanding. 'Spain was simply too far away', has recently noted an author.[36] Yet careful analysis of contemporary evidence reveals that from an early stage socialists and anarchists had a relatively precise understanding of events in Russia. Left-wing newspapers reported with bated breath on the main events taking place at the other end of Europe. By mid-1918, they began to translate documents by the new authorities.[37] Much of this information was derived from foreign press agencies and 'from French and German labour papers'.[38] However, exiled Russians also became significant sources of information on revolutionary events in Eastern Europe.

Viceconsul Markoff noted that the exiles were 'in contact with the rabble of the Spanish working class, not only in the factories and at work, but especially in the taverns and the whorehouses, where their local "comrades" see them as heroes, as the trailblazers of the future workers' movement in Spain'. He noted with concern that 'it is easy to understand why their influence among the local working class is spreading so fast', since 'the Spanish proletariat is very similar to the Russian, for their mentality and their love for dazzling things and for grandiose phraseology'. 'This admiration from the "Western comrades" makes the head of the Russian lout spin and inflames his self-importance', making him eager 'to ingratiate himself with the Spanish demagogue'.[39] Markoff's account is

[29] Consul to Governor, 14 Nov. 1918, Ex. 16, L. 3024, Exteriores (Histórico), AHN.
[30] 'A. Markoff – Confidentiel'.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Foreign Minister to Ambassador in London, 10 Nov. 1918, Ex. 16, L. 3024, Exteriores (Histórico), AHN.
[33] 'Des Organisations communistes bolchévistes existant dans le Secteur de Catalogne', Oct. 1920, 12–13, F/7/13506, Police Générale, Ministère de l'Intérieur, Archives Nationales de France (ANF), Paris.
[34] Foreign Minister to League of Nations Representative, 6 Apr. 1921, Ex. 1, C. 3, 82/5463, Archivo General de la Administración (AGA), Alcalá de Henares.
[35] Arturo Zoffmann Rodriguez, 'An Uncanny Honeymoon: Spanish Anarchism and the Bolshevik Dictatorship of the Proletariat, 1917–22', *International Labor and Working Class History*, 94 (2018), 5–26.
[36] Puigsech, *La revolució*, 90–8.
[37] Javier Maestro Bäcksbacka, 'La revolución rusa en la prensa española de 1917', in Pelai Pagès and Pepe Gutiérrez, eds., *La revolución pasó por aquí* (Barcelona: Laertes, 2017), 42–60.
[38] Mikhail Borodin, 'First Conversation', 23 Dec. 1919, 1–2, IC, AAVV-CV-16, FPI.
[39] 'A. Markoff - Confidentiel'.

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somewhat embroidered. He was keen to see the germ of Bolshevism in all forms of popular dissent. He was probably also trying to shore up support for the White cause abroad by overstating the threat of Bolshevik contagion. But the connections between Russian émigrés and local radicals are undeniable.

The CNT daily spoke of the expanded community of 'Russians who because of the war have had to seek hospitality' in Barcelona, and observed that Bolsheviks 'consider themselves to be international, and whatever country they may find themselves in, they work for the cause'.[40] In his writings on the Bolsheviks, CNT secretary Manuel Buenacasa admitted to have relied heavily on the accounts of 'a Russian comrade'.[41] Similarly, anarchist intellectual Ángel Samblancat, who was one of the most influential champions of the Soviet regime within the Spanish radical left, befriended Barcelona's Russian exiles and used their inputs in his writings.[42] Anarcho-syndicalist activist José Viadiu recalled how he and his comrades spent long evenings during the war in Barcelona's Café Español discussing the world revolution with 'Frenchmen, Germans, Argentinians, Russians, Italians . . . all of them castaways'.[43] In fact, the Russians were only one of the different communities of exiles that settled in Barcelona during the war. For geographical reasons, French draft dodgers were especially numerous.[44] There were also large contingents of German, Turkish and Austro-Hungarian subjects who had been expelled or had fled from France after 1914.[45] These foreign rebels helped familiarise Spanish leftists with world events.

Victor Kival'kich, alias Victor Serge, was one of the most prominent foreign revolutionaries who sought refuge in Barcelona during the war. Although he was born in Belgium to a family of Russian exiles and had never set foot in Russia when he visited Spain, he was passionate about Russian affairs. He considered himself an anarchist but sympathised with the Bolsheviks. He affirmed in the pages of the anarchist weekly *Tierra y Libertad* that the Tsarist Empire 'has dispersed across the globe thousands of political refugees who have become propagandists and authentic leaders'.[46] He acquired ascendancy through his writings in Spanish anarchist newspapers (where he first used the pseudonym Serge), but also through his personal connections with prominent anarcho-syndicalists. With the help of an interpreter, he delivered lectures in trade union haunts.[47] He was asked to pen the blazing editorial in *Tierra y Libertad* that welcomed the news of the fall of Nicholas II. Serge labelled these events as a bourgeois revolution, but noted that it could rapidly mutate into a proletarian one as workers became disenchanted with the new liberal regime.[48] In his *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* and in his semi-autobiographical novel, *Birth of Our Power*, he presented himself as an important source of information on the Russian Revolution for CNT leaders, especially for prominent Catalan trade unionist Salvador Seguí.[49] Arguably, his analysis of the February Revolution shaped CNT strategy in 1917, when the anarchists established a tactical alliance with republican forces.[50]

Menshevik exile Naum Jakovlevich Kogan, whose nom de guerre was Nikolai Tasin, was a more reliable connoisseur of Russian politics than Serge. Born in Kiev in 1873, he was a first-generation social democrat who had aligned himself with the Mensheviks after the schism in the second party congress. According to his testimony, he was exiled to Siberia in 1903 but escaped a year later. He roamed the Russian émigré hubs in Germany, Switzerland and England. Tasin participated in the 1905 revolution, where he met Lenin. After another spell in jail in Orel, he escaped and settled in

[40] 'El miedo', *Solidaridad Obrera*, 947, 17 Nov. 1918; See also: 'La detención del compañero Masianoff', *Solidaridad Obrera*, 951, 21 Nov. 1918; 'Los rusos en España', *Solidaridad Obrera*, 990, 30 Dec. 1918.
[41] M. Buenacasa, 'Siluetas pacifistas: ¡Lenin!', *Solidaridad Obrera*, 667, 26 Nov. 1917.
[42] Ángel Samblancat, 'El bolcheviki errante', *Solidaridad Obrera*, 991, 31 Dec. 1918.
[43] José Viadiu, *Salvador Seguí ('Noy del Sucre'): El hombre y sus ideas* (Valencia: Cuadernos, 1930), 11.
[44] For a first-hand account on desertion and exile in Barcelona: Gaston Leval, 'Mémoires', Gaston Leval Papers, International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam.
[45] Foreign Minister to Spanish Ambassador in London, 10 Nov. 1918, Ex. 16, L. 3024, Exteriores (Histórico), AHN.
[46] Victor Serge, 'Un Zar cae', *Tierra y Libertad*, 346, 4 Apr. 1917.
[47] 'Conferencia', *Solidaridad Obrera*, 582, 6 June 1917.
[48] Serge, 'Un zar'.
[49] Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2012), 64.
[50] 'El volcán social: el pueblo el ejército y el rey', *Solidaridad Obrera,* 588, 12 June 1917.

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Paris. During the war, he collaborated with *Kievskaya Misl'*, until early 1918 when he was driven out of France and moved to Spain. He was one of the few Russians who chose to settle in Madrid rather than Barcelona.[51]

Tasin was a follower of Karl Kautsky, Otto Bauer and Georgi Plekhanov. He vehemently opposed the October Revolution from an orthodox Marxist perspective. The first Comintern agents in Spain defined Tasin as 'a Russian counterrevolutionary who says he is a Menshevik and probably tells the truth'.[52] Tasin denied any possibility for 'uncultivated and backward' Russia to advance toward socialism. It first had to consolidate the 'bourgeois-democratic' revolution. He opined Lenin was closer to Bakunin than to Marx.[53] Despite his hostility towards the Bolsheviks, Tasin was a well-informed commentator on the revolution and the civil war. 'He seems to know a good deal about the Russian movement', bitterly admitted the Comintern agents.[54] Renowned liberal newspaper *El Sol* presented the exile as 'unsurpassed' in his knowledge of Russian affairs.[55] He translated into Spanish important works by the leading lights of the new revolutionary government, and by its detractors.[56] His writings were studied by Spanish socialists and anarchists longing for news on Russia.[57] Tasin established close connections with the more moderate Spanish socialists who were sceptical about Bolshevism.[58] In 1921, he went on a short trip abroad and was subsequently not allowed back into Spain.[59] He sought asylum in Weimar Germany and settled there permanently.[60]

Without a doubt, the most remarkable Russian character that travelled to Spain in these years was Leon Trotsky. Expelled from France in March 1916 for his anti-war activities, he was ejected across the Pyrenees to San Sebastián, and from there to Madrid. This was a queer place of exile for Trotsky, who knew little about Spain and ignored its language. 'This is no longer France', he recalled, 'but something more provincial, more primitive, coarser'. He wrote that 'Spain . . . resembles Romania'. Or better said, 'Romania is like Spain but without a past'.[61] Trotsky made little contact with the autochthonous revolutionary movement, but he befriended a French socialist working in Madrid who updated him on Spanish politics.[62] Arrested by the Madrid police, who accused Trotsky of espousing views that were 'too advanced for Spain', he was interned in the city's Model Prison.[63] The socialists and republicans of Madrid organised a campaign for his release and sent a delegation to visit him in jail.[64]

After three days in jail, Trotsky was released and transferred to the southern port of Cádiz.[65] Two Andalusian anarcho-syndicalists visited him, eager to hear about his opinion on the war.[66] The authorities asked Trotsky to board a ship bound for Cuba, but he was dismayed at the prospect of being banished to the tropical island. After vociferous protests, they allowed him to wait for another ship, a New York bound liner, and to travel to Barcelona first to meet his family.[67] All in all, Trotsky's visit was of little consequence for the relationship between Spanish radicals and the Russian

[51] León Trotsky, *El triunfo del bolchevismo: con una semblanza del autor, sus impresiones de España y su actitud respecto a la Internacional* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1918), 9–26.
[52] Ramírez, 'Conference', 16 Mar. 1920, 75, IC, AAVV-CV-16, FPI.
[53] N. Tasin, *La Dictadura del proletariado* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1919), passim.
[54] Ramírez, 'Conference'.
[55] N. Tasin, 'Desaparición de Nicolás II. Reaparición de Kerensky', 208, *El Sol*, 29 June 1918.
[56] See for instance: Nikolái Bujarin, *El programa de los bolcheviques* (Madrid: América, 1920).
A. Kerenski, *El bolchevismo y su obra* (Madrid: no date, no publisher).
[57] See the comments by Juan Gallego Crespo, 'Por los caminos trillados', *La Revista Blanca*, 15 June 1925.
[58] Juan Andrade, *Recuerdos personales* (Barcelona: Serbal, 1983), 154.
[59] Chief of Police to Interior Minister, 20 Aug. 1921, Ex. 6, L. 34, Gobernación A, AHN.
[60] 'Nicolás Gógol.' *La Época*, 26987, 20 Mar. 1926.
[61] León Trotsky, *Mis peripecias en España* (Salamanca: no publisher, 1997), 32.
[62] Ibid., 32.
[63] Trotsky, *El triunfo*, 30–31.
[64] Borodin, 'First Conversation'.
[65] Trotsky, *El triunfo*, 28–37.
[66] Trotsky, *Mis peripecias*, 110.
[67] Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*, 241.

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Revolution, since his political encounters in Spain were anecdotal. However, Trotsky became sensitive to the revolutionary potential of Spain, and over the years would follow its politics closely. As he sailed to the United States, he is credited with commenting that after Russia, Spain was the European country that was most hospitable to communism.[68] He also became a role model for other Russian émigrés in Spain. 'Privations and imprisonment in Spain will not mollify [the exiles'] violent passions, and the example of Trotsky, who has attained absolute power after having passed through these very same prisons, is a source of encouragement', noted Markoff.[69]

Other, less prominent Russian exiles established more organic and lasting connections with the local labour movement.[70] George Portnoff was a Russian engineer who was in Paris when the war broke out. He attempted to make his way to Odessa via Barcelona but was detained by the Turkish navy and returned to Spain. He remained in the country throughout the war, first in Barcelona and then in Madrid, where he taught Russian and wrote for the left-liberal newspaper *El Sol*. He remained in Spain until 1924. His politics are not entirely clear, but he was in contact with radical left socialists, visited Trotsky in jail in 1916, and collaborated with the Spanish Communist Party after its creation in 1920, providing valuable assistance as a translator.[71]

The Russian consulate in Barcelona accused radical exiles in the city connected to local anarchist and socialist groups of establishing the vociferously pro-Bolshevik anti-war weekly *El Maximalista* in November 1918. Only a couple of issues of the journal appeared, but they made quite a ripple. The consul provided the names of eleven Russian subjects (some of Polish, Jewish, and German ethnicity) who were allegedly involved in the project. Most of them had settled in Barcelona after being expelled from France and Italy in mid-1918. According to the consul, they received funding from the Soviet-aligned naval attaché Kedroff. This accusation was corroborated by Spanish police sources, which also linked the publication to German agents seeking to debilitate the Allied war effort. Police added the names of about a dozen Spanish leftists who purportedly assisted in the elaboration of the newspaper. Police singled out 'Miguel Weissbein, alias Vladimiro Tinikoff [sic]' as the mastermind of *El Maximalista*. He was 'a Russian journalist' and a 'supporter of Kerensky' who had arrived in Barcelona after being expelled from France in July 1918. He had contacts with anarchists and socialists in Barcelona and Madrid and had penned articles for proto-communist newspaper *Nuestra Palabra*.[72]

Reports on the exiles' involvement in *El Maximalista* by Spanish police and Russian consular services are probably inaccurate and distorted by their xenophobic anti-communism. To begin with, it is unlikely that a supporter of Kerensky should edit a rabidly Leninist newspaper. However, the contents and format of *El Maximalista* suggest Russian exiles were involved in its production and that it was propped up by foreign funds (either Soviet or German). The layout of the journal was of first-rate quality. A delegation of local anarchists who visited their offices in Barcelona were impressed at their facilities, which made them suspect they received financial assistance from a foreign source.[73] Most of *El Maximalista*'s articles were devoted to praising the Soviet regime and encouraging Spanish workers to imitate the Bolsheviks, commonly known at the time as maximalists. 'In Spain we must do whatever it takes to implement maximalism', thundered the paper.[74] Its avowed objectives were 'first of all, to defend the Russian Revolution and its leaders . . . . Secondly, to press for an immediate end to the war and for a fair and democratic peace'. It threw darts against the Entente, the Central Powers, and against neutral Bourbon Spain. Despite its stridency, the paper revealed a measure of

[68] Tomás Elorrieta y Artaza, *El movimiento bolchevista* (Madrid: Jaime Ratés, 1919), 33.
[69] 'A. Markoff – Confidentiel'.
[70] Belarussian Jew Mikhail Borodin was key to the creation of the Spanish Communist Party in April 1920, yet he was not an exile, but a Bolshevik agent sent to Spain for that purpose. He only spent a few weeks in Madrid. See: Romero Salvado, 'The Comintern Fiasco'.
[71] Juan Andrade to Luis Portela, 15 July 1965, Pelai Pagès i Blanch Personal Archive.
[72] Chief of Spanish Police to Interior Minister, 24 Nov. 1918, Ex. 12, L. 34, Gobernación A, AHN.
[73] 'A la opinión en general y en particular a los anarquistas y sindicalistas', *Solidaridad Obrera*, 937, 7 Nov. 1918.
[74] 'A nuestros lectores', *El Maximalista*, 1, 2 Nov. 1918.

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ideological sophistication, which suggests its editors were versed in far-left politics. It openly attacked the moderate socialists and sided with the anarchists of the CNT as the true representatives of Bolshevism in Spain.

The appearance of *El Maximalista* generated controversy in Barcelona. It awakened the interest of anarchists and the concern of the police and of conservative public opinion. Anti-Bolshevik Russian residents in Barcelona, perhaps on the initiative of their most vocal representative, Markoff, issued a statement denouncing the publication.[75] The editors mocked accusations that the publication was funded by Germany or Soviet Russia, but at the same time expressed their wish to remain 'anonymous'. Most of its articles were unsigned.[76] All things considered, the police and the consulate were probably right in connecting *El Maximalista* to Barcelona's exiled Russians. Although the project was short-lived, the passions awakened by *El Maximalista* revealed the political significance of the Russian exiles, both for left-wing and right-wing public opinion (although in opposing ways), by dint of their political capital and their knowledge of Russian revolutionary politics.

Severing the Link

By the autumn of 1918, the Russian exiles had become a major source of concern for Spanish authorities. The size of this community had expanded over the summer. In the heat of events in Russia it became more assertive and politicised, and made efforts to link up with local radicals. At the same time, Spain underwent an upswing in industrial conflict that mirrored events in the rest of Europe, where the end of the war brought about social upheaval. The xenophobic sentiments of the Spanish authorities were fanned by the French government. In late November 1918, the French ambassador in Madrid exhorted the Spanish authorities 'not to tolerate the presence of any agent, official or unofficial, of the Russian Soviet government on Spanish soil'.[77] The British and Italian governments also voiced their concern about the Russian colony in Spain. The Spanish authorities responded to these entreaties that Spain 'wishes to expel' the 'numerous Russian indigents who reside here' but complained that for all its clarion calls, France refused to accept deportees from Spain, which made it hard to banish the refugees.[78]

The project of expelling the Russian exiles began to gain traction in the winter of 1918–19. There were sporadic arrests and deportations of Russian leftists in these months. For instance, carpenter and CNT member Masianoff, who had arrived in Barcelona from France during the war, was jailed in November 1918 under the accusation of theft, which the CNT dismissed as 'a lie' to justify political persecution.[79] That same month, the aforementioned 'Miguel Waistein Halperin' (also referred to as Weinstein and Weisbein), alias Vladimir Tinikoff, was detained in Madrid. According to the Spanish police, he had travelled there from Barcelona to 'gather funds for the maximalist campaign he had launched in Barcelona in cahoots with other foreigners and Spaniards'. He was accused of being one of the editors of *El Maximalista* and 'the secretary of Bolshevikism [sic]' in Spain.[80] Police claimed he refused to depart for France or Portugal, and that he did not want to sign the official statement produced after his interrogation. It is likely he was tortured. In December, the authorities decided to transfer him to Barcelona, with a view to deporting him. On his way there under police custody, he purportedly committed suicide by jumping out of the train.[81] The Spanish left-wing press speculated he was the victim of an extrajudicial execution, which would become sadly commonplace in later years.[82] The socialists and anarchists campaigned vigorously against the state's crackdown on the exiles.[83]

[75] 'Contra "El Maximalista"', *El Sol*, 342, 9 Nov. 1918.
[76] 'Una visita - ¿quiénes somos?', *El Maximalista*, 2, 9 Nov. 1918.
[77] French Ambassador to Prime Minister and Interior Minister, 26 Nov. 1918, Ex. 16, L. 3024, Exteriores (Histórico), AHN.
[78] Ibid.
[79] 'La detención del compañero'.
[80] Chief of Spanish Police to Interior Minister, 25 Nov. 1918, Ex. 1, L. 34, Gobernación A, AHN.
[81] Chief of Spanish Police to Interior Minister, 8 Jan. 1919, Ex. 1, L. 34, Gobernación A, AHN.
[82] Ángel Samblancat, 'El bolcheviki errante,' 991, *Solidaridad Obrera*, 31 Dec. 1918.
[83] Aizpuru, 'La expulsión', 117–18.

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The intensification of social conflict in Spain and the growing popularity of the Russian Revolution among radicalised labour organisations, coupled with evidence of connections between Russian exiles and local activists, convinced the government that Russian citizens had to be expelled en masse in order to extricate Bolshevism from the country. The outbreak of the *La Canadenca* strike in January 1919, which started off as a minor conflict at a hydro-electricity company in Barcelona but spiralled into a citywide general strike, stoked the anxieties of conservative and liberal public opinion. It feared the strike was acquiring a revolutionary pitch under the influence of Bolshevism and of the Russian exiles.[84] The government decided to forcefully embark all Russian and suspicious Eastern Europeans in Barcelona on a ship to Odessa, which was under French occupation at the time. Although there were concerns about the plight of 'indigent' foreigners, the motivation for the deportation was essentially political. 'We must attend to the quality rather than the quantity of the detainees, bearing in mind at all times the need to rid Barcelona of the most dangerous [foreigners] regardless of their social condition', noted the interior minister.[85] The departure of the *Manuel Calvo*, the ship that was to take the aliens to Ukraine, was repeatedly postponed due to the logistical complications brought about by the strike.[86] This allowed many of the blacklisted foreigners to steal away. In the end, only 202 refugees boarded the *Manuel Calvo* when it finally departed at the end of March 1919. Only fifty-six of them actually hailed from the Tsarist Empire. The rest of the deportees came from Bulgaria, Bosnia and Turkey (most of them of Armenian and Sephardic ethnicity). The endeavour ended badly, as the ship hit a mine in the Aegean Sea and sank. Over one hundred passengers and crew died. The survivors were abandoned to their fate near Istanbul.[87]

The policy of deportations targeting suspicious Eastern Europeans continued throughout 1919–21. For instance, in August 1920, two Russians, a Pole and a Czechoslovak who were politically suspect were deported from Barcelona to Istanbul.[88] In October that year, another seven Russians were expelled from Barcelona to Romania, although two of them managed to escape during a stopover in Marseille.[89] Residency regulations were hardened and controls, heretofore very loose, became more thorough. The interior minister instructed provincial authorities to monitor and register 'foreign subjects and especially Russians', noting that 'investigations must not be confined to indigents but also to those with known professions or a certain social status'.[90] Incredibly, however, the Spanish authorities failed to lay their hands on Mikhail Borodin, a real Soviet agent who spent almost two months in Spain in early 1920 and was instrumental in setting up the Spanish Communist Party. His Mexican diplomatic passport duped the police.[91]

Rumours and xenophobia shaped this policy of surveillance and deportations. This 'Red Scare' displayed features of previous bourgeois 'moral panics' about anarchist and socialist violence, although in this case it responded to a much more tangible threat.[92] As a liberal commentator noted, after 1917 communism had 'ceased to be a book' and had become 'a nation'.[93] Newspaper *El Sol* pointedly exclaimed: 'the word "Russian" has evolved. In the past it denoted a geographic concept. It now refers

[84] Mariano de Cavia, 'El fruto engañoso', *El Sol*, 786, 20 Jan. 1920.

[85] Minutes of Conference between Interior Minister and Prime Minister and Barcelona Civil Governor, 6 Mar. 1919, Ex.1, L.57, Gobernación A, AHN.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Aizpuru, 'La expulsión', 120–21.

[88] Barcelona Civil Governor to Interior Minister, 14 Aug. 1920, Ex. 2, L. 34, Gobernación A, AHN.

[89] Barcelona Civil Governor to Interior Minister, 4 Oct. 1920, Ex. 2, L. 34, Gobernación A, AHN.

[90] This telegram was sent to the governor in Seville, but similar instructions were sent across Spain: Interior Minister to Seville Governor, 15 Aug. 1919, Ex.2, L.57, Gobernación A, AHN

[91] I refrain from covering the Borodin mission in this article as it was unconnected to the wartime Russian exile community in Spain. See: Francisco Romero Salvadó, 'The Comintern Fiasco in Spain: The Borodin Mission and the Birth of the Spanish Communist Party', *Revolutionary Russia*, 21, 2, 153–73.

[92] Chris Ealham, *Anarchism and the City: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Barcelona, 1898–1937* (Oakland: AK Press, 2010), 10–15.

[93] Rafael Gasset, *La humanidad insumisa: La revolución rusa. El problema social en España* (Madrid: no publisher, 1920), 124–5.

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to a political concept. . . . Whoever protests against the *caciques* or against the high cost of living becomes a potential Russian'.[94] Indeed, not only were foreigners rounded up, even suspicious-looking Spaniards were liable to be arrested under the accusation of being Soviet agents. A particularly tragi-comic episode took place in the summer of 1919 in Andalusia. Word got to the interior ministry that in Seville:

> A foreign subject is begging around the streets of the city; he has a long beard, a dark jacket and light trousers, and pretends to be blind, but, when he wanders into the slums . . . he leaps on a chair or any similar platform and starts to preach the doctrines of Bolshevism, and the authorities are not doing anything about this.[95]

The governor of Seville rapidly got his hands on the suspect. He was not foreign. 'Juan Manuel Aguirre Bellido, 36 years old, a denizen of Valencia del Ventoso (Badajoz) . . . devoted to the circulation of vegetarian propaganda'. Moreover, he was 'completely blind and absolutely destitute'. The minister in Madrid, somewhat embarrassedly, decided to 'send him to an asylum'.[96]

Applications for residency permits were used to sieve out politically suspect foreigners. For instance, in August 1921 Polish Jew Leo Bronstein turned up at a Madrid police station to apply for refugee status. He had arrived in Spain from France in 1918 and earned a livelihood as a Russian and German translator. Considered a 'Bolshevik agent' and a 'queer' connected with 'subversive elements' in the capital, he was arrested and, presumably, deported.[97] Draft dodgers and political exiles from other nationalities were also expelled. For instance, French deserter Leopoldo Grac was arrested and accused of being a Bolshevik agitator. The Spanish foreign ministry advised deportation to 'any country other than France', as he faced court martial and, potentially, the death penalty. However, police disobeyed the government and handed him over to the French authorities.[98] Alongside deportations, much stricter migration controls were introduced.[99] In 1920 border authorities were instructed to 'stop the entrance into Spain of all Russian or Polish subjects, even if they carry a passport'.[100] By late 1921, this policy of expulsions and closed borders largely eliminated the community of foreign radicals that had crystallised during the war. It left a lasting legacy of greater restrictions and state surveillance over foreign citizens.

Neutrality and Internationalism

A welter of studies has excavated the global radical networks that animated activism, solidarity, and theoretical debate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most of these studies stop at 1914.[101] The start of the First World War is regarded as a dramatic caesura that destroyed this dynamic world of transnational militancy. Connections between countries were severed, travel and correspondence were rived with obstacles and, most ominously, leftists of all ideological shades eschewed their internationalist creed and supported their government's war effort. According to

[94] 'Los rusos que recibía Luis Morote', *El Sol*, 475, 23 Mar., 1919.

[95] Interior Minister to Seville Civil Governor, 13 Aug. 1919, Ex. 1, L. 17, Gobernación A, AHN.

[96] Interior Minister to Seville and Badajoz Civil Governors, Ex. 1, L. 17, Gobernación A, AHN.

[97] Chief of Police to Interior Minister, 14 Jan. 1919 and 20 Aug. 1921, Ex. 6, L. 34, Gobernación A, AHN.

[98] Barcelona Civil Governor to Interior Minister, 14 Dec. 1919, Ex. 2, L. 34, Gobernación A, AHN. Foreign Minister to Interior Minister, 11 Jan. 1920, Ex. 2, L. 34, Gobernación A, AHN.

[99] For a first-hand description of discrimination against politically suspect foreigners, see: Carleton Beals, *Glass Houses: Twenty Years of Free-Lancing* (London: Lippincott Co., 1938), 91–5.

[100] Interior Minister to the Governors of Border Provinces, 27 Feb. 1920, Ex. 1, L. 17, Gobernación (Histórico), AHN.

[101] On anarchism for example, see: Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (London: Verso, 2005), Constance Bantman, *The French Anarchists in London, 1880–1914: Exile and Transnationalism in the First Globalisation* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), Davide Turcato, *Making Sense of Anarchism: Errico Malatesta's Experiments with Revolution, 1889–1900* (Basingstoke: AK Press, 2012). Pietro di Paola, *The Knights Errant of Anarchy: London and the Italian Anarchist Diaspora (1880–1917)* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

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most scholars, activist networks had to be rebuilt virtually from scratch after 1918.[102] New organisations with an ecumenical outreach were created, such as the communist Third International (Comintern) and the libertarian International Workingmen's Association, whereas others, such as the Social Democratic Second International, were reconstructed anew.[103] While this analysis contains an element of truth, these organisations did not emerge out of virgin birth. Pre-1914 networks were overturned but not entirely destroyed. Instead, they tended to reorient to neutral countries. These rudimentary wartime networks nurtured the international leftist movements that emerged after 1918.

The most notable instances of such continuities are the Zimmerwald and Kienthal conferences of 1915 and 1916 which, adumbrating the outlines of the Third International, gathered anti-war social democrats in Switzerland. The latter had traditionally been an important place of exile for rebels from across Europe. The First World War heightened its importance as a place of asylum, as was the case with the Netherlands and Scandinavia.[104] Yet the war also made safe havens out of countries that had seldom been regarded as such. Such was the case of Spain, but also of neutral Mexico. Here, contact with foreign radicals provided new ideas and models for labour movements that had previously had a relatively insular character. These contacts infused them with stimulus and inspiration for the upheavals that rocked both countries in 1917–21.

The Mexican labour movement evolved gropingly in the late nineteenth century. It was comparatively removed from global ideological trends. As a Mexican socialist rued in 1919, 'the books that come from Spain are translations of works published more than a century ago in France, Germany, and Russia'.[105] This isolation was punctuated by the important, although sporadic, input of radicalised South American and European migrants (namely Spanish anarchists) and by travellers who had been in contact with workers' organisations in the United States. The latter was especially true of the Magonista anarchists who operated along the northern border, although by 1911 they had been severely weakened by repression and largely cut off from the rest of the country.[106] The relative inexperience and ideological rawness of Mexican trade unions made them vulnerable to being manipulated by demagogic caudillos during the Mexican Revolution.[107]

The international isolation of Mexican workers suddenly came to an end in April 1917. The intervention of the United States in the war drove hundreds, or, according to some authors, thousands of American rebels and nonconformists south of the Rio Grande. Most were draft dodgers representing a broad ideological spectrum; some were apolitical, but many were committed socialists. Some of these 'slackers', as they came to be known in the United States, were first generation migrants from Southern Europe and the Tsarist Empire, with knowledge of the political situation in their home countries. Other escapees were exiles living in the United States, targeted by Wilson's wartime repressive measures. Such was the case, for instance, of Indian anti-colonialist Manabendra Nath Roy.Venustiano Carranza's government tolerated the presence of these radicals. He was pitted against Washington, had established connections with Germany in 1916–18 and also sought to enhance his progressive credentials in the eyes of the left wing of the Mexican Revolution.[108]

[102] Wayne Thorpe, *The Workers Themselves*: *Revolutionary Syndicalism and International Labour, 1913–1923* (Boston: Kluwer, 1989), 87–90.

[103] Brigitte Struder, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), 1–21.

[104] Stefan Zweig left a vivid impression of life as an exile in Switzerland: *The World of Yesterday: Memoirs of a European* (London: Pushkin Press, 2011), 296–8.

[105] Francisco Cervantes López, 'Socialismo', *Gale's Magazine*, 19 Apr. 1919.

[106] Claudio Lomnitz, *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magon* (New York: Zone Books, 2014); Kevan Antonio Aguilar, 'The IWW in Tampico', in Peter Cole, David Struthers and Kenyon Zimmer, eds., *Wobblies of the World: A Global History of the IWW* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 124–39.

[107] Barry Carr, *El movimiento obrero y la política en México* (Mexico City: Era, 1987), 41–3.

[108] Paco Ignacio Taibo II, *Bolchevikis: Historia narrativa de los orígenes del comunismo en México (1919–1925)* (Tabasco: Planeta, 1986), 29–35; Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984).

In Mexico City, a vibrant community of foreign rebels crystallised. It established connections with the local labour movement. Many organised workers in Mexico were dissatisfied with the outcome of the Mexican Revolution and were seeking new, more combative ideas that would unbind them from the populist strongmen that now led the country. By dint of their international connections and diverse ideological background, foreign radicals enriched the politics of the Mexican labour movement and helped it keep abreast of international developments, especially of the Russian Revolution. The 'slackers' played an active part in major initiatives by the radical left in Mexico. In September 1919, they helped organise a national socialist congress. It was an important steppingstone in efforts to establish an all-Mexican socialist party independent of the nationalist regime. In November 1919, M.N. Roy and US slacker Charles Phillips spearheaded the creation of the Mexican Communist Party under the influence of Soviet agent Mikhail Borodin. A smaller communist organisation had been created a few weeks earlier by another adventurer from the United States, Linn Gale. Roy and Phillips became the Mexican delegates at the second congress of the Communist International in Moscow in July 1920.[109] As late as 1921, Phillips and other slackers participated in the formation of the Mexican CGT (General Confederation of Labour), which challenged pro-government labour unions. Indeed, in the 'Red years' of 1918–21 many trade unions and peasant organisations veered leftwards, reaffirming their class independence against the Mexican government in a context of social effervescence. The example of the Russian Revolution influenced this leftward shift.

By June 1921, Mexican authorities had grown impatient with their dubious guests and carried out a wave of deportations. State repression and the end of the war led to the gradual dissolution of this cosmopolitan community, although by then the Mexican labour movement had been lastingly reshaped. Although the slackers were unable to challenge the new nationalist regime, they influenced the emergence of a small but vocal dissident left.[110]

Conclusion

The First World War reshaped the global geography of radical left-wing politics. Spain, as was the case with other neutral countries such as Mexico, became an important hub for exiles and outcasts. Neutral countries became important poles of attraction for foreign rebels. These safe havens cocooned the networks of radicals that would be able to blossom after 1918 with the emergence of powerful international left-wing organisations, most notably the Comintern.

At the same time, the local labour movement in Spain was reinvigorated by the presence of these radicals. Spain had had a rather peripheral position in international left-wing politics prior to 1914. Wartime neutrality gave it unprecedented visibility and rendered its labour movement more cosmopolitan and more sensitive to global trends and events. This was especially important in transmitting the ideas of the Russian Revolution, which would profoundly influence social agitation in 1917–20. Spanish workers were not as ignorant of Russian affairs as historians have often claimed. Contact with Russian exiles provided an important source of first-hand information on revolutionary events in Eastern Europe. The refugees were more vocal and pro-active in their politics than has usually been assumed, as the project of *El Maximalista* reveals. Such was the case with neutral Mexico too, where a vibrant community of foreign radicals gathered that would shape the evolution of communism in the Americas.

The Spanish government was at first relatively unconcerned at the arrival of exiles and draft dodgers. However, the upturn in working-class mobilisation in 1918, the growing popularity of Bolshevism among sectors of the Spanish working class and, most worryingly, the interaction between radicalised foreigners and local revolutionaries turned the Russian colony into a major source of

[109] Borodin, Roy and, above all, Phillips, played an important role in the establishment of the Spanish Communist Party during their stopover in Spain in early 1920.

[110] Daniel Kent Carrasco, 'M.N. Roy en México: cosmopolitismo intelectual y contingencia política en la creación del PCM', in Carlos Illades, ed., *Camaradas. Una nueva historia del comunismo en México* (Mexico City: FCE, 2017); Dan La Botz, 'American "Slackers" in the Mexican Revolution: International Proletarian Politics in the Midst of a National Revolution', *The Americas*, 62, 4 (2006), 563–90.

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anxiety. Concerns about foreign-sponsored subversion were inflected by xenophobic prejudice but also had a certain basis in the instances of collaboration between exiles and local radicals. Authorities tried to sever the connections of the exiles with the local labour movement through repression, deportations and stricter border controls and residency regulations. A similar thing occurred in Mexico in 1921. Indeed, fear of Bolshevik contagion through exiled foreigners, especially Russians, elicited the introduction of harsher migration laws and controls internationally.

However, the cosmopolitan entanglements brought about by the war left lasting legacies in Spanish and Mexican labour, which henceforth would be better attuned to international tendencies and debates. Most importantly, neutral countries partially sheltered the internationalist networks that would experience such a powerful revival after 1918.

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