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# **Transnational District**

European political Exile in Mexico City

1939-1959

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*Und wenn mein Leben vorerst nichts sein sollte  
als ein Herumgeschleudertwerden,  
so wollte ich wenigstens in die schönsten Städte  
geschleudert werden,  
in unbekannte Gegenden.\**

\* Anna Seghers: *Transit* (3<sup>rd</sup> pb impr. Berlin, 1997), p. 33: „And if my life, so far, should consist of nothing but being hurled around, then at least I wanted to be hurled into the most beautiful cities, into unknown parts of the world.“



# Introduction

## The urban topography and political practice of exile

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 1942, members of the German-speaking community of exile in Mexico gathered in a small theatre, the *Sala Mendelssohn*, in a building at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21 in the south of the historical city centre of Mexico City. The building was commonly known as the *Casa Schiefer*, named after a shop for musical instruments owned by the Schiefer brothers which used the small theatre, named after the German-Jewish 19<sup>th</sup>-century composer Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, for instrumental demonstrations and recitals. The meeting of the 16<sup>th</sup> of April had been organised by the *Heinrich-Heine-Club*, the cultural association of the German-speaking political emigration during the 1940s, dominated by the movement *Alemania Libre*, founded the previous year under the guidance of the German communists in exile in Mexico. It was the first time that the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* met at this address.<sup>1</sup> The president of *Alemania Libre*, the writer Ludwig Renn, introduced the speaker of the evening, the Swiss architect Hannes Meyer, former director of the prestigious Bauhaus design school in Dessau, who had settled in Mexico permanently in 1939. The topic of his lecture, accompanied by a slide show, was “Mexico City – from the point of view of urbanism”. It is likely that his lecture covered much of the same ground as an article he published the following year as “fragments of an urbanistic study” about Mexico City.<sup>2</sup> Meyer had directed the Mexican *Instituto de Planeación e Urbanismo* in 1940/41 before moving on to the ministry of labour as a project leader for the planning of working-class homes.<sup>3</sup> As a left-wing socialist, Meyer approached the Mexican capital city from a strictly Marxist point of view as he had laid it out four years earlier: “All landscape organised by man is the result of the socio-economic structure. [...] The real power relations in any given society find their architectonic expression in the organically developed urbanism.”<sup>4</sup> His perspective thus encompassed the colonial and post-colonial development of the city, the topographic manifestation of social class differences, and the resulting inequality and deprivation across the rapidly growing Mexican capital. Population density, the mismanagement of the transport infrastructure in a city of vast geographical proportions, and the long distances travelled by working class family

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1 *Heines Geist in Mexiko*, ed. by Heinrich-Heine-Klub (México D.F., 1946), p. 25.

2 Hannes Meyer: „La Ciudad de México. Fragmentos de un estudio urbanístico“, *Arquitectura* 12 (Apr 1943), pp. 96-109.

3 See: Georg Leidenberger: „»Todo aquí es *vulkanisch*«. El arquitecto Hannes Meyer en México, 1938 a 1949“, in: Laura Rojas and Susan Deeds (eds): *México a la Luz de sus Revoluciones*, vol. 2 (México D.F., 2014), pp. 499-539.

4 Hannes Meyer: „Experiencias de Urbanismo. Conferencia dada en la Academia de Bellas Artes de San Carlos (México, 4 Oct 1938)“, in: *Arquitectura y Decoración* 12 (1938), pp. 251-7.

members each day were aspects of his research as a city planning expert.<sup>5</sup> Meyer also observed the geographical shift of the business district from the historical centre towards the west, where – centred on the intersection of Avenida Juárez and the long south-west Avenue of Paseo de la Reforma marked by the equestrian statue of the Spanish king Charles IV, commonly known as the *Caballito* – a financial and trade district had developed including a press district for the thriving newspaper market.<sup>6</sup> He paid particular attention to the effects of the speculative housing market on the structure and size of working-class residences, and took inspiration from the communal arrangement of daily life in the *vecindades* for his own project of modern working-class housing which culminated in his outline for a new housing development in *Lomas de Becerra* on the south-western outskirts of the city: “Karl Marx says that inside a doomed society there arises a nucleus of a new society which will one day replace it. This statement can also be applied to the forms of housing within a city.”<sup>7</sup> As a government employee, Meyer thus attempted to engage actively with the urban environment of the Mexican capital.<sup>8</sup>

Hannes Meyer was by no means the only European observer of the urban topography which formed the background for the experience of political exile in Mexico City. Already in 1940, José Moreno Villa had published his appreciation of the “Cornucopia de México”, or the “Mexican horn of plenty”. In this metaphor, Moreno Villa celebrated the natural, historical, and cultural richness of his host country, and in particular of its capital city. The starting point of his contemplation was the encounter between the indigenous societies and the Spanish culture of colonial rule which was evident in vocabulary, place names, and the urban structure which Moreno Villa presented as a dichotomy between wide, open, and bright colonial avenues and narrow, dark, and dirty parts of the city.<sup>9</sup> The rapid growth of the city led him to suspect that, “if this continues, Mexico will be a single city in a vast desolate country.” Beside the historical city centre, Moreno Villa concentrated his geographical attention on the affluent middle- and upper-class districts of the west and south-west, but he also paid tribute to the central role of the large markets, the aromas and flavours of their exotic pallet of fruits and spices, the variety of sweets, and the abundance of popular artisan craftsmanship.<sup>10</sup> More than anything, Moreno Villa’s interest was directed at the language, the gestures, and the social practices and customs of the

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5 Hannes Meyer: „La Ciudad de México. Fragmentos de un estudio urbanístico“, *Arquitectura* 12 (Apr 1943), p. 96.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 98

7 *Ibid.*, p. 103.

8 See: Georg Leidenberger: „La colonia obrera Lomas de Becerra (1942-43) del arquitecto Hannes Meyer. Proyecto pionero de la vivienda social en México“, in: Hector Quiroz Rothe (ed.): *Aproximaciones a la Historia del Urbanismo Popular* (México D.F., 2014), pp. 171-87.

9 José Moreno Villa: *La Cornucopia de México* (México D.F., 1940), p. 8.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 10-5.



population, even including a “comparative alcoholology” for his readers.<sup>11</sup> For many Spaniards, a false sense of familiarity with a Hispano-American metropolis led, on occasion, to misunderstandings of the social and cultural reality of a post-colonial society, but it also resulted in a heightened awareness and interest in the lived social practices of its inhabitants. Unlike Meyer, Moreno Villa did not see the city as a vast socio-economic machine waiting to be upgraded to the next world-historical era by means of urban planning and social engineering, but instead he presented a cultural anthropology of Mexico as a complex social matrix of everyday practices which, day after day, betrayed the traces of their colonial and post-colonial historical genesis.<sup>12</sup>

The task of this study will be to join both perspectives into an integrated approach to urban topography as well as social and political practice across the cityscape among the European communities of exile. On the one hand, the social topography of the city must play an important part in reconstructing patterns of residence, sociability, and political association. On the other, the subjective experiences of European political refugees arriving in the Mexican capital, their encounter with the New World, and the lived reality of their social and political practice equally deserves full analytical attention in order to establish the processes of gradual appropriation of the urban environment by the European communities of exile. Such dual attention to urban topography and socio-political practice already appeared in the earliest attempts of presenting a historical review of the political emigration in Mexico.<sup>13</sup> And the awareness for the topographical context of social and political practices has, time and again, played a part in historical studies of exile, mainly concerning the Spanish republican community in the city.<sup>14</sup> But instead of treating the topographical characteristics of social and political practice in exile as an aside to the main historical narrative or reducing it to apolitical, purely subjective memories that pervade much of the oral history of exile, this study aims at presenting a coherent analysis of social and political practice in exile embedded in its urban topography, relating praxeological aspects of political ideology and nationality to their topographical manifestation, and

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11 Ibid., pp. 15-31.

12 Cf. Alessia Cassani: „Las Geografías de José Moreno Villa: México“, *Boletín de la Real Academia de Extremadura de las Letras y las Artes*, t. 20 (2012), pp. 473-88; Ana María González Luna: „Retrato de México en »Cornucopia de México« de José Moreno Villa“, *Atti del XIX Convegno Associazione Ispanisti Italiani, Roma, 16-18 settembre 1999*, ed. by Antonella Cancellier, Renata Londero, vol. 1 (2001), pp. 189-98.

13 Carlos Martínez: *Crónica de una Emigración (la de los republicanos españoles en 1939)*, (México D.F., 1959), pp. 15-102.

14 See e.g.: Patricia W. Fagen: *Transterrados y Ciudadanos. Los republicanos españoles en México* (México D.F., 1975), pp. 78-84; Juan Carlos Pérez Guerrero: *La Identidad del Exilio republicano en México* (Madrid, 2008), pp. 174-81; *El Exilio Español en la Ciudad de México. Legado Cultural*, de. by Rafael Tovar y de Teresa (México D.F., 2010), pp. 114-35; Jorge de Hoyos Puente: *La Utopía del Regreso. Proyectos de Estado y sueños de nación en el exilio republicano en México* (México, D.F., 2012), pp. 156-69.

establishing their historical meaning and significance out of the interplay of spaces and practices.

The historiography of European political exile in Mexico emerged during the post-war era with a delay of some decades. The reasons for this delay are manifold, but had similar effects across the national historiographies in Europe. Most obviously, the Franco dictatorship in Spain made any unprejudiced acquaintance with the experience and legacy of the republican emigration impossible inside the country until the democratic “transition” during the late 1970s. In the Soviet-dominated east of Europe, the existence of an anti-fascist political emigration in the Western hemisphere during the Second World War presented a challenge to the ideologically motivated hegemony of the communist emigration to the Soviet Union which not only dominated the politics of history but was also cemented (at times violently) in post-war Eastern European societies by the marginalisation and political persecution of those emigrants who had returned from Mexico during the second half of the 1940s. In Western Europe, above all in West-Germany and Austria, the anti-fascist exile during the years of fascist dictatorships, for years, presented something of an embarrassment for the social and cultural elites which, in many cases, still displayed strong continuities of personnel with the administrative and intellectual elites of the preceding years of dictatorship. Few political exiles were welcomed back into their former positions. There existed thus a reluctance to accept the public commemoration, discussion, or even a celebration of the anti-fascist tradition which might have encouraged unwelcome questions about the years prior to 1945. This situation began to change since the 1960s when a turn of ideological tides (accompanied by the arrival of a new generation) reached the intellectual and academic elites in Western Europe, and the field of “exile studies” slowly began to emerge as a sub-discipline of history and literary studies. In the Spanish case, a few pioneering studies conducted outside Spain began to explore the social history of republican exile in Mexico even before the end of the Franco regime in 1975.<sup>15</sup> The most important early achievement of the post-Franco Spanish historiography was a monumental collective effort to document and appreciate the republican emigration, above all its intellectual production and contribution in Mexico, as it contained important parts of the educated elite of the Second Republic.<sup>16</sup> The exploration of the Mexican politics of immigration and political asylum as well as

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15 See: Michael Kenny: „Twentieth-century Spanish Expatriates in Mexico: an urban sub-culture“, *Anthropological Quarterly* 35/4 (1962), pp. 169-80; Id.: *The Integration of Spanish expatriates in Ibero-America and their influence on their communities of origin* (unpubl. DPhil thesis: Oxford, 1967); see also some years later Id.: „Observations on contemporary Spanish families in Mexico: immigrants and refugees“, in: John George Peristiany (ed.): *Mediterranean Family Structures* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 335-46; of the greatest importance, however, was the pioneering study by Patricia W. Fagen: *Exiles and Citizens. Spanish Republicans in Mexico* (Austin, 1973); soon translated into Spanish as: *Transterrados y Ciudadanos. Los republicanos españoles en México* (México D.F., 1975).

16 José Luis Abellán (ed.): *El Exilio Español de 1939*, 6 vols. (Madrid, 1976-78); see also: Id.: *De la Guerra Civil al exilio republicano* (Madrid, 1983).

questions of the experience of exile and integration into the Mexican host society soon followed.<sup>17</sup> In East Germany, the re-discovery of the anti-fascist exile in the Western hemisphere went hand-in-hand with political expediency during the late 1960s. The communist regime's efforts to achieve international recognition utilised the politics of sport, and the Olympic Games in Mexico City in 1968 saw a GDR team compete, for the first time, among the nations of the world under its own flag. Relations with Mexico took on renewed importance for the regime, and the history of political exile in Mexico experienced a rehabilitation and public recognition according to a strictly communist interpretation.<sup>18</sup> In West-Germany, the discipline of literary studies was an important inspiration of exile studies which began to explore the literary production of exiled authors since the 1970s.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the political confrontation with the East-German historiography led to competing interpretations that presented the role of communism in exile in a much more critical light.<sup>20</sup> With some delay, the Austrian historiography of exile followed suit.<sup>21</sup> In all cases, the initial phase of European historical exile studies had a twofold purpose: to document and preserve the history and legacy of political exile and to re-integrate its traditions into the existing national and ideological narrative. The result was a profound nationalisation of exile studies which hardly ever contemplated perspectives beyond their respective national horizons of investigation.<sup>22</sup>

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17 Fernando Serrano Migallón: *El Asilo Político en México* (México, D.F., 1998); José Antonio Matesanz: *Las Raíces del Exilio. México ante la guerra civil española* (México D.F., 1999); Pablo Yankelevich (ed.): *México, país refugio. La experiencia des los exilios en el siglo XX* (México, D.F., 2002); Abdón Mateos López: *¡Ay de los vencidos! El exilio y los países de acogida* (Madrid, 2009); Id.: *La Batalla de México: final de la Guerra Civil y ayuda a los refugiados, 1939-1945* (Madrid, 2009); Daniela Gleizer Salzman: *El Exilio Incómodo: México y los refugiados judíos, 1933-1945* (México D.F., 2011); cf. also Mario Sznajder and Luis Roniger: *The Politics of Exile in Latin America* (Cambridge, 2009).

18 See: Wolfgang Kießling: „Zur Tätigkeit der von der KPD geführten Bewegung »Freies Deutschland« in Mexiko in der Anfangsperiode ihres Wirkens“, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 10 (1968), pp. 1008-32; Id.: *Alemania Libre in Mexiko. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des antifaschistischen Exils (1941-1946)*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1974); Id.: „Vicente Lombardo Toledano an der Seite der deutschen Antifaschisten“, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 27/5 (1985), S. 644-53.

19 See: Hans-Bernhard Moeller: *Latin America and the Literature of Exile. A comparative view of the 20th-century European refugee writers in the New World* (Heidelberg, 1973); Heinz-Ludwig Arnold (ed.): *Deutsche Literatur im Exil 1933-1945* (Frankfurt a.M., 1974); *Kunst und Literatur im antifaschistischen Exil 1933-1945*, vol. 4: *Exil in Lateinamerika*, (Frankfurt a.M., 1980).

20 Fritz Pohle: *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986).

21 *Österreicher im Exil, Mexiko 1938-1947. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Christian Kloyber and Marcus G. Patka (Wien, 2002); Christian Kloyber: *Exilio y Cultura. El exilio cultural austriaco en México* (México D.F., 2002).

22 Cf. Dörte Bischoff and Susanne Komfort-Hein: „Vom »anderen Deutschland« zur Transnationalität: Diskurse des Nationalen in Exilliteratur und Exilforschung“, in: *Exilforschung im historischen Prozess = Exilforschung* 30 (2012), pp. 242-73.

The most recent trend in the historiography of exile is to be found in the area of transnational approaches that explore not only the encounter of exiles and their host society but also begin to look at transnational interactions between the different national sub-communities of exile.<sup>23</sup> In this context, the socio-geographic matrix of the city can be regarded as a key element in the transnational experience of exile.<sup>24</sup> In 1939, when European political refugees began to arrive in greater numbers, Mexico City was a metropolis in rapid transition. Until the days of national independence in 1810/21, the Mexican capital had hardly outgrown its pre-cortesian confines, marked by the limits of the historical city centre, or the *Centro Histórico*. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the city began to expand to the west and south-west into what were to become the districts of *Centro* and *Roma*, followed by a more rapid expansion during the authoritarian rule of Porfirio Díaz (1877-1911) when the Paseo de la Reforma between the city centre and the park of *Chapultépec* in the south-west attracted the growing upper echelons of post-colonial society, while the lower strata of society settled in modest housing to the more industrial north and north-west. Sub-proletarian slums emerged along the outer perimeter, accelerated by the growing migration into the city from the countryside during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917). Post-revolutionary Mexico City saw the expansion of middle-class developments into the districts of *Hipódromo* and *Condesa* which showcased some fine examples of *Art-Déco* architecture, and the main thrust of expansion was directed south into the district of *Del Valle* and along the Calzada de Tlalpan, while the upper social classes began to abandon the city centre for the more exclusive districts of *Lomas de Chapultépec* and later *Polanco* further west.<sup>25</sup> By the time the European political

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23 See e.g.: Arno Gimber: „Spanisch-deutsche Begegnungen im mexikanischen Exil. Ein Vorschlag zur Transferforschung“, in: Werner Altmann and Ursula Vences (eds): *Por España y el mundo hispánico* (Festschrift für Walther L. Bernecker) (Berlin, 2007), pp. 448-64; Andrea Acle-Kresing: „El exilio antifascista de habla alemana en México durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial: una peculiar adopción del mito de la Revolución Mexicana“, in: Elena Díaz Silva, Aribert Reimann, and Randal Sheppard (eds): *Horizontes del Exilio. Nuevas aproximaciones a la experiencia de Iso exilios entre Europa y América Latina durante el siglo xx* (Madrid / Frankfurt a.M., 2018), pp. 169-98; Mari Paz Balibrea (ed.): *Líneas de Fuga. Hacia otra historiografía cultural del exilio republicano español* (Madrid, 2017), pp. 545-688.

24 See: Barry Carr: „Radicals, Revolutionaries, and Exiles: Mexico City in the 1920s“, *Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies* (Fall 2010), pp. 26-30; Carlos Martínez Assad: „La Ciudad de los Inmigrantes“, in: Araceli Tinajero (ed.): *Exilio y cosmopolitismo en el arte y la literatura hispánica* (Madrid, 2013), pp. 19-44; Aribert Reimann: “Espacios del Exilio – la experiencia transnacional en la Ciudad de México 1934-60”, in: *Entre Espacios: La historia latinoamericana en el contexto global, Actas del XVII Congreso Internacional de AHILA* (Berlin, 2016), pp. 2950-70; Id.: “Distrito Transnacional. Espacios transnacionales del exilio político en el Distrito Federal de México”, in: Elena Díaz Silva, Aribert Reimann, Randal Sheppard (eds): *Horizontes del Exilio*, pp. 199-22; Víctor Macías-González: „Otros Camaradas de Ruta. Las colaboraciones transnacionales de los editores republicanos españoles y los activistas homófilos norteamericanos en Ciudad de México, c. 1940-1960“, *ibid.*, pp. 223-48.

25 The best city map available for the period in question is the *Guía Roji* of 1943 which also contains an alphabetical street index; free download from the Mexican *Mapoteca Nacional*: <https://mapoteca.siap.gob.mx/index.php/cgf-df-m6-v11-0619/> [21 Jan 2013].

refugees arrived, the city counted some 1.5 million inhabitants, representing a little less than 10 percent of the national population.<sup>26</sup> The total number of European refugees who found asylum in Mexico is notoriously difficult to establish. Official immigration statistics probably need to be corrected slightly upward for cases of illegal immigration or immigration as “tourists” across the US border. The total number of Spanish republican refugees can thus be estimated at around 25,000, while the number of exiles originating from other European countries was clearly much lower, so that the total number of European refugees in Mexico during the Second World War would probably not have exceeded 30,000. A second wave of European immigration into Mexico took place during the immediate post-war years, but the underlying motivation, even in the Spanish case, was certainly mixed.<sup>27</sup> The vast majority of these political refugees settled in the nation’s capital Mexico City, or the Federal District (*Distrito Federal*) at the time, although significant communities of European exiles existed in other cities and in the north of the country.

Chronologically, the history of political exile in Mexico is usually closely connected to the collapse of the Spanish Republic in the spring of 1939, when the Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas del Río issued an offer of political asylum to the Spanish republicans fleeing Spain across the Pyrenees. The key coordinator at the Mexican consulate in Marseille, Gilberto Bósques, issued thousands of visa to Spanish refugees as well as other European refugees stranded in the south of France in 1939, an option of emigration that became all the more urgent after the military collapse of the French Republic in 1940 and the installation of the Vichy government in unoccupied France. A small number of political refugees had reached Mexico already before during the second half of the 1930s, among them mainly intellectuals invited by the Mexican government (Hannes Meyer was one of them, as was José Moreno Villa as a member of the newly-founded *Casa de España*, soon transformed into the *Colegio de México*). The exodus of European intellectuals presented an opportunity for the Mexican government to benefit from this European brain-drain. An offer to acquire the Mexican nationality followed suit which was taken up by an increasing number of refugees. The question of when the history of European exile in Mexico came to an end is more difficult to answer. While for some central-European nationals the end of hostilities in May 1945 brought with it the opportunity of returning to their home countries (even though, in practical terms, it could take years before the return journey actually happened), for the Spaniards their exile in Mexico turned into a prolonged period of hope for the end of the Franco dictatorship which was frustrated for another three decades and which many exiles in Mexico did not outlive. The emergence of

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26 Cf. some excellent approaches to early-20<sup>th</sup>-century Mexico City: Mauricio Tenorio Trillo: *I Speak of the City: Mexico City at the turn of the twentieth century* (Chicago, 2012); Patrice Elizabeth Olsen: *Artifacts of Revolution: architecture, society, and politics in Mexico City, 1920-1940* (Lanham, 2008).

27 A good overview of the „sociology of exile“ is provided by Francisco Caudet; *Hipótesis sobre el Exilio Republicano de 1939* (Madrid, 2005), pp. 293-328.

a second generation of Spanish exiles in Mexico and the almost complete integration of the Spanish republicans into Mexican society marks the slow transformation of exile into lasting immigration. If this study chooses 1959 as a cut-off point in chronological terms, the underlying assumption is that after 20 years in exile the situation of the Spanish republican community in exile in Mexico had changed: by the late 1950s, the political prospects of toppling the Franco regime in Spain had all but vanished following its almost universal international recognition during the Cold War. A new generation began to replace the veterans of the Spanish Republic, but the year 1959 saw only a last youthful echo of political mobilisation for the republican cause in Mexico which then trickled out soon. And the sense that the story of Spanish republican exile in Mexico began to recede into history may further be illustrated by the fact that a process of auto-historicisation had set in with the emergence of the first historical accounts from among the Spanish republican community of exile itself.<sup>28</sup> Some institutions, such as the *Centro Republicano Español* or the *Ateneo Español de México*, continued to exist in the city, but the recurring calendar of republican anniversaries attracted ever smaller audiences and the remaining infrastructure of exile in the Mexican capital dedicated itself more and more to the production of the memory of exile and the documentation of its considerable cultural and academic achievements.

When approaching the history of political exile during its first two decades in Mexico City, the empirical and analytical focus of this study rests on the topographical and, above all, practical manifestations of exile across the cityscape of the Mexican capital. Rather than applying pre-fabricated theoretical concepts of a historical network analysis, the structure of social and political practice is developed from the surviving evidence of residence, sociability, and political activity in the city. Relevant data can be gathered from the membership records of political and cultural organisations, the subscription lists of periodicals, the files of relief organisations, and contemporary surveys produced by the Mexican authorities and the US embassy. Such structural data form the basis of the exploration of social and political practice as it developed over time, supported by oral and written testimonies of memory, as well as contemporary coverage in the metropolitan press, the periodicals of the exile communities, and surveillance reports originating from the Mexican *Secretaría de Gobernación* and the intelligence unit of the US embassy. The understanding of political practice thereby relies on the enactment of politics in exile, above all in the public and semi-public spaces of political sociability in clubs and associations and on the

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28 Carlos Martínez: *Crónica de una Emigración (la de los republicanos españoles en 1939)*, (México D.F., 1959); Martínez can be spotted among the attendees of a banquet to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the promulgation of the constitution of the Spanish Republic at the Spanish embassy in Mexico City in the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 1956, an occasion dedicated to the ageing political founding generation of the second Spanish Republic in exile: *Acto conmemorativo del XXV aniversario de la promulgación de la Constitución de la República Española, celebrado por los Diputados de las Cortes Constituyentes en el exilio* (Embajada de España, México D.F., probably 1957).

stages of the various theatre halls of Mexico City. This study thereby does not primarily concern itself with private or clandestine networks of communication and largely disregards instances of secluded existences in exile (such as the presence of Leon Trotsky since 1937 and his eventual assassination in August 1940) in favour of a praxeological understanding of politics in exile which prioritises public spaces of the Mexican capital. The aim is to understand the interaction of the European communities of exile with their urban environment, the ways in which their appropriation of the city betrays the meaning and development of politics in exile through its topographical manifestations, and how the various political actors related to both the Mexican host society as well as to each other across the national sub-communities of exile and ideological divisions. The advantage of such an approach is the immediate contextualisation of any given event and a higher degree of awareness for the social and political environment of exile in Mexico City.

The most important contextual factor for the history of European political exile in Mexico was the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas del Río who since his election in 1934 set out to implement the social-revolutionary promises of the Mexican constitution of 1917. The radical progressive politics of his term in office had included ground-breaking attempts at the long-overdue land-reform, mainly in the north of the country, the nationalisation of natural resources and the railway system, the modernisation and secularisation of the education system, as well as the remoulding of the trade union movement into a corporatist power block under the umbrella of the centralised *Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos* (CTM), led by the charismatic Marxist intellectual Vicente Lombardo Toledano who also spearheaded the foundation of the *Universidad Obrera*, dedicated to providing vocational, academic, and political education for the under-privileged working classes. In March 1938, the expropriation and nationalization of the Mexican oil reserves coupled with the re-organisation of the government party *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR) as the new, strictly corporatist *Partido de la Revolución Mexicana* (PRM) marked the climax, but also the limit of Cárdenas' progressive radicalism as oppositional forces gathered strength.<sup>29</sup> From 1940 onwards, his successor, Manuel Ávila Camacho, halted but did not reverse the social-revolutionary advances of the Cárdenas administration while leading Mexico into the alliance of the United Nations against Nazi Germany and Japan and restoring relations with the United States.

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29 Cf. Alan Knight: „The Rise and Fall of Cardenismo“, in: Leslie Bethell (ed.): *Mexico since Independence* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 241-320; Id.: „Cardenismo: Juggernaut or Jalopy?“, *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26/1 (1994), pp. 73-107; John W. Sherman: „Reassessing Cardenismo: the Mexican Right and the failure of a revolutionary regime, 1934-1940“, *The Americas* 54/3 (1998), pp. 357-78; Albert L. Michaels: „The Crisis of Cardenismo“, *Journal of Latin American Studies* 2/1 (1970), pp. 51-79. Adolfo Gilly: *El Cardenismo. Una utopía mexicana* (México, D.F., 1994); Willam H. Beezley and Colin M. MacLachlan: *Mexicans in Revolution, 1910-1946. An Introduction* (Lincoln / London, 2009), pp. 130-41; Ariel José Contreras: *México 1940: industrialización y crisis política* (México D.F., 1977), pp. 13-33.

In terms of foreign policy, the Cárdenas government had maintained a firm stance against the rise of European fascism during the 1930s, supporting the Spanish Republic while using the opportunity of international concerns over the annexation of Austria by Nazi-Germany in March 1938 for the nationalization of Mexico's oil reserves.<sup>30</sup> Although the ensuing boycott of Mexican oil exports by US-American, British, and Dutch companies meant that Mexico depended financially on its oil revenues generated by exports to the Axis powers, the Cárdenas government demonstrated that this would not imply a change of its anti-fascist orientation, for example by launching a formal protest against Germany's annexation of Austria at the League of Nations.<sup>31</sup> Given its long-standing support for the Spanish Republic (no Mexican government ever formally recognised the post-war Franco regime, and diplomatic relations were only re-established during the Spanish *Transición* in 1977), the decision by the Cárdenas administration to offer political asylum to Spanish republican refugees who had successfully crossed the border into France during the spring of 1939 and to other European refugees in southern France seemed only coherent and logical but was met with criticism by the right-wing opposition who feared the presence of left-wing refugees in the country.<sup>32</sup> Simultaneously, this policy was accompanied by a consistent reluctance of the Mexican government to admit Jewish refugees from Europe into the country in any significant numbers unless they could demonstrate their persecution on political grounds or were associated with the Spanish republican cause.<sup>33</sup>

The refugees represented an ideologically and politically fragmented group that reflected the comprehensive defeat of left-wing European anti-fascism during the 1930s. Alongside the central-European socialists and communists who, in most cases, had already experienced years of exile within Europe and, in some cases, had joined the International Brigades of the Spanish republican forces during the Spanish Civil War, the Spanish republican refugees brought with them the discord and often bitter internal divisions of Spanish republican politics. The so-called May Events of 1937 in Barcelona had resulted in irreconcilable enmity

30 Cf. Friedrich Schuler: *Mexico between Hitler and Roosevelt. Mexican foreign relations in the age of Lázaro Cárdenas, 1934-1940* (Albuquerque, 1998).

31 Cf. Klaus Volland: *Das Dritte Reich und Mexiko. Studien zur Entwicklung des deutsch-mexikanischen Verhältnisses 1933-1942 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Ölpolitik* (Hamburg, 1976).

32 See Lourdes Márquez Morfín: „Los republicanos españoles en 1939: política, inmigración y hostilidad“, *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 458 (1988), pp. 127-50, esp. 137ff.; José Antonio Matesanz: *Las Raíces del Exilio. México ante la guerra civil española* (México D.F., 1999), pp. 343-74.

33 Cf. Fernando Serrano Migallón: *El Asilo Político en México* (México, D.F., 1998), pp. 95-121; Abdón Mateos: *La Batalla de México: final de la Guerra Civil y ayuda a los refugiados, 1939-1945* (Madrid, 2009), pp. 201-14; Daniela Gleizer Salzman: *El Exilio Incómodo: México y los refugiados judíos, 1933-1945* (México D.F., 2011); Ead.: „De la Apertura al Cierre de Puertas: la inmigración judía en México durante las primeras décadas del siglo XX“, *Historia Mexicana* 60/2 (2010), pp. 1175-227.



between, on the one hand, the libertarian and social-revolutionary republicans of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT and the Marxist POUM and, on the other, the republican national front government and its communist allies. During the summer of 1939, when the first evacuation transports arrived in Mexican ports, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Agreement and the Nazi-German attack on Poland soon caused a complete *revirement* among the anti-fascist Left, as the tactical complicity of the Soviet regime in the German military aggression in Europe forced the communists into defensive isolation. The conflict over the question of co-operation with communist and other pro-Soviet political forces caused a profound rift across the anti-fascist political spectrum of all national communities in exile years before the Cold War resulted in similar ideological divisions based on the key issue of anti-communism.<sup>34</sup> Such ideological fault lines travelled with the European refugees across the Atlantic only to be confronted with further political challenges arising from the right-wing opposition in Mexico and the local ex-patriate colonies which had originated from previous phases of European immigration to Mexico during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Both the Spanish and the German-speaking colonies in Mexico City were, with some notable exceptions, by-and-large subscribed to right-wing nationalist if not outright fascist politics which the Spanish *Falange* and the German National Socialist Party had successfully promoted across their respective ex-patriate colonies throughout the 1930s.<sup>35</sup> A similar situation existed with regard to the Italian ex-patriate colony in Mexico.<sup>36</sup> Such conflicts created a complex matrix of ethnic and ideological divisions that pervaded the lived experience of exile in Mexico City and shaped the corresponding topography of social and political practice as it emerged from patterns of residence, venues of sociability, and manifestations of political activism – at times at surprisingly close and uncomfortable distances from one another.

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34 Cf. Olga Glondys: „El »ex-poumismo de guerra fría«: la lucha de Víctor Alba por la hegemonía estadounidense“, *Laberintos – Revista de estudios sobre los exilios culturales españoles*, no. 13 (2011), pp. 49-68; Ead.: „El Asociacionismo Internacional de los Exiliados Republicanos: el caso del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura (1950-1967)“, (Seminario de Historia, UNED, UCM, Fundación José Ortega y Gasset Gregorio Marañón, 2013), online resource: <https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/297-2013-10-02-6-13.pdf>

35 Cf. Michael Kenny: „Twentieth-century Spanish Expatriates in Mexico: an urban sub-culture“, *Anthropological Quarterly* 35/4 (1962), pp. 169-80; Id.: *Inmigrantes y refugiados españoles en México (siglo XX)* (México D.F., 1979); Clara E. Lida, Dolores Pla Brugat, Alberto Enriquez Perea et al.: *La Comunidad Española en la Ciudad de México* (México, D.F., 1999); Jürgen Buchenau: „The Life Cycle of a Trade Diaspora. The German »colony« in Mexico City, 1821 – present“, *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas* 39 (2002), pp. 275-97; Silke Nagel: *Ausländer in Mexiko. Die "Kolonien" der deutschen und US-amerikanischen Einwanderer in der mexikanischen Hauptstadt 1890-1942* (Frankfurt, 2005), pp. 276-310; Verena Radkau, Brigida von Mentz, Daniela Spenser and Ricardo Pérez Montfort: *Los Empresarios Alemanes, el tercer reich y la oposición de derecha a Cárdenas*, 2 vols. (México D.F., 1988).

36 Cf. Franco Savarino: „Bajo el signo del Littorio: la comunidad italiana en México y el fascismo (1924-1941)“, *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 64/2 (2002), pp. 113-39.

By mapping such complex interrelations between ideologically opposed networks across the European communities of exile against the background of the pre-existing socio-political cityscape in Mexico City this study assumes a perspective which only seemingly abandons an exploration of the politics of exile “from within”, an exploration through the eyes of the political actors themselves. Rather than reconstructing subjective intentions from the extensive text production and private correspondence of political exiles in Mexico, the task here consists of arriving at a better understanding of the politics of exile from a close reading of the locations and chronology of public social and political practice, from deciphering a choreography of actions that relate to one another through their relative position in urban space and over time. In many cases, the logic of transnational politics of exile reveals itself in terms of the locations of political sociability, the synchronicity between events, and their chronological relation to outside factors. A historical topography of exile in Mexico City thereby yields a fuller picture by cross-referencing information across all ideological and national sub-communities of exile than would otherwise be possible by concentrating on any specific individual, national, or ideological perspective.

The political topography of Mexico City thereby also betrays the influence and importance of aspects of global politics which left a mark on a seemingly local urban space. The European refugees paid particular attention to the events unfolding in their countries of origin and across the European continent. Their mental map of politics in exile consisted of the time of persecution or Civil War they had experienced, and such experiences would be inscribed onto the topography of politics in Mexico City. Furthermore, the politics of exile in Mexico City must be understood against the background of global events during the Second World War and the unfolding ideological confrontation of the Cold War. The hope for the downfall of the fascist regimes across Europe needed to accommodate the realities of new global strategic developments between the emerging major powers, and the European politics of exile needed to react accordingly. In this way, what can be observed in the streets and city districts of Mexico City is as much evidence for the local social and political life in exile as it was subjected to events far away which shaped the political urban topography of Mexico City as a matrix for global politics.

This study presents part of the work conducted in the context of a broader research project at the University of Cologne under the title “Left-wing political exile in Mexico, 1934-60”, funded by the European Research Council (grant no. 312717) between 2013 and 2018. The Department for Iberian and Latin American History at the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Cologne, headed by Prof. Dr. Barbara Potthast, hosted the project in the most generous way. It owes much of what it may have achieved to the fruitful collaboration of my co-researchers Dr. Elena Díaz Silva and Dr. Randal Sheppard, and to the participants of two project workshops held in Cologne in 2014 and 2015 and a project conference held at the *Residencia de Estudiantes* in Madrid in 2016 where preliminary results were

presented and discussed.<sup>37</sup> Ms Cordula Greinert contributed valuable archival research in the Russian state archives in Moscow. Ms Rosie Tweddle translated documents from Russian into English. All other translations are by the author. Numerous archivists have added to the successful conduct of empirical research with technical help and generous advice, above all (but not exclusively) at the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN, Mexico), the Ateneo Español de México (AEM), the Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia (BNAH, Mexico), the Archivo de la Palabra at the Biblioteca Nacional Orozco y Berra (BNOB, Mexico), the Bundesarchiv Lichterfelde (BAL, Berlin), the Centro de Documentación y Investigación de la Comunidad Ashkenazi (CDICA, Mexico), the Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstands (DÖW, Wien), the Fundación Pablo Iglesias (FPI, Alcalá de Henares), the Internationaal Instituut vor Sociale Geschiedenis (IISG, Amsterdam), and the United States National Archives (USNACP, College Park, MD). The administrative staff of the University of Cologne, above all the team members of department 74 for European research funding, allowed me to experience the inevitable bureaucratic effort that this project brought with it from an unexpectedly pleasant angle.

As always, I dedicate all my work to my wife, Karina de la Garza Gil, without whom none of this would exist.

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37 See the results of the latter event: Elena Díaz Silva, Aribert Reimann, Randal Sheppard (eds): *Horizontes del Exilio. Nuevas aproximaciones a la experiencia de los exilios entre Europa y América Latina durante el siglo XX* (Frankfurt a.M., 2018); see preliminary results of this investigation: Aribert Reimann: „Distrito Transnacional. Espacios transnacionales del exilio político en el Distrito Federal de México”, *ibid.*, pp. 199–222; Id.: „Espacios del Exilio – la experiencia transnacional en la Ciudad de México 1934-60”, in: *Entre Espacios: La historia latinoamericana en el contexto global, Actas del XVII Congreso Internacional de AHILA* (Berlin, 2016), pp. 2950-70; Id.: „Local Brawls and Global Conflict. Transnational political violence among the exiled Left in Mexico City during 1943”, *JILAR – Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 23/1 (March 2017), pp. 1-17.



## Part I

### The unlikely sanctuary



### a. Transnational Politics in the *Centro Histórico* in 1939

The arrival of European political refugees in Mexico after the defeat of the Spanish Republic in spring 1939 coincided with a difficult and tense situation in domestic politics towards the end of the administration of Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas. The government faced a growing political opposition consisting of remnants of the catholic resistance to the postrevolutionary regime of the 1920s, openly pro-fascist elements such as the *Unión Nacional Sinarquista* (UNS) with their paramilitary organization of the *Camisas Doradas* (Gold Shirts), members of the growing economic middle class, and the politically right-wing business elite, based predominantly in the north-eastern state of Nuevo León.<sup>1</sup> These oppositional forces enjoyed the support of national newspapers in the capital city, above all the periodicals *Excelsior* and *Novedades*, and began to organize politically around a challenge to the pre-arranged presidential succession with the candidature of revolutionary general Juan Andreu Almazán for the upcoming presidential elections of 1940.

The situation *vis-à-vis* the European refugees was further complicated by the presence of sizeable European ex-patriate communities, predominantly in the capital city, the most significant among them being the Spanish and the German colonies. Though originally the post-independence European immigration to Mexico had been socially and politically diverse (including e.g. many liberals and some socialists in the aftermath of the European 1848 revolutions), by the 1930s the political attitudes of the European ex-patriate colonies in Mexico City were by-and-large characterised by openly right-wing nationalism.<sup>2</sup> During the 1930s both the German *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP) and the Spanish *Falange Española / Junta Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista* (J.O.N.S.) had considerable success in establishing their Mexican branches and taking control of the political and social fabric of their national communities in the city. Until 1939, the NSDAP under the leadership of *Landesgruppenleiter* Wilhelm Wirtz had attracted 378 members nation-wide, of whom some 150 resided in the

1 Cf. John W. Sherman: *The Mexican Right: The End of Revolutionary Reform, 1929-40* (Westport, 1997); Javier Garcíadiego: „La oposición conservadora y de las clases medias al cardenismo“, *Istor* VII/25 (2006), pp. 30-49; Leonor Ludlow Wiechers: „La Secularización e integración del sinarquismo a la vida política“, *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 50/3 (1988), pp. 201-16; Hugh Gerald Campbell: *La Derecha Radical en México, 1929-1949* (México D.F., 1976); Alicia Gojman de Backal: „Los Camisas Doradas en la época de Lázaro Cárdenas“, *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 20, 39/40 (1995), pp. 39-64.

2 Cf. Jürgen Buchenau: The Life Cycle of a Trade Diaspora. The German »colony« in Mexico City, 1821 – present, *Jahrbuch für Geschichte Lateinamerikas* 39 (2002), pp. 275-97; Silke Nagel: *Ausländer in Mexiko. Die "Kolonien" der deutschen und US-amerikanischen Einwanderer in der mexikanischen Hauptstadt 1890-1942* (Frankfurt, 2005), pp. 276-310; Michael Kenny: Twentieth-century Spanish Expatriates in Mexico: an urban sub-culture, *Anthropological Quarterly* 35/4 (1962), pp. 169-80; Id.: *Inmigrantes y refugiados españoles en México (siglo XX)* (México D.F., 1979); Clara E. Lida, Dolores Pla Brugat, Alberto Enriquez Perea et al.: *La Comunidad Española en la Ciudad de México* (México, D.F., 1999).

capital city.<sup>3</sup> The pro-Nazi activities in the German colony were directed from the party headquarters at calle Uruguay no. 80 in the *Centro Histórico*, commonly known as the *Casa Humboldt* (because in 1803 Alexander von Humboldt had resided there during his stay in Mexico City), and the building also housed the *Deutsche Volksgemeinschaft* (Community of “Ethnic Germans”) which controlled the activities of virtually all other institutions of German ex-patriates in the city.<sup>4</sup> Of particular importance was the *Deutsches Haus* (*Casino Alemán*) at calle de López no. 23 which under the direction of Carlos Stein and Alejandro Holste dominated the social and cultural life of the German colony. In 1936 the *Casino Alemán* counted over 500 members which provided the propagandistic efforts of National Socialism in the city with a broad audience stretching particularly into the German business community – and the flag poles atop the building could be seen flying the Nazi swastika flag.<sup>5</sup> Although only 32 members of the *Casino Alemán* were listed as card-carrying members of the NSDAP in the city, their position evidently enjoyed broad acceptance among the German colony and far outweighed their relatively small number. The German business community gathered around the German Chamber of Commerce, directed by Richard Eversbusch and Francisco Conrad at calle 16 de Septiembre no. 83. This institution was commonly identified by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* as a centre of economic espionage by the Nazi government<sup>6</sup>, while Georg Nicolaus headed the Gestapo espionage in Mexico from his domicile at calle Luis Moya no. 22.<sup>7</sup> The German colony also maintained a cultural organisation, the *Fichte-Bund* under the direction of NSDAP party member Heinz Weber, which disseminated nationalistic propaganda across Mexico.<sup>8</sup> The propaganda office of the German legation was headed by Arthur Dietrich, NSDAP party member since 1931, who

- 3 A complete list of former NSDAP members in the western hemisphere was published by the US government in 1946, see: *Nazi Party Membership Records*, part 2 (Washington D.C., 1946) at BAL, SgY 14/16, fols. 132-7.
- 4 On the structure and activities of all pro-Nazi German associations and institutions in Mexico see the extensive report by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* (23 May 1940) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 83, exp. 7, fols. 71-101; see also the detailed informations mentioned in: Vicente Lombardo Toledano: *5th Column in Mexico* (Council for Pan-American Democracy, 1942), pp. 24-32.
- 5 See the membership list of the *Casino Alemán* (dated 1 Jun 1936) at BAL, NS 19/4057, fols. 27-44.
- 6 Cf. the reports at AGN, DGIPS, caja 31, exp. 27, fol. 8 (22 Jan 1942); AGN, DGIPS, caja 83, exp. 10, fol. 161 (4 Apr 1942).
- 7 Cf. Verena Radkau, Brígida von Mentz, Daniela Spenser, and Ricardo Pérez Montfort: *Los Empresarios Alemanes, el Tercer Reich y la Oposición de derecha a Cárdenas*, vol. 2 (México D.F., 1988), pp. 194-6; see also the confidential memorandum on „German Agents operating in Mexico“ (5 Jan 1942) at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02 Gibson, s.fol.; see also the confidential report (15 Dec 1941) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 89, exp. 13, fol. 38.
- 8 Cf. the reports at AGN, DGIPS, caja 18, exp. 13, fol. 1 (10 Jan 1942); AGN, DGIPS, caja 89, exp. 13, fol. 38 (15 Dec 1941).



maintained offices at calle Viena no. 17 in the district of *Juárez*.<sup>9</sup> The *Colegio Alemán*, the German school, stood at the centre of education and sociability of the young. At the end of the 1930s, the school was in the process of relocating from its original building in the Calzada de la Piedad (today's Avenida Cuauhtémoc) near the city centre to a modern, purpose-built campus at calle Industria (today calle General Benjamin Hill) on the northern edge of the district of *Tacubaya* (the building today forms part of the Universidad La Salle). Soon after the National Socialists' rise to power, the school had come under the directorship of Friedrich Wilhelm Schröter and followed national socialist doctrine to the letter, establishing a strong unit of the Hitler Youth and after 1938 no longer taught pupils of Jewish descent.<sup>10</sup> The *Deutsche Zeitung von Mexiko* catered for the German-speaking community in the city as a newspaper of national persuasion loyal to the government in Berlin.

At around the same time the Spanish *Falange* in Mexico numbered about 740 members and had established itself among the Spanish business community which centred on the *Casino Español* at Calle Isabel la Católica no. 29 in the *Centro Histórico*.<sup>11</sup> With the defeat of the Spanish Republic, the Spanish community in Mexico City did not have an official diplomatic representation, as the Spanish embassy in calle Londres no. 7 was passing into the care of the Cuban government on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 1939, followed by the Portuguese government in July.<sup>12</sup> For the nationalist community, Alejandro Villanueva Plata acted as Visitor General of the Spanish *Falange* while Genaro Riestra from its beginnings had occupied the post of regional chief of the *Falange* in Mexico, until in 1938 he was replaced by Marcos Odriosa Solana.<sup>13</sup> One of the key figures of the *Falange* in Mexico was Augusto Ibañez Serrano who (although Mexico never recognised Franco's government) performed unofficial duties as de-facto consul for the Franco government in Mexico from his offices in calle Venustiano Carranza no.

9 See the report (23 May 1940) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 83, exp. 7, fol. 74; BAL SgY 14 / 16, fol. 132 rev.

10 Cf. Verena Radkau, Brígida von Mentz, Daniela Spenser, and Ricardo Pérez Montfort: *Los Empresarios Alemanes, el Tercer Reich y la Oposición de derecha a Cárdenas*, vol. 2 (México D.F., 1988), pp. 222-34; Matthias Wankel: *Reflejo de la historia de dos pueblos: el Colegio Alemán de México / Spiegelbild der Geschichte zweier Völker: Die deutsche Schule in Mexiko, 1894-1942* (México, D.F., 1994).

11 See the membership list of the *Falange Española / J.O.N.S.* in Mexico at AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fols. 3-9 (dated 29 Mar 1938); the membership lists do not allow for a localization of the listed members, but a number of about 300 *falangistas* in Mexico City should probably not overstate their numerical presence in the capital city.

12 See: „Cuba se ha hecho cargo de la embajada española aquí“, *Excélsior* (18 Apr 1939), pp. 1 & 4; „Mañana entrega la embajada de la Rep. Española“, *Excélsior* (23 Jul 1939), p. 7; „Recibió ayer el ministro de Portugal los archivos de la embajada de España“, *Excélsior* (25 Jul 1939).

13 Cf. the extensive report on the Spanish *Falange* in Mexico by the US embassy at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02 Gibson (7 Oct 1943), s.fol.

42, desp. 23, as well as in calle Artículo 123 no. 97, desp. 501-503.<sup>14</sup> Julián Bayón García acted as president of the *Casino Español* and under his leadership some Casino officers maintained close links with the pro-*Falange* elements in the Spanish community, among them Ibañez' assistants Ángel Urraza Saracho and Carlos Prieto y Fernández de la Llana.<sup>15</sup> Of particular importance for the Spanish colony in Mexico City was the role of the regional clubs: In general, the organisations of Basque and Catalan residents in the city showed predictable hostility to Spanish nationalism and, thus, to any Francoist sympathies among the Spanish community – although in the Basque case, a Spanish-monarchist group had broken away from the decidedly anti-fascist *Centro Vasco* in 1935 and established the *Círculo Vasco Español* with its social centre in calle 16 de Septiembre no. 51. The fact that one of the key figures of the unofficial diplomatic networks of Francoist Spain in Mexico, Ángel Urraza Saracho, later served on the Board of Directors of the *Círculo Vasco Español* may serve as an indication of its political denomination.<sup>16</sup> A similar political attitude was displayed by the *Centro Asturiano* at calle 16 de Septiembre no. 14 and the *Unión Cultural Gallega* at Puente de Alvarado no. 14.<sup>17</sup> The politicisation of the ex-patriate Spanish community in the city thus relied on the regional structure of sociability as other regional centres tended to favour the republican cause, chief among them the *Centro Vasco* at Calle Madero no. 6, the *Orfeó Català* at calle Uruguay no. 49, and later the newly-founded *Casa Regional Valenciana* at calle 5 de Mayo no. 8, all in the *Centro Histórico* of the city.<sup>18</sup>

14 On Ibañez Serrano see the reports at AGN, DGIPS, caja 4, exp. 14, fols. 7-8 (18 Jul 1939); AGN, DGIPS, caja 89, exp. 14, fol. 80 (9 Oct 1942); AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fol. 553 (21 Oct 1942); USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02 Gibson (10 May 1943), s. fol.; USNACP, RG84, UD2895, 820.02 Gibson (25 Oct 1944), s. fol.

15 See the reports on the *Casino* and its officers at USNACP, RG84, 820.02 Gibson (23 Jul 1942), s. fol.; USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02 Gibson (9 Jun 1943), s. fol.; USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02 Gibson (20 Jun 1943), p. 4.

16 See the information on the *Círculo Vasco Español* at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02 Gibson (20 Jun 1943), pp. 9-10; see also the memo on the *Círculo Vasco* at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) (22 Sep 1943), s. fol., which indicated a belated change in the politics of the *Círculo Vasco*; cf. Amaya Garritz Ruiz and Javier Sanchiz Ruiz: *Euskal Etxea de la ciudad de México* (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2003), esp. pp. 57-64.

17 On the *Centro Asturiano* and the *Unión Cultural Gallega* see the report at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02 Gibson (20 Jun 1943), pp. 5-6; on the *Centro Asturiano* see also the short memo at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02 Gibson (1 Jun 1943), s. fol., quoting one source characterizing the *Centro* as „a fortress of totalitarian propaganda in Mexico and one of the principal centers of Franquista activity“.

18 Amaya Garritz Ruiz and Javier Sanchiz Ruiz: *Euskal Etxea de la ciudad de México* (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2003), pp. 54-63; Miquel Martí I Soler: *L'Orfeó Català de Mèxic (1906-1986)* (Barcelona, 1989); Juan Ignacio Cruz Orozco and Juan Ignacio (eds): *La Casa Regional Valenciana de México* (México D.F., 2007); cf. Pilar Domínguez Prats: *De Ciudadanas a Exiliadas. Un estudio sobre las republicanas españolas en México* (Madrid, 2009), pp. 124-9.

The political atmosphere around the Spanish and German ex-patriate communities became considerably more tense during the spring of 1939 when, in the wake of the dramatic political events in Europe (the defeat of the Spanish Republic and the fall of Madrid, the German invasion of Czechoslovakia) and the simultaneous offer of asylum to Spanish republicans by the Mexican government, the right-wing communities of European immigrants in the city made themselves heard.<sup>19</sup> On the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1939 the *Casino Español* at calle Isabel la Católica no. 29 in the *Centro Histórico* of the city became the site of a celebratory victory lunch of a “*plato único*”, a frugal one-course meal introduced by the Franco regime in order to promote national austerity and patriotic solidarity. This politicised form of lunch was based on the German model of the *Eintopfgericht*, a collective one-course meal of soup popularised for propaganda purposes by the National Socialists, which the Spanish nationalists imitated in the *Casino Alemán* as well as their own *Casino*.<sup>20</sup> The *Plato Único* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> April was an openly pro-Fascist celebration of the nationalists’ victory in Spain attended by the leaders of the local *Falange*, representatives of the major regional clubs of the Spanish ex-patriate community as well as the ambassadors of Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Japan, and the president of the Spanish Red Cross in Mexico. An observer of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* reported on the event which saw a total number of some 3.000 guests in attendance. Among the speakers after lunch were the local *Falange* leader Genaro Riestra, the *Visitador General* of the *Falange* in the Americas Alejandro Villanueva Plata, the German and Italian ambassadors as well as Augusto Ibañez Serrano. The speeches called for national unity, celebrated the contribution of the German and Italian governments to the nationalists’ victory, and emphasized the strict observance of Article 33 of the Mexican constitution (which prohibits any involvement of foreigners in Mexican politics) by the Spanish colony. Spain’s relationship with Hispano-America would not be characterized by any neo-colonial ambitions but by a “spiritual empire” which the Franco regime wanted to establish across the continent by means of “sympathy, good reason, education, and intelligence”.<sup>21</sup> Villanueva explicitly called for discipline among the Spanish fascists (a car belonging to the – at this point in time still republican – Spanish embassy had been attacked the day before) and denounced any political violence which would be punished by expulsion from the

19 Cf. on the violent ideological conflicts surrounding the offer of asylum to the Spanish republicans: José Antonio Matesanz: *Las Raíces del Exilio. México ante la guerra civil española* (México D.F., 1999), pp. 343-74.

20 See the extensive report on the *Falange* activities in Mexico at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02 Gibson (7 Oct 1943), p. 2; cf. José Antonio Matesanz: *Las Raíces del Exilio. México ante la guerra civil española* (México D.F., 1999), pp. 344-6.

21 On the cultural propaganda of the Franco regime in Latin America cf. Eduardo González Calleja and Fredes Limón Nevado: *La Hispanidad como Instrumento de Combate. Raza y imperio en la prensa franquista durante la Guerra Civil* (Madrid, 1988); Sebastiaan Faber: „»La hora ha llegado« Hispanism, Pan-Americanism and the Hope of Spanish/American Glory (1938-1948)“, in: Mabel Moraña (ed.), *Ideologies of Hispanism* (Nashville/Tenn., 2005), pp. 62-104.

*Falange*, possibly even result in the loss of Spanish citizenship. Among the most challenging ideas he laid out to the Spanish colony was his proposal to create a centralized “*Casa de España*” which would replace all the other centres of sociability among the Spanish ex-patriates in the city – the existence of which he characterized as “symbols of the division of Spain”.<sup>22</sup> The event ended with the Spanish national anthem which the guests listened to while offering the fascist salute.<sup>23</sup>

This fascist victory celebration did not go unnoticed by the Mexican public, although the organizers had painstakingly ensured that the event would not be noticeable from outside the building. But on the next day the Mexican press reported extensively on the event with photographs of the guests of honour and depicting some *Falange* youths offering the fascist salute in front of a portrait of Francisco Franco hastily pasted over one of the decorative paintings in the staircase of the *Casino Español*.<sup>24</sup> The immediate consequence of the fascist *Plato Único* at the *Casino Español* on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April was a violent incident two days later: Members of the *Frente Único de Trabajadores del Volante* (the national union of chauffeurs) had gathered in front of the building at around 5.30 pm and destroyed the windows, while hundreds of members of the *Sindicato Único de Trabajadores del Pan* (the national union of bakers) attacked and smashed the windows of the *Centro Asturiano* at calle 16 de Septiembre no. 14 before descending on the *Casino Español*, too. Shouts from the crowd were reported by the press: “Death to the Falange! Death to the Spaniards!” before several speakers addressed the unionists with passionate speeches against the Franco regime in Spain. The police arrested a number of the attacking unionists before dispersing the crowd with tear gas.<sup>25</sup> It appears significant that the trade unionists not only attacked the location of the fascist victory celebrations at the *Casino Español* but also the *Centro Asturiano* – its political reputation as pro-Fascist was evidently well-established.

This violent response from the anti-fascist trade union movement in the city preceded the Mexican government’s decision to outlaw the *Falange Española / J.O.N.S.* in Mexico on the very next day, the 5<sup>th</sup> April 1939.<sup>26</sup> Three of its principal leaders, the Visitor General Alejandro Villanueva Plata, the president

22 Such plans were reported by the Mexican right-wing press as fact: *Excélsior* (3 Apr 1939), p. 1: „Se unirán en un solo centro los españoles residentes en México“.

23 Report by Inspector PS-8 (3 Apr 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 78, exp. 8, fols. 25-7.

24 „Se unirán en un solo centro los españoles residentes en México“, *Excélsior* (3 Apr 1939), p. 9.

25 „El Casino Español lapidado por unos obreros“, *Excélsior* (5 Apr 1939), p. 1 & 6; cf. Matesanz, *Las Raíces*, pp. 350-1.

26 See the extensive report on the *Falange* activities in Mexico (7 Oct 1943) at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02 Gibson, p. 3; generally, on the move by the Mexican government against the Spanish *Falange* see: José Antonio Matesanz: *Las Raíces del Exilio. México ante la guerra civil española* (México D.F., 1999), pp. 343-74..

Genaro Riestra Díaz, and the secretary José Celorio Ortega were expelled from the country under provisions of Article 33 of the Mexican constitution and had to leave the city the same evening *en route* to the port of Veracruz where they embarked for Cuba.<sup>27</sup> The government tried to enforce the ban of the organisation, but the *Falange Española* continued to maintain clandestine structures of organisation. On the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1939, a group of about 15 individuals meeting in the home of Joaquín Fernández Villegas at calle Jesús María no. 182 in the *Centro Histórico* was detained and questioned by police under the suspicion of continuing the political work of the *Falange Española*.<sup>28</sup> By the end of May, other *falangistas* came under scrutiny after agents of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* interrupted a clandestine meeting at the home of Manuel Oria Llano at calle Dr. Martínez del Río no. 205 in the district of *Hidalgo*, among them Amador Fernández Noriega, the press and propaganda secretary of the *Falange*.<sup>29</sup> In all these cases, those questioned by Mexican authorities emphasised their loyalty to the constitutional and legal order of their host country. Just a few days later, the *Secretaría de Gobernación* received information that the *Falange Española* continued to exist underground and was directed by Armando Pría, Felipe Yurritia, and Eulogio Celorio.<sup>30</sup> The *Secretaría de Gobernación* continued to investigate the organisation and obtained another, updated list of its membership which it used to screen Spanish nationals for possible membership in the *Falange Española*. When compared with the original membership list of late March 1938, it becomes clear that the organisation had by then lost 246, that is one in three of its followers.<sup>31</sup> The government ban of the *Falange* did therefore reduce the organisational base of Spanish fascism even if it failed to destroy its social and political networks. The political atmosphere in the city remained charged with animosity, a fact illustrated by another violent incident which occurred on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1939, just days after the government ban of the *Falange Española*, when an anonymous voice shouted a “Viva Franco!” at the guests of the restaurant “Pepín” at calle Bolívar no. 44, upstairs of the legendary Café “Tupinamba” in the historic city centre. This provocation immediately resulted in angry responses from other guests which quickly descended into violence:

No-one knows how things came to pass, because very quickly the scandal reached its peak: there were shouts, insults, shrieks by the women; glasses, cups, plates and what other crockery there was

27 „México no reconoce personalidad a la Falange Española“, *Excelsior* (5 Apr 1939), p. 1 & 11; „Orden de Deportación de los principales jefes de la Falange Española“, *ibid.*, p. 1; „Los líderes falangistas de España fueron embarcados ayer en el vapor «Siboney»“, *Excelsior* (6 Apr 1939), pp. 1 & 7.

28 See the investigation files (8 May 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fols. 26-32.

29 See the report (1 Jun 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fols. 47-49.

30 See the report (8 Jun 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fol. 77.

31 See the two membership lists at AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fols. 3-9 (dated 29 Mar 1938) and AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fols. 166-76 (June 1939).

crossed the room and went to pieces while the chairs were flying, too. The tumult began to take on gigantic proportions when the police intervened, re-established order, and detained a number of individuals.<sup>32</sup>

Among the six persons arrested for violent disorder was the Mexican writer Octavio Paz Lozano, a nobel laureate decades later, who had championed the cause of the Spanish Republic and had attended the Second International Congress of Writers in Defence of Culture which had taken place in Valencia, Madrid, and Barcelona during 1937 as a Mexican delegate.

The Spanish followers of fascism in Mexico City resorted to less public and potentially conflictive displays of their political allegiance. The 18<sup>th</sup> of July was a particularly delicate day in the Spanish political calendar, as it represented the anniversary of the fascist military coup lead by Franco against the Spanish Republic in 1936. Both sides of the political conflict commemorated the date, and in 1939 the Spanish community of the followers of the Franco regime gathered in the church of Santo Domingo three blocks north of the central plaza of the *Zócalo* for a catholic mass of thanksgiving for peace after the Spanish Civil War. An agent of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* reported the scene inside the church where Spanish and Mexican flags were “profusely” used for decoration, and the Spanish anthem (the *Marcha Real*) was played as well as the party anthem of the *Falange Española*. Still, the government agent noted “very few members of the Falange in attendance [...] the majority consisting of youths between 16 and 18 years while the remaining congregation were ladies and elderly gentlemen.”<sup>33</sup> The Mexican press reported that a “known speaker of the clergy” had wished for peace in the whole world before those in attendance then gathered for “intimate meals without all ostentation” in “various social centres” of the Spanish colony.<sup>34</sup> The pro-Franco community of the Spaniards had deliberately avoided the *Casino Español* on this occasion, and their public commitment to following the provisions of Mexican law was duly noted.

The oppositional press, above all the daily *Excélsior*, proved instrumental in dispersing any suspicion of fascist activities of the banned *Falange* in the capital city. And the same is true for its portrayal of the activities of the German colony in the city which was no less devoted to their national socialist government in Berlin. During spring 1939, two dates of celebration among the pro-Nazi German colony rapidly approached, just after the events surrounding the *Casino*

32 “Gresca por un »Viva Franco«”, *Excélsior* (10 Apr 1939), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1 & 6; cf. José Antonio Matesanz: *Las Raíces del Exilio. México ante la guerra civil española* (México D.F., 1999), p. 370.

33 See the confidential report by Inspector PS-15 (18 Jul 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 81, exp. 4, fol. 89.

34 „Fue celebrada la gran fecha. Los españoles franquistas de México rememoraron la lucha nacionalista“, *Excélsior* (19 Jul 1939).

*Español* and the *Centro Asturiano* at the beginning of April. The German ambassador in Mexico Heinrich Freiherr Rüdts von Collenberg-Bödighheim had been in attendance at the *Plato Único* in the *Casino Español*, and the German diplomats as well as the leadership of the NSDAP in the city had no doubt followed closely the events that lead to the ban of the *Falange Española* a few days later. Under the circumstances, they decided to present a harmless and non-political image of the German colony to the Mexican public, and the right-wing newspaper *Excélsior* assisted in this campaign. In its edition of the 21<sup>st</sup> of April the paper reported the *fiesta de quince años* of the *señorita* Martha del Río y Muñoz the night before, prominently depicted with photographs of the reception.<sup>35</sup> This seemingly banal piece of society news of the coming-of-age celebration by a local Mexican family gained its political significance because of the location and the date of the event: The 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1939 was the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of Adolf Hitler, a day that was marked by the most conspicuous displays of Nazi propaganda and military might in Berlin. In Mexico City, however, the German colony had opened its most prominent venue for a social occasion of a local family: the *Casino Alemán* at calle de López no. 23, two blocks south of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*. In this way, the leadership of the German colony hoped to demonstrate to the Mexican public (and, no doubt, to the *Secretaría de Gobernación*) the complete absence of any political activity or national socialist propaganda in the city. This appears to have worked well for the German colony, as just a few days later the celebrations of 1<sup>st</sup> May (labour day, or for national socialists, the so-called “national holiday of the German people”) were made public. Unlike the year before, the German embassy did not stage a prominent celebration, but instead the *Casino Alemán* hosted an event which was described as “entirely social and recreational” in character.<sup>36</sup> After the event, the press described the national feast as a complete success where the German ambassador had spoken some words of salutation in German in the name of the “Führer”, and the feasting and dancing continued until past midnight.<sup>37</sup> Such displays of harmless, supposedly a-political sociability responded to the continuing political tension across the city: on the same day, some demonstrators had torn off a Nazi-German flag from a commercial building and burnt it publicly – an incident which immediately prompted the German embassy to demand from the Mexican government a denunciation of such public attacks on the symbols of Nazi Germany.<sup>38</sup>

The Spanish and German ex-patriate colonies adopted a style of non-political sociability to escape the suspicion and surveillance of government agents, and – in contrast to their political meetings – publicised these events actively. On

35 „Alegre fiesta de quince años a la señorita Del Río y Muñoz“, *Excélsior* (21 Apr 1939).

36 „Ningún acto exterior de la Legación Alemana en México“, *Excélsior* (23 Apr 1939), pp. 1 & 13.

37 „Reunión social en el Casino Alemán“, *Excélsior* (3 May 1939).

38 „Representación de Alemania a México. El ministro de aquella nación la hace por el incidente de la bandera“, *Excélsior* (4 May 1939), pp. 1 & 10.

the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1939, the *Casino Español* staged the celebrations of the 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Casino*, a feast which attracted a crowd of no fewer than 3.000 guests and lasted until 5 o'clock the next morning. The occasion was communicated to the Mexican public via the press, complete with photographs and an enormous guest list, and passed as a prestigious event of the social calendar in the city.<sup>39</sup> The German colony presented itself in a similar fashion, staging an evening of culture at the *Casino Alemán* on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July attended by an audience of about 200, closely watched by an agent of the Mexican ministry of the interior. The main agendum of the evening was a public lecture by an alumna of the *Colegio Alemán* "whose discourse", the agent noted, "though not tendentious in character, did not fail to contain at its root great Nazi propaganda."<sup>40</sup> Two days later, the association of alumni of the *Colegio Alemán* staged a reunion and had their picture taken for the press at the restaurant *Alt-Heidelberg* at calle Nuevo León no. 16 in the district of *Condesa*<sup>41</sup>, and on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July the company Félix Beick used the premises of the *Casino Alemán* for a feast for its employees, presenting the German business community to the Mexican public as law-abiding and dedicated to its employees.<sup>42</sup>

During these months preceding the arrival of the first large transports of evacuation from France which brought thousands of Spanish republican refugees into the city, the Mexican public was constantly alerted to their imminent arrival. This public feeling of anticipation coincided with the onset of the presidential election campaign which profoundly polarised Mexican politics. Several right-wing forces strongly opposing the Cárdenas administration of the PRM gathered around a possible opposition candidate, general Juan Andreu Almazán, who counted on the support of various political opposition forces. The European refugees thereby were drawn into the domestic political conflict before the vast majority of them had even arrived in the country.<sup>43</sup> In June 1939, the *Comité de Exploración pre-Candidatura General Juan Andreu Almazán* circulated rumours that "the majority of the Spanish refugees who are arriving in this country bring with them their weaponry consisting of machine guns, rifles, and pistols."<sup>44</sup> Such fears of a para-military intervention in Mexican politics by the Spanish refugees

39 „Jubilosa Fiesta del Club de España, el sábado anterior. Con extraordinaria asistencia y grande animación se efectuó el baile del España“, *Excélsior* (3 Jul 1939), p. 3.

40 See the report by Inspector PS-15 (6 Jul 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 81, exp. 4, fol. 82.

41 „Con los Exalumnos del Alemán“, *Excélsior* (9 Jul 1939); The *Secretería de Gobernación* treated the restaurant "Alt-Heidelberg" as a well-known meeting place for the Nazi sympathisers among the German-speaking community in Mexico City, see e.g. the report "Localización del alemán Arturo Dietrich" by Inspector PS-12 (23 Jan 1941) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 69, exp. 3, fol. 15.

42 „En el Casino Alemán“, *Excélsior* (17 Jul 1939).

43 Cf. Patricia W. Fagen: *Transterrados y Ciudadanos. Los republicanos españoles en México* (México D.F., 1975), pp. 42-9.

44 See the report by Inspector PS-19 (9 Jun 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 187, exp. 5, fols. 170-1.



proved to be a standard theme of the oppositional right wing in Mexico, as in the case of Rubén Vizcarra, president of the *Unión Nacional de Veteranos*, who in April 1940 accused the police of using veterans of the Spanish Civil War in violent confrontations with the supporters of the candidature of Juan Andreu Almazán for president.<sup>45</sup>

Such allegations were often coupled with more general political, economic, and moral arguments by the right-wing opposition against the policy of political asylum for the Spanish republicans during the summer of 1939. The *Acción Juvenil Anti-Comunista* polemicised against the arrival of Spanish republican refugees: they would not work the land as *campesinos* but would, through their involvement in the Mexican economy, displace the indigenous workforce. As workers, they would contribute to economic exploitation by a corrupt elite which had an eye on the “Russian money” which the Spanish republicans had acquired as traitors to their fatherland. As veterans of the Spanish Civil War their involvement with the Mexican military hierarchy would lead to the disintegration of the National Army. In this way, the organization called for resistance against the “wicked servants of Stalin on Mexican soil”.<sup>46</sup> Other groups took their protest to the streets, such as the *Partido de Salvación Pública* (PSP) which organised a protest meeting in front of the building housing their offices in calle San Juan de Letrán (today’s Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas) on 20<sup>th</sup> of June 1939. Speaking from the windows of their offices, Adolfo León Osorio asserted that the refugees’ entry into the country would be illegal and that they should be returned to where they came from, since “they did not come from Spain but from France.” He announced an “active campaign” against the arrival of refugees in Mexico while threatening “possible disorder” should the government fail to stop their arrival. Other speakers used intermissions in theatres and cinemas to convey the same message.<sup>47</sup> The city government reacted to such vocal opposition by shutting down the offices of the PSP which provoked another protest meeting of their followers at the *Monumento a Benito Juárez* in Avenida Juárez on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June which in turn was attacked by supporters of Manuel Ávila Camacho, the governing party’s (PRM) chosen candidate to succeed president Cárdenas the following year. Shots were fired and some suffered injuries, as the issue of the arrival of Spanish refugees quickly fuelled the flames of domestic political dispute between the pro-Almazán PSP and the post-revolutionary followers of the PRM (in this case the *Partido Revolucionario de Tranvarios*).<sup>48</sup> Hearing about the

45 See: “Que en la policía causaron alta varios refugiados, dice la Unión Nacional de Veteranos”, *La Prensa* (17 Apr 1940), pp. 3 & 22; cf. the report by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* by Inspectors PS-24 and PS-5 (13 Apr 1940) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 190, exp. 1, fols. 59-62; see also: “La Inmigración como instrumento político”, *El Universal* (19 Apr 1940). See also the report by Agent PS-41 (20 Apr 1940) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 190, exp. 1, fol. 90.

46 See the leaflet by the *Acción Juvenil Anti-Comunista* (12 Jun 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 132, exp. 51, fol. 1.

47 „Mitin de Protesta contra los refugiados, disuelto anoche“, *La Prensa* (21 Jun 1939).

48 See the report and press coverage „Zafarrancho entre dos grupos políticos“ in *La Prensa* (30

arrival of the “wicked servants of Stalin” will have contributed to the increasing circulation of rumours, some of which reached the agents of the *Secretaría de Gobernación*, for example receiving an information on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1939 that in a boarding house owned by Angélica del Arenal at calle París no. 7 in the district of *Tabacalera* there existed a cell of Spanish communist secret agents (“*oficina checa*”) who were allegedly plotting an assassination. This rumour, however, may have contained an element of truth as the *Secretaría de Gobernación* later recorded none other than Carlos Contreras (who was, in reality, the Italian veteran of the Spanish Civil War Vittorio Vidali) as a guest in this boarding house at calle París no. 7 when he had arrived in Mexico in spring 1939.<sup>49</sup> Political hostility and private suspicions mixed with imagined (and sometimes real) scenarios of communist infiltration and formed an atmosphere that presented a difficult environment for the European refugees and for those who supported their cause.

Against the polemic and, at times, violent background of right-wing hostility to the arrival of European anti-fascist refugees, a network of organisations and institutions existed which supported the pro-republican and anti-fascist policies of the Mexican government and lobbied actively for the refugees’ admission into the country. Of particular importance for the Spanish cause were two organisations directly related to the cause of the Spanish Republic: the *Frente Popular Español* which maintained offices in calle Venustiano Carranza no. 30 and the *Federación de Organizaciones de Ayuda a la República Española (FOARE)* operating from the Spanish consulate building at calle Balderas no. 37. Both organisations adhered to the last republican government of Juan Negrín and a certain rivalry existed in terms of the relative primacy of representing the Spanish republican cause in Mexico, as the FOARE claimed the status of a federation of all pro-republican organisations in Mexico.<sup>50</sup> The FOARE was officially a Mexican organisation headed by the writer and historian José Mancisidor. In 1937, Mancisidor (together with Octavio Paz) had represented Mexico at the Second International Congress of Writers in Defence of Culture in Spain. In November 1938, he had participated in a meeting organised by the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) at the *Teatro del Pueblo* in the *Mercado Abelardo Rodríguez* at calle República de Venezuela in the *Centro Histórico* in protest against the anti-Semitic pogroms in Germany (the so-called *Kristallnacht* of the 9<sup>th</sup> of November). After other speakers had launched personal attacks against Leon Trotsky, who had arrived as a political refugee in Mexico the year before, and called for assistance to the Spanish republicans as well as for an unlimited offer of asylum by the Mexican government for the millions of European Jews, Mancisidor accused the Nazi regime of having orchestrated the

Jun 1939).

49 See a copy of a personal memo on Contreras/Vidali (29 May 1943) at USNACP ,RG84, UD2894, 820.02 Gibson (1945), s. fol.

50 See e.g. the letter by FOARE to the *Frente Popular Español* at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 140, exp. 6589, s. fol. (12 Jul 1939).

pretext of the pogroms (the assassination of the German legation councillor von Rath in Paris) in order to attack the Jewish minority in Germany. He saw Germany sliding back into an age of “barbarism of the 17<sup>th</sup> century”.<sup>51</sup> The FOARE president thereby demonstrated a broader commitment to all victims of fascist prosecution in Europe, not just the Spanish republicans. The Jewish Women’s Committee responded on the same occasion with a leaflet which called for donations to FOARE towards aid for the Spanish victims of fascist bombing campaigns, primarily the women and children, because, the Jewish women asserted, “when we help the Spanish children, we are helping the whole Spanish people which struggles against the enemy of our own people, the Nazis and fascists of the whole world.”<sup>52</sup> The FOARE thus stood at the centre of a transnational public in Mexico City which tried to mobilise the broadest possible support for anti-fascism, even if compromises with the Stalinist ideology of international communism needed to be made.

From among the pro-republican intellectuals, politicians, and trade unionists first initiatives to institutionalise the presence of Spanish republican emigrants in the city were ventilated, the most important of which was the project of a Spanish centre of advanced study which adopted the name of *Casa de España en México*. The idea had first been presented to the Mexican government in 1936 by the Mexican social scientist Daniel Cosío Villegas, founder of the publishing house *Fondo de Cultura Económica* (FCE).<sup>53</sup> Since its foundation in August of 1938, the *Casa de España* invited a great number of Spanish republican intellectuals and academics before in 1940 it became the nucleus of the Mexican *Colegio de México*.<sup>54</sup> The *Casa de España*’s first location under the presidency of the Mexican writer Alfonso Reyes<sup>55</sup> were two modest offices rented from the *Banco Nacional Hipotecario Urbana* at calle Madero no. 32.<sup>56</sup> The emigration of

51 See the report on the meeting (17 Nov 1938) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 141, exp. 24, f. 2.

52 See the leaflet „Zu di jidische Froien in Meksiko, zu der jidische Kolonie in allgemein“ (Nov 1938) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 141, exp. 24, f. 3.

53 Cf. Clara E. Lida: „La fundación de La Casa España en México. Un eslabón entre México y la Segunda República española: 1931-1940”, *Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza* 91-92 (2013), pp. 9-17; Ead. and José Antonio Matesanz: *La Casa de España en México, Centro de Estudios Históricos* (México, D.F., 1988).

54 Clara E. Lida and José Antonio Matesanz: *El Colegio de México: una hazaña cultural, 1940-1962* (México, D.F., 1990); *La Casa de España y el Colegio de México: memoria, 1938-2000*, ed. by Clara Eugenia Lida, José Antonio Matesanz, and Josefina Zoraida Vázquez (México, D.F., 2000); see also the published collection of documents by Martí Soler Vinyes (ed.): *La Casa del Exodo: los exiliados y su obra en la Casa de España en México y el Colegio de México (1938-1947)* (México, D.F., 1999).

55 Clara E. Lida: „Alfonso Reyes y El Colegio de México”, *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 37/2 (1989), pp. 481-6.

56 Ead. and José Antonio Matesanz: *La Casa de España en México, Centro de Estudios Históricos* (México, D.F., 1988), p. 77; Ágüeda Pía Fernández: *Una Mujer en Vilo* (México D.F., 1999), p. 57.

eminent scholars and intellectuals thus preceded the arrival of the majority of refugees during the summer of 1939.

Another important source of political support and influence for the European anti-fascist refugees were the Mexican trade unions under the corporatist umbrella of the *Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos* (CTM). A number of its constituent member organisations were actively involved in the support and propagation of the anti-fascist cause of the popular front policies and joined the cause in favour of the European refugees, among them the *Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas* (SME), the *Sindicato de Telefonistas de la República Mexicana* (STRM), the *Sindicato de Cinematografistas*, and the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC). Under the leadership of Vicente Lombardo Toledano, the CTM had developed a distinctly Marxist and pro-Soviet political orientation which led to the alliance with the European popular front movements and its solidarity with the Soviet Union which Lombardo had visited in 1935.<sup>57</sup> These sympathies found their expression in public demonstrations of comradeship in Mexico City, as on 7<sup>th</sup> of November 1937 when the CTM staged a celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian October Revolution in the prestigious *Palacio de Bellas Artes*.<sup>58</sup> One of the main speakers on that day was the German writer Ernst Toller, a veteran of the German Revolution of 1918/19 and himself a political refugee, who had visited the Mexican capital from his US-American exile in New York City. His presence in Mexico led to contacts with the small German-speaking group of anti-fascists in the city, above all with Heinrich Gutmann who initiated the foundation of a German anti-fascist organisation in Mexico. After aborted attempts at a German “popular front”, this organisation emerged in March 1938 as the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* (LPC) which would utilise a humanistic understanding of German culture to promote the cultural resistance against official German propaganda efforts in the city.<sup>59</sup> Apart from Gutmann, the LPC was represented by the journalist Alfred Miller, who worked for the *Daily Worker* in New York, and the local dentist Mauricio Luft.<sup>60</sup> Through Gutmann the LPC enjoyed excellent connections with Mexican government

57 Daniela Spenser: „El Viaje de Vicente Lombardo Toledano al Mundo del Porvenir”, *Desacatos* 34 (2010), pp. 77-96; Andrea Aclé-Kreysing: „Antifascismo: un espacio de encuentro entre el exilio y la política nacional. El caso de Vicente Lombardo Toledano en México (1936-1945)”, *Revista de Indias* LXXVI/267 (2016), pp. 573-609.

58 „Chronik der kulturellen und politischen Veranstaltungen verschiedener Organisationen in Mexiko“, in: *Österreicher im Exil, Mexiko 1938-1947. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Christian Kloyber and Marcus G. Patka (Wien, 2002), p. 600.

59 Cf. Fritz Pohle: *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 83-9; Gutmann’s own political pedigree remains somewhat unclear: he certainly defied any party political labels, and even had given a press interview to the Mexican journalist Esperanza Velázquez Bringas in September 1934 (two months before the inauguration of incoming Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas), in which he defended the peace-loving intentions of the German people – while failing even to mention its Nazi government; see a copy at AGN, DGIPS, caja 122, exp. 45, fol. 4.

60 See the memorandum on the LPC (31 Mar 1938) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 205, exp. 6, fol. 2.

circles, the Mexican trade unions, and the post-revolutionary elites in general. Until April 1939, the LPC maintained an office at Avenida Juárez no. 60 (on the floor below the pro-Nazi news agency *Transocean*, run by NSDAP party member Kurt Benoit-Duems) before moving to calle Bucareli no. 12, desp. 412, a building which also housed the Mexican *Ateneo de Ciencias y Artes*. Among the *Comité Patrocinador* of the LPC featured personalities such as the writer Ermilo Abreu Gómez, the biologist Enrique Beltrán, the Mexican consul in Marseille Gilberto Bosques, supreme court justice Alberto Bremauntz, the director of the newspaper *El Popular* (affiliated with the CTM) Alejandro Carrillo, the president of FOARE José Mancisidor, the composer Silvestre Revueltas, and the writer Víctor Manuel Villaseñor.<sup>61</sup> Such high-ranking supporters associated themselves publicly with the LPC at events across the city. One of the most effective and cheapest ways for the LPC to make contact with the Mexican public was the use of the national radio network to promote its cause. Lombardo Toledano opened a series of radio lectures on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1938 with a treatise on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe – a lecture which, demonstrating his considerable intellectual ambitions, he would later publish in book form.<sup>62</sup> The topics of the 36 lectures organised by the LPC in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* and sponsored by the CTM attracted audiences of 1.000 to even 4.000 people and covered the works of eminent German authors, such as Heinrich Heine, Immanuel Kant, the brothers Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Stefan Zweig, Erich Maria Remarque, as well as Hegel, Marx, and Engels. Other contributions reflected more generally on questions of modern economics and society, problems of ethnicity, gender, and anti-Semitism, different forms of fascism in Italy, Germany, and Spain, as well as in Latin America and Japan, and the series ended with another lecture by Lombardo Toledano on the question “How to combat fascism?” on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1939.<sup>63</sup> Most of these events were transmitted to the Mexican public via radio and regularly advertised by posters designed by Jesús Escobedo of the *Taller Gráfica Popular*.<sup>64</sup> Speakers included members of the LPC’s *Comité Patrocinador* as well as the historian Jesús Silva

61 See the introduction of the LPC to the *Secretario de Gobernación* Ignacio García Téllez at AGN, DGIPS, caja 205, exp. 6, fol. 2-3 (Mar 1938); a letter by the LPC to the Mexican consul in Marseille Gilberto Bosques (3 Apr 1939), reproduced in: *Letzte Zuflucht Mexiko. Gilberto Bosques und das deutschsprachige Exil nach 1939* (Ausstellungskatalog, Akademie der Künste Berlin, 2012), p. 294; on Benoit-Duems see the memoranda at AGN, DGIPS, caja31, exp. 27, fols. 1 & 4 (5 Sep and 6 Oct 1941); a copy of an LPC memorandum on behalf of German refugees (22 May 1939) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 51179, s. fol.

62 Vicente Lombardo Toledano: *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe* (México, D.F., 1944).

63 For the dates and topics see the list: „Chronik der kulturellen und politischen Veranstaltungen verschiedener Organisationen in Mexiko“, in: *Österreicher im Exil, Mexiko 1938-1947. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Christian Kloyber and Marcus G. Patka (Wien, 2002), pp. 600-2; cf. Gutmann’s report on the LPC’s activities to Karl Kautsky in New York (11 Nov 1940) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 18884/5, s. fol.; see also the publication of parts of the series in: *La Verdadera Cultura Alemana. 6 actos culturales organizados por la Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana en México* (México D.F., 1938).

64 Some examples can be found in Helga Prignitz: *TGP. Ein Grafikerkollektiv in Mexiko von 1937-1977* (Berlin, 1981), pp. 63-5.

Herzog, the Italian socialist Francisco Frola, and Daniel Cosío Villegas. The relatively small group of German anti-fascists thus gained a position of disproportionate attention in the Mexican public by occupying important stages in the Mexican capital from which to promote their message of opposition to the dictatorships of European fascism. Their aims during this period coincided with those of the Mexican political and cultural post-revolutionary elites, as in the case of CTM leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano who at the invitation of the German-speaking anti-fascists spoke once again at *Palacio de Bellas Artes* on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1939 about the economic, political, and ethical grounds for Mexico to participate in the global struggle against fascism.<sup>65</sup> By 1940, the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* had moved its offices to calle Ramón Guzmán no. 125 in the district of *San Rafael* further to the west which indicated its decreasing influence as the arrival of more and more political refugees from Europe shifted the agency of German-speaking political activities to other organizations. The LPC would eventually cease to be publicly active by March 1943.<sup>66</sup>

The Mexican Communist Party (PCM) itself displayed its support for the case of the Spanish republican refugees, as was noted by the agents of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* on the 4<sup>th</sup> July, when the PCM organised a meeting at the *Teatro del Pueblo* to commemorate the US-American Day of Independence. Party leader Hernán Laborde used the occasion to remind the public that the PCMs supported the government party PRM in the upcoming critical election campaign and would not, therefore, field its own presidential candidate. Instead, he accused a number of right-wing political parties of promoting reactionary ideologies in opposition to the Cárdenas government – he named the *Partido Anticomunista*, the *Partido de Reconstrucción Nacional*, the *Frente Constitucional Democrático*, the *Unión de Veteranos de la Revolución*, and the *Partido de Salvación Pública*. The celebration of US-American democracy and freedom, thereby, was contrasted by him and other speakers with the victory of fascism in Spain and across Europe and ended in calls to support the Spanish refugees.<sup>67</sup>

Just a few weeks later, however, the German-Soviet non-aggression pact and invasion of Poland would make such public displays of solidarity between the pro-Soviet political forces of the Mexican trade unions and the German anti-fascists impossible. The sudden alliance between National Socialists and Soviet Communists evidently caused some confusion in Mexico City. As the oppositional

65 See the full text of his speech in a report by Inspector PS-4 (21 Jul 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 205, exp. 6, fols. 16-25; press coverage of the event: „Mexico Bar to Fascism, says Lombardo Toledano“, *Mexico Today* I/19 (22 Jul 1939), p. 6.

66 See the report by Manuel M. Barrera (25 Mar 1943) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 205, exp. 6, fol. 1.; cf. Fritz Pohle: *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 188-200.

67 See the report by M. Tomaza Rincón (5 Jul 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 141, exp. 24, fols. 4-6rev.

press noted, a crowd of communist activists had gathered in protest in front of the German embassy building at Calle Córdoba no. 14 on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 1939, although “in fact, it is unknown against whom they were protesting, since the many voices got mixed up; all that was noticeable were swear words, and therefore the police intervened [...]” Some communists were detained and the crowd dispersed.<sup>68</sup> Two weeks later, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September, the leader of the Mexican communist party (PCM) Hernán Laborde justified in a public meeting at the *Teatro Hidalgo* at calle Régina no. 52 the Soviet invasion of Poland as an act of “liberation of the world proletariat” and hailed Stalin as a “defender of oppressed minorities” in Poland. Pedro Martínez Cartón spoke in the name of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) whose members exiled in Mexico “think of reconquering Spain” and used the lessons of the Spanish Civil War to warn the Mexican audience in rather general terms to be vigilant against “internal and external enemies”.<sup>69</sup> While the oppositional paper *Excelsior* evidently relished the opportunity to point out confusion and hypocrisy among the Mexican communists and Spanish refugees, the paper openly advertised the idea of the continuing historical and cultural links of Mexico with Spain in terms of a celebration of “Hispanidad”, the very concept that the Spanish *Falange* promoted to create “spiritual bonds” between Franco’s Spain and Latin America.<sup>70</sup> Alongside an illustrated celebration of the achievements of Spanish colonial rule in the Americas, the paper invited José Vasconcelos to reflect on *Paniberismo*, a thinly veiled theory of racial interconnectedness between the peoples of the former Spanish and Portuguese colonial possessions.<sup>71</sup> During the 1920s, Vasconcelos had been the chief promoter of Mexico’s post-revolutionary ethnic ideal of *mestizaje*, the fusion of Spanish and indigenous “races” to form a new “*raza cósmica*” in the New World. While this original ideal of hybrid ethnicity had already excluded Slavs, Jews, and Asian minorities from access to the imagination of post-revolutionary Mexican identity, Vasconcelos became notorious for his sympathies and collaboration with Nazi propaganda in Mexico after the outbreak of the European war. During 1940, his short-lived journal *Timón* was financed by the German propaganda agent Arthur Dietrich and contained open praise and adulation of Nazi Germany and its *Führer*.<sup>72</sup> The fact that Vasconcelos and his

68 „Escándalo frente a la legación alemana. Elementos de filiación comunista en manifestación de protesta“, *Excelsior* (8 Sep 1939), pp. 1 & 6.

69 „Desde México, los comunistas disculpan al »Libertador de los Proletarios del Mundo«,“ *Excelsior* (20 Sep 1939), pp. 1 & 8.

70 See the „Edición dedicada a España“ of *Excelsior* (22 Sep 1939).

71 José Vasconcelos: „Paniberismo“, *ibid.*, pp. 1 & 10.

72 On Vasconcelos’ collaboration with National Socialism see Itzhak Bar-Lewaw: „La Revista »Timón« y la colaboración nazi de José Vasconcelos”, *Actas de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas* (1971), pp. 151-6; Héctor Orestes Aguilar: „Ese olvidado nazi mexicano de nombre José Vasconcelos”, *Istor: revista de historia internacional* 8/30 (2007); pp. 148-57; Mauricio Pilatowsky: „El acercamiento de José Vasconcelos al Nazismo y su dirección de la revista El Timón”, *Estudios: Filosofía Historia y Letras del ITAM* 110, vol. XII (otoño 2014), pp. 159-75.

journal collaborated with the Nazi propaganda of the German legation was openly publicised at the time.<sup>73</sup> The ideological and violent conflicts of Europe therefore played a direct role in the unfolding political disputes in Mexico City, both among the Mexican public which faced an internal political crisis at the end of the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas as well as between and within the European expatriate colonies and the growing number of political refugees who entered the city.

While the German-Soviet alliance between 1939 and 1941 meant that the German-speaking anti-fascists considerably lost support and public presence among the pro-Soviet elites of the city, the Spanish anti-fascist groups experienced a political and topographical re-alignment in the wake of the defeat of the Spanish Republic in spring 1939. The Spanish consulate at calle Balderas no. 37 was transformed into the political centre of Spanish republicanism in Mexico: the *Centro Republicano Español*. The FOARE which had occupied the building until then, moved its offices to a building at calle Lucerna 55 in the city district of Juárez before taking up more permanent offices in calle Artes 50 in the district of Tabacalera.<sup>74</sup> The *Centro Republicano* was dominated by the centre-left of the political spectrum of Spanish republicans with a clear anti-communist orientation, dominated by Indalecio Prieto who assumed a leading role within the group of Spanish socialists who were opposed to the popular front policies of the last Prime Minister Juan Negrín (who briefly visited Mexico in June 1939, but later continued his exile in London). The official inauguration of the *Centro Republicano* took place on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1939, just days before the arrival of the first evacuation transport from France. Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas had sent a representative, and alongside the first president of the newly-founded *Centro Republicano*, the writer and fellow of the *Casa de España* Enrique Diez Canedo, the list of attendees from among the exiled Spanish republicans included general José Miaja (legendary for the defence of Madrid in 1936), the former republican Foreign Minister Julio Álvarez del Vayo, the last Spanish ambassador to Mexico Félix Gordón Ordáz, the poet León Felipe, and the Mexican intellectual and president of the *Casa de España en México*, Alfonso Reyes. The absence of Indalecio Prieto himself was noted.<sup>75</sup> While the moderate republican elements among the Spanish exile community gathered in the *Centro Republicano*, the *Frente Popular Español* was finally dissolved in October 1939. Instead, the premises at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 30 were used to set up the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano*, an institution which was to become one of the most important political meeting places for the international anti-Soviet Left in Mexico

73 „A Nazi Fifth Column and Communist allies are active in Mexico“, *Life Magazine* (10 Jun 1940), pp. 51-7; Vasconcelos and Dietrich could be seen posing for a picture together on p. 52.

74 See e.g. a letter from FOARE to the US ambassador (8 Feb 1941) at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 800M-800R (1941), s. fol.; letter by numerous Spanish military officers in exile to the US ambassador (Nov 1942) at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 800M-800Ref (1941), s. fol.

75 „Se inauguró el Centro Español“, *Excelsior* (11 Jun 1939), p. 3.



City. The transformation of this centre of anti-fascist political activism into a focus for anti-communism happened against the backdrop of dramatically changed political circumstances which did not leave the Spanish republicans untouched:

The European conflict and the foreign policy of the powers which until a few days ago were sworn enemies and now, to the great surprise of all good anti-Fascists, unite and embrace each other, made almost all members of the *Frente [Popular Español]* realise that it would be a real farce to maintain this name any longer, in spite of its prestige of always having stood fast and, even after defeat, represented the anti-Fascist force of a great number of Spaniards who selflessly sacrificed themselves, rushed forward with gallantry and made intense propaganda for the Spanish republican cause.<sup>76</sup>

Under the leadership of Raúl Cordero Amador and Manuel Suárez Mier the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* hoped to contribute to the education of independent minds while rejecting religion as well as “any determinist sociological tendency” in order to establish “a nucleus of workers of the mind and of the muscle”.<sup>77</sup> Just as in the case of the relative silence of the German-speaking anti-fascists of the LPC, the foundation of the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* marked the break of the independent anti-fascist Left with communism in the wake of the *revirement* of coalitions in Europe at the outset of the Second World War, and this re-alignment of the political Left was inscribed onto the political topography of the city.

The Spanish communists reacted to their isolation by setting up their own political institutions in exile, above all their weekly periodical *España Popular* which established its first offices in February 1940 at Calle San Juan de Letrán (today: Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas) no. 13 (desp. 311), before moving more permanently to premises at calle Rosales no. 2, halfway between the *Monumento a la Revolución* and the *Alemeda Central* off the northern end of the Paseo de la Reforma. In 1942, the editorial offices were finally moved to the party headquarters at calle Morelos no. 77 in the district of Juárez and became a fixture in the topography of left-wing politics in Mexico City.<sup>78</sup> The date of the first edition in 1940 was chosen carefully, as the 16<sup>th</sup> of February marked the fourth anniversary of the electoral victory of the Spanish *Frente Popular* in 1936. On the front page of its first edition, the communist paper hailed the united front of workers and the popular front as the two political weapons at the disposal of the Spanish people, assured of its final victory against the Franco regime and

76 „El Frente Popular Español se ha transformado“, *Iberia. Portavoz de la colonia española antifascista* I/21 (18 Nov 1939)

77 „El Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano. Preámbulo y Fines que inspira su fundación“, *Iberia* I/22 (24 Nov 1939), p. 8.

78 See “»España Popular« cambia de domicilio”, *España Popular* III/92, (5 Jun 1942), p. 6.

demanded such a unity of action must work “without cowards nor traitors!”<sup>79</sup> The argument, thus, ran diametrically opposed to that of the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* which had given up on the idea of the *Frente Popular* which, they felt, had been betrayed by the Soviet decision to enter the alliance with Nazi Germany in August of 1939. *España Popular* tried to utilise the anniversary of the election victory of 1936 to remind its readers: “The union of the *Frente Popular* (which stretched from the catholic Basques to the Communist Party) delivered victory to the Spanish people.”<sup>80</sup> The issue of the sudden turn of Soviet foreign policy was only hinted at in veiled terms while the main thrust of the argument aimed at the calamitous role of the Western powers during the Spanish Civil War and supposedly unreliable and dangerous elements in the ranks of anti-fascism:

The *Frente Popular* thus remains the only just policy, in Spain and elsewhere, the only policy which allows us to regain the homeland which in this moment is exposed to Francoist repression and foreign voracity. But without traitors, without capitulators, without cowards, without elements that are prepared to sell the cause of the people every time a setback makes the challenge more difficult or more dangerous, forged in the factories, in the fields, and in the hearts of the people.<sup>81</sup>

At this moment, the stage was set for internal strife and conflict among the transnational Left in Mexico – and Leon Trotsky had another six months to live.

## **b. Early Institutions and Encounters**

The arrival of thousands of mainly Spanish refugees since June 1939 (the first evacuation transport, the vessel *Sinaia*, arrived in the port of Veracruz on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 1939) prompted activities from among the Spanish ex-patriate colony to organize help and support for the new arrivals. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, the *Orfeo Català* set up a *Comité de Ayuda a los Refugiados Españoles* under the direction of José Puig, José Clavería, and Joan Rovira and issued a circular call for financial contributions on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June.<sup>82</sup> Of critical importance, however, were efforts by the Spanish colony as a whole to create opportunities for employment for the republican refugees, given the political polarisation between the largely nationalist pro-Franco business community in Mexico City and the left-wing republican orientation of the incoming exiles. In June 1939, the Spanish business community

79 „Por la reconquista y la liberación de España, ¡Ni una tregua en la Lucha!“, *España Popular* I/1 (18 Feb 1940), p. 1.

80 „16 de Febrero. Lo que votó y lo que quería el pueblo español“, *España Popular* I/1 (18 Feb 1940), p. 2.

81 Ibid.

82 See the circular letter (20 Jun 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 81, exp. 4, fol. 81.

held a meeting at the *Casino Español* uniting representatives of all Spanish associations in order to provide employment for the refugees. This was to be done in cooperation with the Mexican government which was anxious to see the incoming population of refugees to be economically self-sufficient as the Cárdenas government had based its offer of asylum for Spanish republicans in Mexico on the condition that this would not cause any additional cost for the Mexican public purse. An agent of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* reported that from the community of Spanish business owners concerns were being voiced that the hiring additional staff from among the refugees would bring them into conflict with existing Mexican labour laws which limited the percentage of foreigners employed in any business in Mexico in order to avoid discrimination against Mexican labour. The Spanish business community feared that

in case they admitted to their staff someone of the mentioned »refugees« they would operate outside the Labour Law and therefore would always expose themselves to a visit of one of the inspectors finding that the number of foreigners was higher than the said law required. Consequently, they would face the obligation of either sacking one of the foreigners or increase the number of Mexican employees. In view of this, they believe that if the government were to pass a provision that the »political refugees«, for the purpose of employment, were to be regarded as Mexican nationals, this difficulty and the fear of the business owners would disappear.

More important, however, were economic and political reservations: even though the current economic situation was regarded as unfavourable, they would make the “sacrifice” of hiring “one or two extra employees” but, significantly, added that this was based on the provision that “they would not engage in politics”.<sup>83</sup> At a subsequent meeting of the Spanish business and industrial community on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July at the *Círculo Vasco Español* at calle 16 de Septiembre no. 51, the general feeling turned out to be even less favourable to the idea of providing employment for refugees. Presided over by the president of the *Círculo Vasco Español*, Juan José Sanmartín, the assembled businessmen affirmed their “great enthusiasm” to cooperate with the Mexican government in the creation of jobs for refugees, but their “great and good will as well as their humanitarian feelings come up against the reality of facts because of a thousand circumstances, especially the lack of work in their businesses and factories.” Another excuse highlighted the powerful role of the trade unions in hiring decisions: “One, and possibly the greatest difficulty [...] is the trade union which openly opposes giving work to Spaniards before the Mexicans, since at the moment there are many among them without work.” And even though employees in the garment trade were not unionised they would understand “that if staff is increased in times when sales are paralysed and they are spending most of their day behind the counter without activity, there

83 Memorandum by Inspector PS-15 at AGN, DGIPS, caja 81, exp. 4, fol. 74, undated (Jun 1939).

would come the day when the boss would decide to sack someone of the Mexican elements, making things worse for all.”<sup>84</sup> The following day, the inspector José M. Clavé reported on his visits to several Spanish clubs and associations in order to obtain lists of businesses associated with the members of these institutions. It appears that the *Orfeó Català* was only too happy to provide this information, as were the *Centro Vasco* and the *Casino Español*, but that others, such as the secretary of the *Centro Asturiano*, Sinfiriano Fernández, and the secretary of the *Centro Gallego* were evidently reluctant to meet with him.<sup>85</sup> In this context, Clavé reported a conversation which he claimed to have overheard in one of the Spanish centres and which “could be of interest to Señor Francisco Trejo [the Mexican *Director General de Población*]”, and he reported the exchange of opinions verbatim:

[One said:] I heard that [José] Loredó Aparicio [the last *Chargé d’Affairs* of the Spanish republican embassy in Mexico] has obtained a post in the Secretaría de Gobernación with the task of bringing the members of the [Spanish] colony to provide jobs for the new arrivals, but this is a manoeuvre of this man to use pressure and take revenge [...] It is a real shame that this man meddles in such good works that the Mexican government is doing and that he has no other goal than to show off. Molesting us who do not meddle in politics and putting into shade the great work they say Trejo is doing. Well (said the other), I cannot get a job for anyone, but even if I could, I would not do it if that one asked me, since he is not just anyone and only inflicted damage upon us; it would be an entirely different matter if the Mexican government asked me, since – after all, I have much to thank this country for – it is as if it were mine.<sup>86</sup>

Even if it is impossible to ascertain the veracity of this episode, it is evident that Clavé tried to convey the mood of the Spanish business community which was, above all, hostile to the influence of Spanish republicans in Mexican government circles while the new Franco administration (to which they themselves evidently adhered) had no official representation in Mexico. As much as the two unnamed interlocutors may have expressed their loyalty to the Mexican government, they appeared prepared to boycott the government’s efforts to provide employment for the republican refugees, as long as the Mexican government did not forsake its continuing allegiance to the republican cause.<sup>87</sup> Apart from being a former

84 Report by Inspector PS-15 at AGN, DGIPS, caja 81, exp. 4, fol. 75 (6 Jul 1939).

85 Memorandum by inspector José M. Clavé on his visits to the Spanish clubs and casinos at AGN, DGIPS, caja 81, exp. 4, fol. 77-8 (7 Jul 1939).

86 Ibid., fol. 78.

87 Generally on the hostility of the Spanish ex-patriate colony and the right-wing Mexican opposition towards the republican refugees, see: Lourdes Márquez Morfin: „Los republicanos españoles en 1939: política, inmigración y hostilidad”, *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 458

republican diplomat, 20 years earlier Loredo Aparicio had also been a co-founder of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) and since his arrival at the Spanish embassy in Mexico in 1938 a prolific orator and author against Franco and Spanish fascism. That he should have been singled out for animosity among the Spanish business community in Mexico may be taken as an indication of the political agenda of the Spanish colony (and/or of some anti-communist feelings shared by the reporting inspector).

During the first days of July, this display of anti-republican resentment among the Spanish business community was accompanied by a remarkably different tone in the Mexican right-wing press. Just before the imminent arrival of the third evacuation transport (the vessel *Ipanema*) in Veracruz, the newspaper *Excélsior* painted a rosy picture of the situation of the refugees that had arrived so far, since “it can be said that those that arrived with the *Sinaia* have been completely distributed and accommodated.” The *Director General de Población* Francisco Trejo would, so the article continued, constantly receive job offers for Spanish technicians, farmers, and professionals. The cooperation of the *Orfeó Català* was duly mentioned while simultaneously downplaying the number and influence of the political leadership of the Spanish republicans. Isolated incidents of protests against the influx of refugees (as one was reported from Huatusco) had found no echo elsewhere in the country and the government would take measures to protect the refugees.<sup>88</sup> When combined with the reports of reservations among the Spanish business community, the right-wing opposition forces in the city were trying (after the Spanish *Falange* had been outlawed and the opposition had failed to prevent the immigration of republican refugees in the first place) to present an optimistic scenario that would not require interventionist measures by the government, while trying to isolate the political and diplomatic leadership of the Spanish republicans which was depicted as creating unnecessary discord between the government and the Spanish ex-patriate colony as well as within the Spanish community. The right-wingers’ ideal scenario appeared in the pages of *Excélsior* a month later when the republican refugees arriving on the vessel *Mexique* were described as farmers and workers who would settle in the states of Veracruz and Michoacán (that is to say, at some distance from the capital city) while not professing any political allegiances: “We were in the trenches to defend purely Spanish principles and ideals, and we do not mix with communism and come prepared to work in Mexico without following instructions and even less so engaging in politics [...]”, they were quoted.<sup>89</sup> The ideal Spanish refugee, therefore, appeared as a hard-working, patriotic, and de-politicised rural labourer, not far removed from the ideal subject of the new Franco regime in Spain.

(1988), pp. 127-50, esp. pp. 137-49.

88 „Al llegar los refugiados del »Ipanema«, ya estarán distribuidos los primeros“, *Excélsior* (5 Jul 1939), pp. 1 & 11.

89 „Los españoles llegados en el »Mexique« no reconocen a ningún jefe en este país“, *Excélsior* (4 Aug 1939), pp. 1 & 8.

Apart from relying on the support from the ex-patriate Spanish business community, the arrival of the republican refugees was first and foremost financed by the *Servicio de Evacuación de Refugiados Españoles* (SERE). Under instructions from Juan Negrín in London, José Puche had arrived in Mexico at the end of March 1939 to set up a Mexican branch of this republican aid organisation: the *Comité Técnico de Ayuda a los Republicanos Españoles* (CTARE) which came into existence on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 1939.<sup>90</sup> Among the first activities of CTARE in Mexico City was the creation and financing of accommodation and subsidised meals.<sup>91</sup> The centres of temporary accommodation (the *albergues*) were located to the west of the city centre in the districts of *Roma*, *Juárez*, *Condesa* and *San Rafael*. At the beginning of August 1939, first reports to the *Secretaría de Gobernación* indicated that at that time CTARE provided housing for 55 refugees at calle Chilpancingo no. 164 (district of *Roma Sur*), 36 at nearby calle Huatusco no. 32, about 100 refugees at calle Lucerna no. 65 (district of *Juárez*), 55 more at calle Niza no. 71 of the same district, and 61 refugees at calle Serapio Rendón no. 125 (to the north in the district of *San Rafael*).

*Albergues run by CTARE in Mexico City (between Aug 1939 and May 1940)*<sup>92</sup>

address	number of residents 1939/40					meals served <sup>93</sup>
	Aug <sup>94</sup>	Oct	Dec	Jan	May	
Atlixco 49			125		107	
Calz. de Tacubaya 26				44	55	250 (May-Aug 40)
Chilpancingo 164	55		33			47 (Jun 39 – Jan 40)
Huatusco 32	36	40		22	41	
Lucerna 65	100	91	43	62	81	234 (Jun 39-Jul 40)
Monte de Piedad 1	7 (Jun-Jul 39)					
Niza 71	55	27	28	45	50	187 (Jun 39- Aug 40)
Serapio Rendón 125	61	42	31	43	42	55 (Jun 39-Jul 40)
Sinaloa 56						36 (Jun-Oct 40)
Sor Juana I. de la Cruz 112					24	199 (May-Aug 40)

90 The best summary of the republican efforts of evacuation and supporting aid organisations is provided by Abdón Mateos: *La Batalla de México: final de la Guerra Civil y ayuda a los refugiados, 1939-1945* (Madrid, 2009), on CTARE: pp. 86-102.

91 Cf. Aurelio Velázquez Hernández, *La Otra Cara del Exilio. Los organismos de ayuda a los republicanos españoles en México (1939-1949)*, doctoral thesis (Universidad de Salamanca, Facultad de Geografía e Historia, 2012), pp. 138-48.

92 According to the files of the *Comité Técnico de Ayuda a los Refugiados Españoles* (CTARE), BNAH, fondo CTARE, sección Auxilios y Albergues, rollo 121, exps. 6420-6434 and 6437, fols. 2 & 6; Lists of residents in the *albergues* at calle Monte de la Piedad no. 1, Sor Juana de la Cruz no. 112, and Sinaloa no. 56 do not survive in the CTARE files, but the number of residents taking meals at the *comedores* while having their domicile listed under those three addresses provides minimum numbers given here.

93 Dates according to the „Relación de los albergues y comedores [...]“ (1940) at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 137, exp. 6478, s. fol., p. 2; none of the *albergues* and *comedores* lasted beyond the autumn of 1940.

94 AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 10, fol. 51 (8 Aug 1939).

Accommodation was also provided at several hotels across the city: for 34 persons at the Hotel “Guerrero”, 49 at the Hotel “Estrella”, 4 persons at the Hotel “Laredo”, 39 at the Hotel “Terminal”, 6 at the Hotel “Colonia”, and 19 others at the Hotel “Morelia”.<sup>95</sup> Other hotels used by CTARE to house refugees were the Hotel “Castilla”, Hotel “Roma”, the Hotel “Imperial”, Hotel “Asturias”, Hotel “Vizcaya”, and the *Hogar Vasco*.<sup>96</sup> Collective canteens (the *comedores*) were being planned for a total of 335 daily meals at the *albergues* located at calle Serapio Rendón no. 125, calle Niza no. 71, and calle Chilpancingo no. 164. In 1940, the infrastructure of CTARE reached its maximum capacity with a total of 9 *albergues* across the city (the one at calle Monte de la Piedad no. 1 was already closed in September of 1939) which could house more than 500 persons and served meals to almost 1.000 persons each day. These *albergues* saw a considerable fluctuation of occupants as the number of residents dropped to 265 in January 1940 before rising again to 442 in May 1940.<sup>97</sup>

Alongside these services for refugees in immediate need of housing and food, the CTARE also developed initiatives of investment in newly created firms.<sup>98</sup> More than half of its initial investment was used to set up an agricultural colony “Santa Clara” in the northern state of Chihuahua, but CTARE was also economically active in the capital city. Among the most important establishments were the metal construction workshop “Vulcano S.A.” which provided employment for industrial workers, electricians, carpenters, engineers, draughtsmen, and some secretarial staff. The labour office of CTARE counted around 140 of these employees.<sup>99</sup> The workshops were located at the western outskirts of the city at the Avenida Ferrocarril de Cuernavaca no. 799<sup>100</sup>, just north of the as yet scarcely developed district of *Polanco* and in close proximity to the *Beneficiencia Española*, the hospital of the Spanish ex-patriate colony. In addition, the *Comité Técnico* also maintained an institute of financial services, the *Financiera Industrial Agrícola S.A. (FIASA)*, located on the corner of calle Balderas and Independencia in the city district *Centro* south of the *Alameda*

95 See the list at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 10, fol. 51 (8 Aug 1939).

96 According to the list provided in the „Relación de los albergues y comedores [...]“ (1940) at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 137, exp. 6478, s. fol., p. 1.

97 See the statistics at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 121, exp. 6437, fols. 2 & 6; see also the report provided by *Boletín al Servicio de la Emigración Española*, no. 47 (20 Jul 1940), p. 3, which gave a total number of 597 refugees staying in ten *albergues*, as quoted in Pilar Domínguez Prats: *De Ciudadanas a Exiliadas. Un estudio sobre las republicanas españolas en México* (Madrid, 2009), p. 106.

98 On the – largely unsuccessful – economic activities of CTARE see Aurelio Velázquez Hernández: „El Exilio Español: ¿un impulso económico para México? la iniciativa empresarial del CTARE en 1939”, in: Abdón Mateos and Agustín Sánchez Andrés (eds): *Ruptura y Transición. España y México, 1939* (Madrid, 2011), pp. 227-49; for a fuller analysis see Id.: *La Otra Cara del Exilio*, pp. 193-272.

99 See BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 117, exp. 6367, fols. 1-10.

100 See the reference at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 140, exp. 6587, fol. 7.

*Central* which initially employed around 30, mostly clerical staff.<sup>101</sup> The *Industrias Químicos-Farmacéuticas Americana S.A.* produced pharmaceutical products and employed a modest number of highly qualified and specialised staff.<sup>102</sup> The printing house *Industrial Gráfica* was a less successful economic venture of CTARE which existed only until 1941 and employed up to 37 staff<sup>103</sup>, while the publishing house *Editorial Séneca* under the direction of José Bergamín at calle Varsovia 35-A in the district of *Juárez* belonged to the best-known and most successful economic and cultural activities of CTARE until it was closed in 1948.<sup>104</sup> The editorial not only established itself at the centre of the literary and political circles of the Spanish community in exile but also maintained close links with and provided a venue for cultural and political initiatives from among the anti-fascist groups of other nationalities in exile in Mexico City, most notably the German and Italian communities with prevailing pro-communist sympathies.<sup>105</sup> But the most important initiatives of CTARE was without doubt the educational project of two new schools<sup>106</sup>: The *Instituto Luis Vives* and the *Academia Hispano-Americana*. The former was the first school established by the academic elite of Spanish refugees and began to operate as early as in August of 1939 in a building at the corner of calle Sadí Carnot and calle Valentín Gómez Farías in the district of *San Rafael*, four blocks west of the *Monumento a la Revolución*.<sup>107</sup> A teaching body of about 50 pedagogues provided a broad spectrum of primary and secondary education ranging from the humanities and sciences to arts, commercial training, technical and manual skills, physical education, while also organising excursions into the surrounding parts of Mexico.<sup>108</sup> In this manner, the school sought to implement modern and progressive educational ideals for the second

101 See BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 117, exp. 6367, fols. 1-10; Velázquez Hernández mentions a number of 40 employees, possibly relating to a later period of its operation, see: Velázquez Hernández, *El Exilio Español*, p. 233.

102 See Velázquez Hernández, *El Exilio Español*, p.236-7.

103 Ibid, p. 239.

104 Ibid., pp. 237-9.

105 See e.g. the events between Nov 1941 and April 1942 recorded by the German-speaking cultural association *Heinrich-Heine-Club: Heines Geist in Mexiko*, ed. by Heinrich-Heine-Klub (México D.F., 1946), p. 25; the commemoration for the victims of Lidice and Lichtenfelde in 1942, *ibid.*, p. 26; and the series of lectures organised by the Italian *Alianza Internacional „Giuseppe Garibaldi”* in 1945: *Información Italiana. Publicación mensual de la Alianza Internacional „Giuseppe Garibaldi” por la Libertad de Italia*, II/23 (Dec 1944), p. 11.

106 On the schools of the Spanish community in exile, see in general; José Luis Abellán and Antonio Monclús (eds): *El Pensamiento Español Contemporáneo y la Idea de América – II. El pensamiento en el exilio* (Barcelona, 1989), pp. 144-51.

107 Although the building no longer exists today, the site still commemorates the *Instituto “Luis Vives”* with a remnant of its former facade integrated into the administrative complex of the Mexican *Sindicato Único Nacional de Trabajadores de Telecomunicaciones de México*.

108 See the annual report of 1941 at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 31, exp. 354, fol. 116ff.; cf. also the extensive survey of Spanish institutions in Mexico by the US embassy at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02 Gibson (June-Aug 1943), s. fol, pp. 79 ff. (20 Jun 1943).



generation of Spanish republicans and also maintained a *kindergarden* at the location of the section of the *primaria* at calle Arquímedes no. 4 in the more prosperous city district of *Polanco*.<sup>109</sup> The *Instituto Luis Vives* set out with a total student body of about 250 in 1940 which rapidly rose to about 400 in 1942 when the number of Mexican students already exceeded that of the Spanish – an indication of how highly the quality of education at this institution was also appreciated by the Mexican population of the city.<sup>110</sup> In 1952, a list of alumni of the *Instituto Luis Vives* listed 340 names of former students, almost all of whom still resided in the city.<sup>111</sup> The annual cost of tuition ranged from between 144 and 204 pesos for the primary level to 240 pesos at secondary level, and 360 pesos for the higher *preparatoria* and *vocacional*.<sup>112</sup> After the untimely death of its founding director Joaquín Álvarez Pastor, the *Instituto* was directed by Rubén Landa, one of the eminent intellectuals of the Spanish community in exile who also belonged to the *patronato* of the communist newspaper *España Popular*.<sup>113</sup> The *Academia Hispano-Americana* began as an institute for secondary education before broadening its programme to the lower levels. With an initial teaching staff of 33 professors under the direction of Ricardo Vinós, the school cared for the education of 200 students (most of whom came from the Spanish community in exile) and grew rapidly during its first years.<sup>114</sup> The *Academia* was housed in a noble villa on the grand Paseo de la Reforma no. 80, established a *kindergarden* and *primaria* at Reforma no. 835 in the upper-class district of *Lomas de Chapultépec*, and was co-administered by a number of eminent Mexican intellectuals on its governing board.<sup>115</sup> A third school, the *Instituto Hispano-Mexicano “Ruiz de Alarcón”* was established in the more central district of *Roma Norte* at calle Córdoba no. 48 with 52 teachers and about 300 students but soon ran into financial problems and needed to be closed again already in 1942.<sup>116</sup>

A special case of infrastructure provided for Spanish refugees in the Mexican capital city was that of the *Casas Hogar*, a housing project for the so-called *Niños de Morelia*, Spanish children who had been evacuated from Spain to

109 See a copy of a public advert for the *kindergarden* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 31, exp. 354, fol. 187.

110 José Ignacio Cruz Orozco: *Maestros y Colegios en el Exilio de 1939* (Valencia, 2004), pp. 73-5; cf. also Velázquez Hernández, *La Otra Cara del Exilio*, pp. 174-85.

111 See the list at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 31, exp. 354, fols. 1-8.

112 See the annual report of 1941 at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 31, exp. 354, fol. 146.

113 AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 31, exp. 354, fol. 44; *España Popular* II/45 (10 Jan 1941), p. 4.

114 See the annual report of 1940 at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 31, exp. 352, fols. 1-17; cf. José Ignacio Cruz Orozco: *Maestros y Colegios en el Exilio de 1939* (Valencia, 2004), pp. 93-9.

115 *Ibid.*, p. 96; cf. the annual report of 1941 at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 31, exp. 354, fols. 31ff., pp. 13-4.

116 José Ignacio Cruz Orozco: *Maestros y Colegios en el Exilio de 1939* (Valencia, 2004), pp. 89-93; cf. also Florentino Rodríguez Oliva: *Augustín Mateos Muñoz - Una peripecia editorial del exilio republicano en México* (Naucalpan de Juárez, 2010), pp. 102-5.

Mexico in 1937 and who had lived and been educated in the capital of the state of Michoacán until their school had to be closed down and many of the young Spaniards migrated towards Mexico City where they often failed to find work or even shelter. In order to protect them from destitution, the later successor institution to the Spanish aid organisations, the Mexican controlled *Comisión Administrativa del Fondo de Ayuda a los Republicanos Españoles* (CAFARE), established between June 1943 and early 1944 a total of 6 housing projects across the city: at calle Michoacán no. 64 (for girls) in the district of *Condesa*, and calle Alfonso Herrera no. 88 (for boys) in the district of *San Rafael*, at calle Miguel Ángel no. 81 and calle Caravaggio no. 30 both in the southern district of *Mixcoac*, and later at calle Río Pánuco no. 19 in the district of *Cuauhtémoc* and at Cerrada de Otoño no. 33 in the district of *Escandón*.<sup>117</sup> The inauguration of the first two houses took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1943 in the presence of Luis Sánchez Pontón and Félix Palavicini for the CAFARE, Félix Gordón Ordaz, and Vicente Garrido Álfaro, while Rubén Landa, José Arguelles, and Matilde Cantos took on the *Patronato de Niños Españoles*. The event passed in festive mood as the “students from Morelia engaged in the delights of dance until 10 pm when this joyful get-together came to an end.”<sup>118</sup> The total number of resident students and young workers who were housed at the *Casas Hogar* in 1945 can be reconstructed from the remaining files of the CAFARE as follows<sup>119</sup>:

### *Casa Hogar*

Miguel Ángel no. 81	20 (Sep 45)
Michoacán no. 64	23 (Oct 45)
Alfonso Hererra no. 88	24 (Oct 45)
Caravaggio no. 30	25 (Aug 45)
Río Pánuco no. 19	22 (Oct 45)
Cerrada de Otoño no. 33	22 (Oct 45)
<b>total</b>	<b>136</b>

117 See: Antonio Velázquez Hernández: “El proyecto de casas-hogar para los niños de Morelia (1943-1948)”, *Tzintzun. Revista de Estudios Históricos* 59 (2014), pp. 139-73; cf. also the memo on the “Report of the Mexican Government Commission Administering the Funds of Spanish Republican Refugee Organizations” (7 Jan 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800R-Ref, s. fol.; cf. “El Fondo de Auxilios a Republicanos Iberos”, *El Nacional* (6 Jan 1944).

118 Archivo General de Administración Española, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Junta de Ayuda a los Republicanos Españoles (JARE), Comisión Administrativa del Fondo de Ayuda a los Republicanos Españoles (CAFARE), M 303, exp. 1.

119 Archivo General de Administración Española, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Junta de Ayuda a los Republicanos Españoles (JARE), Comisión Administrativa del Fondo de Ayuda a los Republicanos Españoles (CAFARE), M 303, exp. 6; M 304, exps. 1-3.

The main challenge which the *Comité Técnico* faced from its beginnings in 1939 was financial in nature. The *Servicio de Evacuación de Refugiados Españoles* (SERE) under the control of the last republican Prime Minister Juan Negrín had entrusted the foundation of the CTARE to José Puche and had intended to use the remaining state funds of the Spanish Republic, which had been evacuated to France, for the support of evacuation of refugees to and their economic upkeep in Mexico. The republican “treasure” was shipped from France to Mexico in March 1939 and had arrived on board the yacht *Vita* in the port of Veracruz on the 23 of March, before Puche had even reached Mexico. The resulting confusion and concerns over possible interventions by outside forces lead to the republican funds being handed over not to Puche or another representative of SERE but to Indalecio Prieto, Negrín’s bitter political rival among the Spanish socialists who seized the opportunity to set up his own Spanish-republican aid organisation, the *Junta de Auxilio a los Republicanos Españoles* (JARE).<sup>120</sup> The fact that Prieto had taken control of the republican funds and administered them in suspiciously non-transparent ways gave rise to bitter animosities between the rivalling camps of *negrinistas* and *prietistas* which also had a political side to it, given their respective attitudes towards the possibility of continuing the popular front partnership with the Spanish communist party (PCE) – the *negrinistas* were in favour of, the *prietistas* vehemently rejected such a strategic option. The CTARE files of 1940 even contain a collection of rumours and negative reports about Prieto which were evidently compiled for use as polemic ammunition. Much of the accusations against the administrative practices of JARE centred around Prieto’s personal life-style, above all his acquisition of luxurious real estate in the Avenida de Nuevo León no. 103 in the city district of *Condesa* which appeared difficult to explain.<sup>121</sup> A few months later, in August 1940, Prieto’s personal wealth became the object of a mock advertisement in the short-lived satirical pamphlet *Claridades*:

»New Luxury Accommodation«

Nuevo León 103

Proprietor: Don Indalecio Prieto, the one with the treasure.

Salons and bedrooms, everything spacious and sunlit. Economic and comfortable.

*Señores refugiados!* Take advantage of the opportunity, now that the *albergues* are closed.

Attention: Beware of the dog when you open the door.<sup>122</sup>

120 The best summary of this confusing and bitterly contentious episode can be found in: Aurelio Velázquez Hernández: „En torno del asunto del yate *Vita*. Los recursos de la Junta de Auxilio a los Republicanos Españoles (JARE)”, *Historia Mexicana* 63/3 (251) (enero-marzo 2014), pp. 1249-1308; cf. also Id., *La Otra Cara del Exilio*, pp. 273-327; cf. also: Carlos Sola Ayape: El exilio puesta a la prueba: la polémica periodística entre Indalecio Prieto y Alfonso Junco en torno del oro del “*Vita*”, *Historia Mexicana* 63/4 (2014), p. 1809-70.

121 See the memorandum at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 140, exp. 6580, s. fol.: „notas confidenciales“ (5 Apr 1940); the address given in this memorandum (Avenida Nuevo León no. 132) appears to be an error of hear-say.

122 *Claridades* no. 3 (10 Aug 1940), as quoted in: Francisco Caudet: *Hipótesis sobre el Exilio Republicano de 1939* (Madrid, 2005), p. 217.

How much the scandal surrounding his new home in the district of *Condesa* tainted Prieto's image as a socialist leader among the republican community of exile may be gathered from the memories of Concepción Baixeras who, 40 years later, recalled Prieto's establishment in the city thus:

Finally, I guess this recording is for whatever you want and, and I don't care [...] This *señor* who claimed to be a socialist, the first thing he did [...] He had a precious garden with wonderful garden tables, and he received people. I have even seen artists; I don't know, I don't know whom I have seen, but I have seen artists. We leaned out to see; the first thing that this *señor* does is to erect a screen so that we should not see his garden. You should have thought that this *señor*, whom I have taken for a socialist and republican and this whole series of things, during that time, it disillusioned me.<sup>123</sup>

During the summer of 1939, the situation surrounding the administration of funds by SERE and its Mexican branch CTARE soon became tense, and a report to the *Secretaría de Gobernación* made it clear that the brewing discontent was political in nature. The reporting inspector noted that "individuals who deserve the highest respect for their reliability assure me that it would not be strange if one day it would come to fights and gunfire in the offices of SERE at calle Sinaloa [no. 56]."<sup>124</sup> It is significant that the informer singled out one individual in particular to be blamed for the mismanagement of funds: Antonio Bahamonde, who had served with the nationalists forces during 1936/37 in the Spanish Civil War, switched sides, and in 1938 published a first-hand account of atrocities committed under the command of lieutenant general Gonzalo Queipo de Llano.<sup>125</sup> According to these complaints voiced in August 1939, Bahamonde was among those responsible for preferring *negrinistas* over the anti-communist *prietistas* for evacuation and support by SERE. While Bahamonde's presence in Mexico as a nationalist renegade and republican *exiliado* was certainly anathema to the pro-Fascist circles of the ex-patriate Spanish colony, he could hardly be accused of pro-communist sympathies.<sup>126</sup> The complaints about the lack of funds for the daily allowance that CTARE offered to refugees in the city and the allegedly politically motivated selection of republican refugees in France for evacuation to Mexico appeared to

123 Interview with Concepción Baixeras (conducted by Dolores Pla, Jul 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/025, pp. 119-20.

124 See the report by Inspector PS-15 (8 Aug 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 10, fols. 47-47rev.

125 Antonio Bahamonde: *Un Año con Queipo. Memorias de un nacionalista* (Barcelona: Ediciones Republicanas, 1938).

126 In his account of Mexican society as he saw it (and he was probably writing it at that time), Bahamonde professed gratitude and loyalty to the Mexican government of Lázaro Cárdenas while promoting the idea of liberty and social justice in equi-distance from both fascism and communism which he both rejected as criminal dictatorships; see: Antonio Bahamonde: *México es Así* (México D.F., 1940).

address real problems in the administration of SERE and CTARE, but such complaints could also be used to mobilise discontent against a principal witness of the nationalists' atrocities of war in Spain.

Word that all was not well with CTARE reached the metropolitan public by October 1939. The offices of the organisation at calle Sinaloa no. 56 in the district of *Roma Norte* became the focal point of displays of outrage by some refugees who depended on the daily allowances that the CTARE handed out to the heads of families so they were able to provide for the bare necessities of life. At first, reports referred to the unnecessarily bureaucratic procedures of the CTARE offices which delayed payments and caused scenes of distress in front of the building.<sup>127</sup> Even though the right-wing Mexican press had every reason to overstate and dramatize the scenes in front of the CTARE offices, the confrontation became real enough by November when the *Comité Técnico* needed to lower the daily allowance it could still afford to pay out from 2 pesos 50 centavos to just 90 centavos per day – which led to disorder in calle Sinaloa no. 56. The agents of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* reported “great indignation and protests” among the assembled refugees who had gathered to take over the funds of the *Comité*.<sup>128</sup> The press carried reports that the confrontation had started in the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup> of November when a group of refugees headed for the building at calle Sinaloa no. 56:

Several units of the *Gendarmes de la Montada* and many reserve police forces were stationed in the surrounding area of calle Sinaloa awaiting the refugees, in case they adopted an angry attitude, but that did not happen, on the contrary [...] All observed the same rules of conduct [...] Some of those who had been affected by the reduction [of financial aid] suggested to stage a public protest against SERE, of course, after previous permission by the authorities.<sup>129</sup>

Evidently, the protesters were meant to be seen as concerned, but law-abiding individuals who did not pose a threat to public order but raised legitimate concerns over the misadministration of essential funds for the support of the Spanish refugees. The following day, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 1939, a meeting was held at the “*Centro Español*” – probably referring to the *Centro Republicano Español* at calle Balderas no. 37 – to discuss the state of finances and investments of CTARE in the light of the recent crisis in financial aid to the refugees in the city. The result was the decision to install a commission to represent the refugees “before the *Comité Técnico de Ayuda* in order to try and resolve urgently the

127 See „Existe un gran discontento entre los republicanos que buscaron refugio en México“, *Excelsior* (1 Oct 1939), pp. 1 & 7.

128 “Nota confidencial“ (22 Nov 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 10, fol. 55.

129 Report in *Excelsior* (22 Nov 1939).

situation that has arisen.”<sup>130</sup> While at first, it seemed that the president of CTARE, José Puche, was willing to accommodate complaints and subject the *Comité* to the control of the assembly of refugees<sup>131</sup>, but soon the politicisation of the conflict became inevitable. The role of the commission was subjected to bitter sarcasm by some who assumed widespread corruption among the administration of republican funds:

During successive assemblies and reunions the mission to be accomplished shall be remembered by the commission, consisting of well-known republican, socialist, and libertarian comrades, even though that seems unlikely. Since from now on this army will launch a well-prepared offensive! Tired of resisting without order, one counts on weapons and, above all, unity.<sup>132</sup>

The actual outcome of discussion and negotiations did not find much favour in the pro-republican press, as the commission appeared to prefer large-scale investment over individual private loans: “[...] while a great number of comrades are being denied insignificant amounts of loans, intended to begin work which would solve their situation and turn them into producers (and others [being denied] even the aid which they have been given), some privileged [people] turn into rich capitalists overnight, probably on the payroll for their service and complicity in squandering the funds of the Republic.” And such complaints and accusation were backed up with concrete names and the amounts of financial aid that they had obtained from CTARE.<sup>133</sup> The assemblies among the Spanish refugees during November and December 1939 were, however, not unified in opposition to the CTARE, even though support from the audience was not recognised as legitimate by some press observers: “all those elements do not have any legal right to assist [the event].”<sup>134</sup> The politicised character of the conflict over the funds of CTARE became clearer as the assemblies continued into December, now in the *Teatro Hidalgo* at calle Régina no. 52 a few blocks south of the *Zócalo*.<sup>135</sup> The communists were clearly in the minority during these assemblies but nevertheless insisted on their right to voice their dissent. But during the days of political persecutions in the Soviet Union, the Soviet-German non-aggression treaty and the invasion of Poland, such a position did not meet with approval among the Spanish refugees in the *Teatro Hidalgo*:

130 “Republicanos españoles celebraron una reunión“, *Iberia* I/22 (24 Nov 1939), p. 2.

131 See the report in *Excelsior* (25 Nov 1939).

132 „Los refugiados en México. El estado mayor tiene un plan“, *Iberia* I/22 (24 Nov 1939), p. 12.

133 „La Hora del Reparto“, *Iberia* I/23 (1 Dec 1939), p. 6 & 8.

134 See the report in *Excelsior* (25 Nov 1939).

135 See the short report (undated) on the meeting at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 10, fol. 56.

What doubt can there be? The right of the minority to be respected and considered is undeniable; therefore, in Russia, »the beloved fatherland«, they send those in the minority to the execution wall, or they bury them piously in Siberia, after being »stroked« by the distinguished Gestapo. – Sorry, we meant to say: the GPU. – That’s how the opposition to the »beloved leader«, »the genius leader« is being treated, as it has happened to the best leaders of the revolution, the old Bolshevik guard, Kamenev, Zinoviev etc, etc.

Those who occupied important posts which “no-one with neither authority nor the right to do so” had conceded to them should be exposed to the “honourable anti-fascist public of the world” to document how these elements were “squandering the treasure of the Republic”.<sup>136</sup> The assemblies, however, entered a phase of institutionalisation as the *Asociación de Inmigrados Españoles* which continued into 1940 as a regular body of council and debate on financial matters and the difficult relationship between the CTARE and the JARE, usually being held at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* now located at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50.<sup>137</sup> This choice of venue, the domicile of the clearly anti-communist successor organisation of the defunct *Frente Popular Española*, demonstrated in topographical terms the political distance between the *Asociación de Inmigrados Españoles* and the Spanish communists in the city. This organisation had been created on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1939 under the presidency of Tiburcio Díaz Carrasco, a moderate socialist, follower of Indalecio Prieto, and activist of the Spanish socialist trade union *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT). Alfredo Piqueras Olivares, former governor of Cádiz, served as vice president, and Mariano Cardona Rosell from the anarcho-syndicalist union *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT) acted as secretary general. The executive committee also included the names of Mendoza, Saura Muñoz, and Tomás Bilbao, the latter a Basque nationalist who belonged to the faction of *negrinistas* in Mexico.<sup>138</sup>

Meanwhile, a friendlier environment for the Spanish communists was provided by the *Conferencia Panamericana de Ayuda a los Refugiados Españoles*

136 „Al Margen de una asamblea“, *Iberia* I/23 (1 Dec 1939), p. 11.

137 See e.g. the report by Inspector PS-5 on the meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> of February 1940 at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 10, fols. 56-8; the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* had, by then, moved to this address from its previous location at the former premises of the defunct *Frente Popular Español* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 30; see: „Nuevo Local para el Centro Cultural“, *Iberia* I/23 (1 Dec 1939), p. 8:

138 „Quedó constituida ayer una asociación española“, *Excelsior* (1 Jan 1940), p. 12; Bilbao’s archive survives at the *Ateneo Español en México* as an important collection for the history of the *negrinista* faction in Mexico; cf. Jorge de Hoyos Puente: *Las Redes del Negrinismo en el Exilio Republicano en México*, UNED – UCM – Fundación Ortega y Gasset-Gregorio Marañón (20 Nov 2014), online resource: <https://www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/297-2014-11-21-8-14.pdf>; Id.: „La Evolución del Negrinismo en el exilio republicano en México“, *Historia y Política* 36 (2016), pp. 313-37.

which took place in Mexico City between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of February 1940. Delegates from all over the Americas gathered to raise international awareness for the repressive and violent nature of Francoist terror in Spain and to lobby American governments throughout the Western hemisphere to admit more Spanish refugees into their countries. The Mexican government was represented by the *Secretario de Gobernación* Ignacio García Téllez, and the conference received greetings from the presidents of Mexico, Lázaro Cárdenas, and Chile, Pedro Aguirre Cerda.<sup>139</sup> The example of Chile (which had just received a transport of about 2.000 Spanish refugees on board the vessel *Winnipeg*) was duly praised.<sup>140</sup> The French government came under especially harsh criticism for its treatment of the Spanish refugees and the unsustainable conditions of life in the various internment camps.<sup>141</sup> The communist paper *España Popular* used the occasion to launch its first issue during the conference and occupied the space behind the presiding panel with a prominent promotional banner.<sup>142</sup> After three days of resolutions and calls for unity, the leader of the Spanish Communist Party in exile in Mexico, Vicente Uribe, spoke the concluding words: “In spite of the differences that we may have, I have to tell you that we hope that, in future, you share with us the responsibility to march on along this glorious route of aid and support for our people.”<sup>143</sup> In a lengthy letter to José Puche, president of CTARE, dated shortly before the Panamerican Aid Conference, Antonio Mije had identified in the name of the PCE’s central committee three fundamental problems in the leadership of CTARE which the communists saw as the root problem of the crisis of the organisation: “a lack of planning, a lack of leadership potential in the council and the factories, and a lack of a political line.” With regard to the latter, one remedy was to be found in an increased activity of transnational politics: “contacts with governments and their organs; with progressive organisations in each country; with the masses and peoples of America, and particularly with the refugees whose assistance is elementary for the solution of the problems.” And the political criticism of the communists soon turned personal: “It should not have been permitted that a group of elements, headed by Prieto, despised by the Spanish people, assumed, against the silence and the isolation of the *Comité Técnico*, the moral representation of the Spanish Republic vis-à-vis Mexican authorities and organisations.” Mije turned against “enemies of the Republic and

139 See the report in *España Peregrina* I/2 (Mar 1940), p. 88; the presidential messages in *España Popular* I/2 (25 Feb 1940), p. 3; cf. the complaint by the member of the Mexican *Cámara de Diputados* Martino (16 Feb 1940) who represented the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* at the conference to Cárdenas’ personal secretary that the event was “openly communist” and who asked for clarification of Cárdenas’ offer of asylum for Spanish refugees, “particularly agriculturalists”, at AGN, Archivo Presidente Lázaro Cárdenas del Río, exp. 546.6/212-54, fol. 1.

140 „La Conferencia Panamericana de Ayuda“, *España Popular* I/1 (18 Feb 1940), p. 7.

141 „Como trata el gobierno Daladier a los refugiados“, *España Popular* I/2 (25 Feb 1940), p. 5.

142 See the picture of the conference in *España Popular* I/2 (25 Feb 1940), p. 1.

143 „No renunciamos a la lucha. Discurso de Vicente Uribe“, *España Popular* I/2 (25 Feb 1940), p. 4.



the government, traitors and deserters” who were entrusted with important positions in the organisations, and his letter ended with demands to remove Joaquín Álvarez Pastor (Director of the *Instituto Luis Vives*), the “traitor Miaja” (vice president of FIASA), and to admit a representative of the communist party onto the executive board of CTARE.<sup>144</sup> Meanwhile, the administration of charitable institutions, such as the *albergues*, was characterised by the communist press in a very negative light, and almost without fail the cause of any grievances was identified as political. Apart from general problems of hygiene, the report presented the administrators of the *albergue* at calle Lucerna no. 65 as an “alarming skeleton of personnel”, a “troublesome and despicable conglomerate, politically and personally.”

Which sadistic pleasure does the responsible gentleman derive from shutting down the water supply of the showers when the young men are under them still soaped up? When protest reaches him, his loud and grotesque laughter, of greasy obesity, can be heard through his office door. This man [...] does not hide his opposition to the last republican government [the popular front led by Juan Negrín], [...] he does not allow mural periodicals! What even the *gendarmes* in the internment camps could not prevent! [...] In the meantime, the *prietistas*, the friends of this con-man of the Republic, are coming by these days and sign a receipt for a suit over 100 pesos, without return or later reclamations. They are aiming to provoke, asking for trouble.

Among the remedies suggested by the reporter “Suárez” was a cleansing of the administrative personnel: “Sweep the Comité clean of traitors and the inept [...]”, and there could be little doubt of which political denomination the communists believed the “traitors and the inept” to be.<sup>145</sup>

The attacks against the CTARE had happened at a time when the JARE controlled by Indalecio Prieto had come in for harsh criticism, mainly for its handling of the *Vita* treasure in back in March 1939 and its lack of fiscal transparency.<sup>146</sup> While the CTARE was evidently running out of money, the JARE began to step into the breach and thereby gained support among the community of refugees.<sup>147</sup> The JARE was reluctant to continue the operation of institutions created by the CTARE – above all the *albergues* –, but it engaged actively in other

144 „Carta del Partido Comunista de España al Comité Técnico de Ayuda a los Republicanos Españoles“, *España Popular* I/8 (4 Apr 1940), p. 7.

145 „Los refugios del Comité Técnico“, *España Popular* I/16 (30 May 1940), p. 4.

146 Cf. the summary of the attempts to reconstruct the finances of JARE in: *Memoria General de la Comisión Administradora de Auxilios a los Republicanos Españoles: 1942-1945* (México D.F., CAFARE, 1945), pp. 5-12.

147 A definitive analysis of the organisation and finances of the JARE has been provided by Velázquez Hernández, *La Otra Cara del Exilio*, pp. 347-68.

areas, such as the provision of stipends for the students of the schools created by the Spanish republicans<sup>148</sup> and by setting up its own, new school: the *Colegio Madrid*.<sup>149</sup> Located at calle Empresa no. 2 in the southern city district of *Mixcoac* since 1941, the JARE possessed the funds to let the school operate free of any tuition fees, and consequently the school was overrun by demand. Under the direction of Jesús Revaque and staffed by Spanish republican teachers, the school thus existed in a strangely paradoxical situation of great popularity and the attempt not to attract any attention, as an informer of the US embassy explained in 1943:

There are 937 pupils in this school, more students than they can really afford to have. This is why they do not publish any catalogue. The director [Jesús Revaque] stated to the informant that catalogues are intended for propaganda, to get more students, and if we were going to publish a catalogue, it would be with the only idea of persuading parents not to send any more children to the school.

The comparatively generous financial situation of the school, however, evidently allowed even further expansion, since “this year they started to accept several Mexican children.” The report mentioned a budget of “over one half million pesos” in 1943.<sup>150</sup> Among the specialities of the pedagogical concept of the school was the inclusion not only of academic subjects but also of manual professional training, such as carpentry, book binding, aspects of agriculture, and excursions to museums, monuments, workshops, and factories.<sup>151</sup>

In this manner, the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City managed to establish a network of temporary institutions of aid and support (such as the *albergues* and *comedores*) as well as more permanent institutions, first and foremost the schools. The geographical structure of the Spanish-republican presence in the city stretched across the districts west of the historical city centre, especially *Roma*, *Juárez*, *Condesa*, *Tacubaya*, as well as *San Rafael* to the north, and *Mixcoac* in the south. Other nationalities in exile did not, at first, have access to this network of institutionalised support and relied either on personal and arbitrary resources of support or relied on aid from the Jewish community in Mexico City. The *Comité Central Israelita en México* had been founded in November 1938 (by coincidence on the evening of the anti-Semitic pogroms in

148 Ibid, pp. 388-9.

149 Ibid., pp. 393-402; see also José Ignacio Cruz Orozco: „El Colegio Madrid de la Ciudad de México. Un modelo de excelencia académica”, *Migraciones y Exilios* 2 (2001), pp. 85-109; Id., *Maestros y Colegios en el Exilio*, pp. 103-26.

150 Extensive report on Spanish institutions in Mexico by the US embassy (20 June 1943) at USNACP, RG84, UD2984, 820.02 Gibson (June-Aug 1943), s. fol., pp. 84-5; for the budget of 1941 see Velázquez Hernández, *La Otra Cara del Exilio*, p. 401.

151 Cruz Orozco, *Maestros y Colegios en el Exilio*, pp. 109-10.

Germany) as a coordinating body for a variety of Jewish social and cultural organisation across the country. Between 1938 and the end of 1942 it occupied offices at calle Tacuba no. 15 in the *Centro Histórico*, a luxurious building locally known as the *Palacio de Mármol* and maintained its neutrality in terms of politics while helping to liaise with other, non-Jewish bodies and institutions in matters that were of concern for the Jewish community as a whole.<sup>152</sup> When the numbers of European refugees from anti-Semitic persecution were rising, the *Comité Central* set up a *Comité Pro-Refugiados* which offered support in financial as well as legal matters.<sup>153</sup> Especially for the German-speaking and central-European refugees the *Comité Pro-Refugiados* became an important first point of contact which offered initial support – the surviving records of the Jewish refugee aid committee offer testimony to the immediate urgency of the support that was needed by most: out of the 150 individuals who since June 1940 registered for support in the capital city (a small number applied for help from other locations) a full third gave a hotel room as their address, in four out of five of these cases at the Hotel “Juárez” at Cerrada de 5° de Mayo no. 17, the Hotel “Washington” at Avenida 5 de Mayo no. 54 (both on the same block at the very heart of the *Centro Histórico*), or the Hotel “Vizcaya”. Other hotels utilised by the *Comité Pro-Refugiados* included the Hotel “Ambassador” at Avenida México no. 83 in the district of *Hipódromo*, the Hotel “Tivoli” at calle Ramón Guzmán no. 6 in the *Tabacalera*, the Hotel “Carlton” at calle Ignacio Mariscal no. 32-B in the same district, the Hotel “Pánuco” at calle Ayuntamiento no. 148 in the district *Centro*, the Hotel “York” in Avenida 5 de Mayo in the *Centro Histórico*, the Hotel “Canada” in the same street, or the Hotel “Buena Vista”. It appears that the *Comité Pro-Refugiado* was able to draw on established networks when accommodation for new arrivals was needed.<sup>154</sup> The *Comité Pro-Refugiados* of the *Comité Central Israelita* thereby fulfilled a similar function as did the CTARE in the case of the Spanish republican refugees. Its activities were particularly important in lobbying Mexican state authorities to grant visas for persecuted refugees in France, organising accommodation for the newly arrived refugees and providing medical attention free of cost. The community of German-speaking Jews in the city included business owners, legal and medical professionals as well as a great number of intellectuals and artists and operated under the name of “*Menorah*”, directed by Paul Drucker.<sup>155</sup>

152 Cf. Daniela Gleizer: „En Busca de la Unidad: historia del Comité Central Israelita en México, 1931-1945”, in: Shulamit Goldsmit and Natalia Gurvich (eds): *Sobre el Judaísmo Mexicano. Diversas expresiones de activismo comunitario* (México D.F., 2009), pp. 217-56.

153 Cf. León Sourasky: *Historia de la Comunidad Israelita de México, 1917-1942* (México D.F., 1965), pp. 229-55.

154 Data from the surviving card catalogue of the *Comité Pro-Refugiados* at the *Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Comunidad Ashkenazi* (CDICA, Mexico City), fondo Comité Pro-Refugiados, nos. 1-140.

155 See the recollections of Paul Merker: *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika. Erinnerungen, Dokumentationen und Berichte*, unpubl. ms. at BAL, SAPMO, NY 4102/5, fols. 15-6.

Another source of mainly financial aid was available from the “Exile Writers Committee of the League of American Writers” and distributed in Mexico City by the American author Ralph Roeder. In later years, this fundraising initiative had merged with other charitable committees into the “United American Spanish Aid Committee” which operated in Mexico City under label of the “Mexican-Spanish Aid Commission”. It was controlled by Spanish, German, Italian, and Hungarian emigrants in the city and treated applications for financial support individually.<sup>156</sup> The commission also supported institutions of medical care for European refugees in Mexico City, such as the *Casa de Salud* at calle Bellini no. 36 in the city district of *Álvaro Obregón* under the direction of Dr. Emilio Soriano and the *Policlínica Popular* at calle Dinamarca no. 11 in the district of *Juárez*. The key figure in raising, organising and transferring such material aid from the United States to the refugees in Mexico was Dr. Edward K. Barsky, a former field surgeon with the US-American International Brigade “Abraham Lincoln” during the Spanish Civil War and head of the Joint Antifascist Refugee Committee in New York who funded and maintained his own clinic for European refugees in Mexico City in the Calzada de Tacubaya.<sup>157</sup> In some cases, for example for the leadership of the German communists in Mexico, the direct financial aid from the United States continued until well after the end of the Second World War.<sup>158</sup>

156 Ibid., fols. 50-2.

157 See a letter by the United American Spanish Aid Committee to the US-American consul in Mexico City at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 800M-800R (1 Dec 1941), s. fol.; on Barsky see the personal memorandum at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 800P-800PolishRefugees (25 Oct 1943), s. fol.; cf. Walter Janka: *Spuren eines Lebens* (Berlin, 1991), p. 188; Lenka Reiner[ová]: *Grenze geschlossen* (Berlin, 1958), p. 281; on the *Sanatorio Dr. Barsky* cf. Interview with Cristina Ulibarri González (conducted by Matilde Mantecón, Jul 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/79, p. 76; Interview with Lino Sánchez Portela (conducted by Elena Aub, Dec 1979, Jan 1980, Nov 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/ESP06, p. 74.

158 See the lists of recipients of financial aid by the „New York Aid Committee” at BAL, SAPMO, DY 30/IV-2/4/111, fols. 196-205 (May 1946 – Jan 1947).

Part II

City of Exile



### a. Memories of Arrival

Most of the personal accounts that exist of the refugees' arrival in and first encounters with Mexico survived in the form of either written memoirs or oral history interviews conducted decades after the events. The character of these materials accounts for a twofold narrative bias which permeates the subjective voice of the contemporaries: on the one hand, the task of recounting those experiences decades after the events leads to an overemphasis on the extraordinary, the exotic, generally the experience of social and cultural otherness. On the other hand, the narrative construction of memory tends to favour biographical coherence over contingent events and experiences, thus creating the 'biographical illusion' (Bourdieu) of a meaningful life experience over decades. The materials relating to the experience of arrival in Mexico reveal both qualities and need to be seen against a probably greater body of contemporary experiences which, for their relative lack of eventfulness, never may have been recorded in the first place. At any rate, the danger of overestimating the frequency of encounters with alien and exotic circumstances as well as of adventurous explorations of a foreign continent should be taken into account as those experiences of the refugees which were documented may point towards their extraordinariness rather than their typicality.

The arrival of the great majority of European political refugees in Mexico which took place since June 1939 usually began in one of the major sea ports, such as Veracruz or Tampico – a smaller number of refugees arrived in the country via the United States across the Texan border or from Central America. The refugees' knowledge about their host country was generally very limited or rather non-existent: When Brigitte Alexander – an actress and distinguished member of the German community of exile in Mexico – was asked by Gilberto Bosques, the Mexican consul in Marseille, about how she imagined her future life in Mexico, she answered with revealing honesty that she pictured Mexico as a country where “lots of Indians sit in the trees and shoot with arrows” – an admission which caused the Mexican diplomat great amusement before he went on to enlighten her about what she was to expect.<sup>1</sup> The evacuations organised during the summer of 1939 by the Spanish *Servicio de Evacuación de los Refugiados Españoles* (SERE) made efforts to use the time spent on board the evacuation vessels for numerous educational lectures. Alongside some articles about the political situation of the country, these lectures were also printed in the on-board journals, the *Diarios de Abordo*, to disseminate some information about Mexican history, society, the economy and, above all, the policies of the administration of president Lázaro Cárdenas who had made possible the offer of asylum for the Spanish republicans.<sup>2</sup>

1 Interview with Brigitte Alexander in the TV documentary „Flucht nach Mexiko. Deutsche im Exil“, directed by Gerlinde Böhm (SFB / Goethe-Institut, 1994), min. 20:45 – 21:05.

2 See just for the first evacuation transport on board the vessel *Sinaia* during May-June 1939: „Las Ideas del presidente Cárdenas“, in: *Sinaia. Diario de la primera expedición de republicanos españoles a México*, no. 2 (27 May 1939), p. 3; no. 3 (28 May 1939), p. 5; no. 4

Evidently, the intention was to portray Mexico as a progressive republic comparable to what would have been possible in Spain under a progressive republican regime, thus suggesting an implicit ideological and political bond with the host nation and its attempts at economic and social advancement during the years of the Cárdenas administration. Even though some information was thus available, the first encounter with the New World in many cases took on the character of a culture shock which was compensated by references to a more familiar imaginary past. In the case of the Spaniards, this almost inevitably included established historical narratives of the Spanish conquest of the Aztec empire 420 years earlier. When Pedro Armillas recalled his first impressions of the Mexican landscape in an interview almost 40 years later, he immediately remembered his childhood lessons on the history of the Spanish *conquista* relating to the name of Otumba at a train stop about 50 km northeast of Mexico City, “because Otumba is part of the history of Spain. [...]”. Armillas later worked as an archaeologist and the memories of his arrival in the Valley of Mexico bear the hallmark of an autobiographical narrative constructed in hindsight about three decades later:

Otumba is a name, at least for the Spaniards of my generation, which one learned since second grade, at school when you were studying... The first time one studied the history of Spain, about the *Conquista* of Mexico, Cortés, the *Noche Triste* and how they saved, they saved their remaining forces in the battle of Otumba [...] And a little further on another train station..., there were some pyramids at which I exclaimed: »The Aztec pyramids!« I did not know then that Teotihuacán is pre-Aztec (laughs).<sup>3</sup>

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(29 May 1939), p. 3; no. 5 (30 May 1939), p. 4; no. 6 (31 May 1939), p. 4; no. 7 (1 Jun 1939), p. 4; no. 8 (2 Jun 1939), p. 4; „¿Como es la tierra de México?, ibid., no. 2 (27 May 1939), p. 4; „Presentación de México“, ibid. no. 3 (28 May 1939), p. 3; „Los »Corridos« de la Revolución Mexicana“, ibid., no. 4 (29 May 1939), p. 5; „Geografía general de México“, ibid., no. 5 (30 May 1939), p. 6; „Geografía médica de México“, ibid., no. 7 (1 Jun 1939), p. 6; „Economía agrícola mexicana“, ibid., no. 9 (3 Jun 1939), p. 2; „Los petróleos mexicanos“, ibid., p. 4; no. 10 (4 Jun 1939), p. 3; no. 11 (5 Jun 1939), p. 5; „Cultura Mexicana antes de la llegada de los españoles“, ibid., no. 10 (4 Jun 1939), p. 5; „La segunda conferencia sobre Historia de México“, ibid., no. 12 (6 Jun 1939), p. 4; „La Independencia y la Revolución Mexicana“, ibid., no. 15 (9 Jun 1939), p. 5-6; „La conferencia del Sr. Bonilla: Derechos, obligaciones y deberes de los españoles en México“, ibid., no. 16 (10 Jun 1939), p. 5; „Economía industrial de México“, ibid., no. 17 (11 Jun 1939), p. 4; „Vida artística y literaria de México“, ibid., no. 18 (12 Jun 1939), p. 2; „Cárdenas, político del pueblo“, ibid., p. 4; „El indio y el campo“, ibid., p. 6; „La pintura mexicana. Lo que sé de vosotros“, ibid., p. 10; „La escuela popular mexicana“, ibid., p. 12; „El pueblo en la Revolución Mexicana“, ibid., p. 14; „Vida Política y Sindical de México“, ibid., p. 17; „La Prensa Mexicana“, ibid.; „La Constitución mexicana“, ibid., p. 18; cf. José Antonio Matesanz: *Las Raíces del Exilio. México ante la guerra civil española* (México D.F., 1999), pp. 416-24..

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Pedro Armillas (conducted by Marisol Alonso, Aug-Oct 1978), BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/003, p. 159.



The first contact with Mexican society could also provoke misunderstandings, most likely for the Spanish refugees who, at times, for linguistic reasons underestimated the cultural differences between Spain and Mexico. Confusing the Spanish and the Mexican concept of a *tortilla*, mistaking the alcoholic *pulque* drink for a glass of milk, or trying to eat Mexican *tamales* with the leaf wrapping were frequent anecdotes of memory.<sup>4</sup> Another episode has been corroborated by several independent sources and relates to a linguistic misunderstanding. The Mexican trade unions regularly welcomed the incoming vessels of the evacuation transports organized by the SERE directly at the harbour quays, and one banner displayed in the port of Veracruz caused much amusement among the Spaniards who spotted it from the ship's deck: "The Union of Tortilleras is greeting the Spanish refugees!" The amusement originated from the fact that in Mexican Spanish the term *tortillera* simply referred to a (usually female) baker of *tortillas*, but in Spain the same term was used as slang for female homosexuals. Thus, one of the Spanish refugees recalled the reaction of his cousin: "My goodness! Where have we ended up, if even they are unionised?!"<sup>5</sup>

When the German actress Steffi Spira arrived in the port of Veracruz aboard the vessel *Serpa Pinto* in December 1941, the first contact with Mexico consisted, above all, of sensory impressions of the natural world which exploded the boundaries of all previous experiences, especially when compared to the deprivation during the preceding years as a refugee and the internment camps of France. She recalled, above all, "the flying pelicans. On the ground a clumsily moving bird, an elegant swimmer in the water, but in the air a dream of hovering among the blue." She described her time in Mexico as period of never-ending amazement, for example regarding the unknown vegetation:

Laurel, Bougainvillea, pepper trees, palm trees. The orange trees displayed white, wonderfully smelling flowers while the lower, dark-green branches already bore ripening fruits. Camellias, rubber plants, agaves, fields of maize corn, moonlight cactuses under a sky that was almost always blue. And the moon: it did not stand in the sky, it was lying as if reclining in the dark-blue ethereal vastness, surrounded by stars which I had never seen before.<sup>6</sup>

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4 Cf. e.g. Interview with Ángel Palerm Vich (conducted by Marisol Alonso, Mar-Sep 1979), BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra PHO/10/013, pp. 230-1; Interview with Teresa Armendares de Lozano (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Oct-Nov 1979), BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/048, p. 80; cf. Dolores Pla Brugat (ed.): *Pan, Trabajo y Hogar. El exilio republicano español en América Latina* (México D.F., 2007), pp. 71-2.

5 Interview with Sacramento Álvarez Ugena de Herrero (conducted by Dolores Pla, Apr 1980), BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/058, p. 45; cf. also Rosa María Seco Mata: *El Recetario de mi Vida* (México D.F., 2008), p. 59.

6 Steffi Spira-Ruschin: *Trab der Schaukelpferde. Aufzeichnungen im Nachhinein* (Berlin/Weimar, 1984), pp. 176-7.

For Lenka Reinerová, who had arrived on board the same ship, the banana market of Veracruz provided a first glimpse of a “land of plenty”, followed by the journey to the capital city through the coffee plantations of the state Veracruz. Local markets offered “curious, colourfully painted fantastic animals made of clay [...] I am looking at a tiny bull with golden horns, blood-red hoofs and a big lilac flower on its white back. How novel everything is here, more colourful and joyful than in Africa.”<sup>7</sup> Another German refugee, Walter Janka, was welcomed in late 1941 by other political refugees who had arrived earlier and who organised meals and lodgings for him. His first impressions were no less enthusiastic: “The weather was fantastic and very warm. The streets were bubbling with life. Uninhibited, noisy, exotic, copper-brown faces beneath straw hats, men and boys in white shirts and trousers, women and girls in colourful blouses and skirts. Mostly barefoot.” His acute awareness of social inequality and poverty soon overshadowed his memories:

A new world opened up for the foreigners who arrived from Europe, a world in which, however, well-being and misery, wealth and poverty, content and conflict, satiation and hunger, love and hate always coexisted closely in spite of the natural riches and the wonderful climate. And even though we got to know the country and the people more closely, even in this beautiful country we remained aliens. We were about to discover this during the subsequent years which, nevertheless, turned out to be among the best of our whole life.<sup>8</sup>

A certain gendered difference of memory entered these narratives when the women first and foremost emphasised the natural environment while Janka immediately commented on the social realities of his Mexican host society. His account also displays greater emotional distance to the “new world”. Even when the general balance of their experience in Mexico appeared overall positive, some refugees maintained a fundamental attitude of ambivalence towards their experiences of Mexico which continued to present a challenge of otherness to their social and political identity formation in Europe.

During those first days in the port city of Veracruz, the Café “Parroquia” at the central square functioned as a preliminary sanctuary for recovery after the journey, social contacts, and information. Domingo Rex vividly recalled this place as a key location for the appropriation of a post-colonial identity which he saw in perfect harmony with his own Spanish background: “Upon arrival in Veracruz, Mexico did not present any strangeness to us. I am saying this because the fascinating city at the Gulf is a true copy of any port city of Andalusia. The same central plaza with the symbolic buildings of city hall and the church; the youthful dwellers around the little kiosk; the gaiety and shouts from the terraces of the

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7 Lenka Reiner[ová]: *Grenze geschlossen* (Berlin, 1958), p. 280.

8 Walter Janka: *Spuren eines Lebens* (Berlin, 1991), p. 186.

cafés. And to top it off, the popular music of its typical venues.” And to him, the Café “Parroquia” represented the heart of the place as well as the local society:

There is no place more representative of the spirit of Veracruz than the Café “Parroquia”. An establishment which carries with it a hundred years of history during which all social classes convened here. The conversations of the gathered guests, the shouts of the street vendors, and the voices of the waiters form a deafening chatter. The “Parroquia” is more than a café, it is the friendly talking shop of the family of Veracruz.<sup>9</sup>

Jorge Piñol and his wife had soon made contact with the population of Veracruz, were even invited to the house of a local union leader, but they also encountered the mixed attitude of the Mexican population that displayed certain reservations towards the republican refugees. Without any money, Piñol and his wife took daily walks past the “Parroquia” before being invited in to join two Mexican gentlemen (brothers, as it turned out) for a refreshment. After a rather thorough interrogation about their lives and experiences in Spain, one of the Mexican men asked Piñol whether he had asked himself why they had been invited. As Piñol answered that he had not, since everyone in Veracruz seemed welcoming and supportive towards the Spanish refugees, his Mexican interlocutor replied: “No, that’s not it”:

My brother [...] is the rich one of the family, I am less rich – he said. My brother said that all the Spanish refugees are assassins and escaped prisoners [...], and I told him that I did not believe that, and that among all the refugees there must be some reasonable person, a sound person, who may be middle class, who may or may not have a career, but who is not really an assassin – he said – and we agreed on a wager over one thousand dollars on that – he said – and since I was the one in favour of you [...] we made this bet and I have won. Many thanks to both of you, you have just won me a thousand dollars.<sup>10</sup>

The political climate in the port of Veracruz was certainly tense, as a press report indicated during just those days of summer 1939 when thousands of political refugees arrived from Europe. The anglophone newspaper *Mexico Today* with offices in Mexico City highlighted a story which had first been reported by the paper *El Dictamen* of Veracruz: The restaurant owner Franz Moser, a naturalized Austrian immigrant in Veracruz, had his establishment boycotted by the local community of Nazis because he had married Estela Hernal, a local Mexican woman. This racist persecution of Moser extended to the crews of German

9 Domingo Rex: *Un Español en México. Confesiones de un transterrado* (México, 1983), p. 37.

10 Interview with Jorge Piñol (conducted by Marisol Alonso, Apr 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/031, pp. 48-51; Dolores Pla Brugat: *Els exiliats catalans. Un estudio de la emigración republicana española en México* (México D.F., 1999), pp. 201-2.

merchant vessels passing through the port which had provided Moser with a large part of his business. In February 1939, Moser complained to the German consul in Veracruz, and immediately some sailors blocked the entrance to his restaurant and attacked him later that night with razor blades, leaving Moser with serious injuries. Attacks continued into March while the local police took no action.<sup>11</sup> Moser soon resettled to Mexico City where he opened the restaurant “Austro-Mex” at calle Artículo 123, no. 81 in the district *Centro*. The local National Socialist community in the capital city, however, did not seem to object to his marriage.<sup>12</sup>

The European refugees often remembered the train journey from the coast into the high altitudes of the Valley of Mexico in the narrative mode of adventure. And for the Spanish refugees, this almost invariably involved the memory of the Spanish conquest of the New World by Hernán Cortés. In Domingo Rex’s view, “it will come as no surprise to those with any interest in historical topics that we shall prepare ourselves to explore the presence and the trajectory of the first Spaniard who entered the American continent.” And instead of his own journey from Veracruz to Mexico City, he then recalled the stages of Cortes’ progress toward Tenochtitlán in 1519 as if the two journeys were essentially interchangeable.<sup>13</sup> The long train journey from the coast to the central highlands impressed the newly arrived refugees with the still largely rural character of Mexico, “a truly agrarian country, an agrarian country, and still with little urbanisation; this is the year of ’39.”<sup>14</sup>

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11 „Nazi Terror here exposed“, *Mexico Today* I/19 (22 Jul 1939), pp. 1 & 6.

12 Moser’s case is difficult to locate within the transnational politics of Mexico City: In October 1939, agents of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* were doubtful about his persecution by the Nazis of Veracruz, suspected him of distributing National Socialist propaganda, and during 1942 noticed clandestine meetings of pro-Nazi operatives, such as Paul Grzesik, Georg Nicolaus, and Paul Strobel in Moser’s restaurant; cf. memoranda at AGN DGIPS, caja 122, exp. 45, fol. 1 (4 Oct 1939); and caja 87, exp. 1, fol. 148 (17 Nov 1942); meanwhile, the US embassy discussed his possible involvement in German espionage activities: cf. the short memo on a meeting at USNACP RG84 UD2894 820.02 Gibson (19 Sep 1942), s. fol.; more intriguingly, Moser’s name later also appeared on a list of supporters of the German anti-fascist and communist-dominated exile organization *Alemania Libre*; cf. AGN DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fol. 67; his involvement with the German exile community may, however, simply illustrate his interest in German-speaking customers for his restaurant more than it could possibly be taken as an indication of his wavering political affiliation. In 1947, a memorandum on the Austrian ex-patriate community in Mexico provided by an official of the Austrian education ministry, Hermann Zeisel, characterized him as a „very simple, rough, but good Austrian, wealthy, married to a Mexican“; cf. the so-called Zeisel-Report (6 Dec 1947) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 22409/2, p. 4.

13 Domingo Rex, *Un Español en México. Confesiones de un transterrado (México, 1983)*, p. 38.

14 Interview with Claudio Esteva Fabregat (conducted by Elena Aub and Enriqueta Tuñón, June/Dec 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/ESP29, p. 127.

For others, the “hustle and bustle” of the train journey, the discomfort of wooden benches, the bumpy ride and, above all, the multi-hour delays represented important features of the memory of arrival, even though Ángelinas Jiménez had a story to tell that stood out from the usual narrative. During the slow upward train ride from sea-level to Mexico City at around 2,400 m altitude, she found a man sitting in a chair on the rear platform of the last coach “with a straw hat with a wide brim, going to sleep.”

At times, this man would stand up, light up a [...] bengal flare, [throw it onto the track], and go back to sleep. And then one of our group, I don't know whether it was Emilio Rodríguez Mata, approached him and said: “Ok, why do you throw bengal flares?” And the man replied: “That's because an express train is approaching which runs faster [than us] and it might catch up with us in a curve.”<sup>15</sup>

The first contact with the capital city then often took place at one of the train stations, usually at San Lázaro or at the station of Buenavista. Neither of these places instilled much confidence in future life in the city as they were primarily remembered for their ugliness, derelict state, and, above all, dirt.<sup>16</sup> After 40 years, Pascual Casanova Rius could not help but notice this about his arrival at the station of Buenavista:

We arrived in the Distrito Federal, also the entrance, Buenavista, the station of Buenavista, before arriving at the station of that name, that was also very depressing, the entrance into Mexico City, by train; today it is not beautiful, but in those days it was ugly. It was a series of impressions, let's say, disagreeable, right?, [...] I am not a dubious person in this respect, for me Mexico is my second fatherland, but I have to say the truth in a case such as this one, it was depressing.<sup>17</sup>

But for many Spanish refugees these were also the places to meet representatives of CTARE who personally met the refugees at the train stations and organised their transfer to local hotels or the *albergues*. Among these CTARE officials, Carlos Velo was remembered as the most prominent face.<sup>18</sup> The CTARE not only provided shelter at the *albergues* but also booked accommodation in the local

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15 Interview with Angelinas Jiménez de Dorronsoro (conducted by Matilde Mantecón, Apr 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/057, pp. 60-1.

16 Cf. e.g. Interview with Sacramento Álvarez Ugena de Herrero (conducted by Dolores Pla, Apr 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/058, p. 48; cf. also Julita Blanca Ballvé Eguen: *Los Recuerdos de la Abuela desde 1925 hasta 1993*, unpubl. ts. (México, 2012), s. p.;

17 Interview with Pascual Casanova Rius (conducted by Dolores Pla, Aug 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/41, p. 145.

18 Interview with Emilio Rodríguez Mata (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Jul-Aug 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/024, p. 87.

hotels.<sup>19</sup> The accommodation provided, however, did not always meet the expectations of the refugees. The lack of comfort in the hotels close to the stations was grudgingly accepted, even though the temporary separation of families caused many to change their residence within just a few days.<sup>20</sup> In other cases, the situation appeared less acceptable, especially when the great number of arrivals and the limited economic means of CTARE resulted in compromises in terms of the public reputation of the hotels that were offered for accommodation. A recurring theme in the memory of the Spanish refugees was the use of sleazy hotels of ill repute, or in other words: unofficial brothels. Emilio Rodríguez Mata noted this almost in passing while immediately acquitting Carlos Velo and the CTARE of all responsibility: “because, surely, Velo did not know where he was sending us, but that’s how it was, and they sent us to that hotel in calle [República de] Perú [...]”<sup>21</sup> Others were still unable to mention these embarrassing circumstances explicitly, even though they had experienced such episodes in their mid-30s, and four decades had passed since.<sup>22</sup> Angelines Jiménez ended up in such a disreputable hotel in calle Allende to the north of the city centre close to the quarter of *La Lagunilla*, but after 40 years she was quite able to understand and explain the situation she had encountered:

The aid committee for the Spanish refugees had asked in various hotels – back then there weren’t as many as there are today, many fewer, there were very few – and they had thirty something or forty rooms and they said no, they would not have enough rooms available, and in this one they offered any number that was requested, naturally it was a brothel... [...] We arrived at Saturday around mid-day, and they looked at us as if we were really weird, the families with the children, like clueless people [...]. Of course, during the small hours of that night there was such a commotion, there were women – broads as they say here – naked in the hallways, with men chasing after them, so I said to José María: »Where have they sent us?!« . And the men got up and said: »What on earth is this?“ . And they ran out to find another decent hotel.<sup>23</sup>

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19 Cf. Pla Brugat: *Els exiliats catalans*, p. 235.

20 Cf. e.g. Interview with Veneranda García Manzano (conducted by Elena Aub, Feb-Mar 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/ESP015, p. 68.

21 Interview with Emilio Rodríguez Mata (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Jul-Aug 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/024, p. 87.

22 Cf. Interview with Miguel Vidal Rico (conducted by María Luisa Capella, Jan-May 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/012, pp. 71-4 & pp. 79-80.

23 Interview with Angelines Jiménez de Dorronsoro (conducted by Matilde Mantecón, Apr 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/057, pp. 62-3.

In many cases, the first accommodations were, thus, improvised at short notice and exchanged for alternative lodgings sooner rather than later. Miguel Vidal Rico enjoyed the support of the Spanish aid organisations in finding another hotel accommodation to escape the conditions of his first lodgings, before he was able to install himself in a succession of ever more comfortable homes in the middle-class districts of the city.<sup>24</sup> But at first, many refugees (especially when arriving without partners or family) were scattered across a wide range of accommodations and smaller hotels. In the spring of 1940, the *Secretería de Gobernación* produced a list of members of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) which located Alejandro Pérez Lías at the Hotel “Europa” at calle Donceles no. 3 in the *Centro Histórico*, Manuel Juan Ortells at the Hotel “Estrella”, Antonio Otero Díaz at the Hotel “Terminal”, and Ángel Vera Zamora at the Hotel “Ballona” at calle República de Uruguay no. 30 in the *Centro Histórico*, after he had lived for some time at the *albergue* maintained by the CTARE at calle Atlixco no. 49.<sup>25</sup> In room number 4 of the same hotel also lived the Czech national Walter Allerhand who had entered Mexico as a journalist for socialist periodicals in Czechoslovakia and Switzerland in 1938. He had ended up as a political refugee and exile after the Nazi regime had destroyed Czechoslovakia in March 1939.<sup>26</sup> In May 1940, the *Secretería de Gobernación* listed some of the most prominent members of the intellectual elite among the Spanish republican refugees as living in the hotels of the Mexican capital: the professor in psychiatry Gonzalo R. Lafora at Hotel “Danky” at calle Donato Guerra no. 10 in the district of *Juárez*, Prof. Enrique Rioja Lo-Blanco in the Hotel “York” at calle 5 de Mayo in the *Centro Histórico*, the engineer and geographer Alfredo San Juan y Colomar at the Hotel “Buenos Aires” at calle Motolinía no. 21 in the *Centro Histórico*, and the law professor Luis Recasens Biches in Hotel “Tivoli” at calle Ramón Guzmán no. 6 in the *Tabacalera*.<sup>27</sup>

What is significant about such first patterns of residence in the city is that many political refugees were, at first, reluctant to establish themselves in permanent circumstances but chose to live, as the saying went, “on packed suitcases”. After spending almost two weeks in his first disagreeable accommodation, Rómulo García Salcedo recalled moving on to the Hotel “Ambassador” in Avenida México no. 83 at the corner with calle Michoacán in the district of *Hipódromo*. Just across the adjacent *Parque México* he then found a furnished apartment in the *Edificio “Rosa”*, a little further down Avenida México at no. 147, where his family lived without many possessions, “because we were

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24 Interview with Miguel Vidal Rico (conducted by María Luisa Capella, Jan-May 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/012, pp. 81-2.

25 See the list of PCE members at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 10, fols. 81-2; cf. also the list of residents at the *albergue* Atlixco no. 49 (22 Dec 1939) at BNAH, Archivo Histórico, fondo CTARE, rollo 121, exp. 6425, fol. 4.

26 See the short personal memo on Allerhand (16 Jan 1942) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 89, exp. 13, fol. 45.

27 See the list at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 10, fols 78-9.

convinced during those four years that we would return to Spain, and we did not want to spend money; so we only moved with one suitcase with our belongings, [...]”. It was only “after the Yalta Agreement” that he realised that he and his family would have to stay longer in Mexico, and “we began to think that we would have to establish [ourselves] a little more seriously”, and so they moved on to more spacious and comfortable accommodation.<sup>28</sup> Teresa Almdares de Lozano recalled staying at first at the Hotel “Ambos Mundos” at calle Bolívar (close to calle Tacuba) in the *Centro Histórico* with five persons in one room before moving on to a small suite with one bedroom and a sitting room at the Hotel “Ambassador” in Avenida México.<sup>29</sup> The German writer and publisher Franz Pfemfert, a well-known publicist of the independent radical Left of German politics between the wars, first stayed at the Hotel “Tivoli” during April 1941 before moving on to his first more permanent accommodation at calle Tabasco no. 300 in the district of *Roma Norte*.<sup>30</sup> Changing hotels was not only undertaken to escape sub-standard lodgings but also to move from luxury establishments to financially more affordable accommodation, whether it be paid by the Spanish CTARE or by the refugees themselves. During the first few days of his stay in Mexico City, Pedro Carrasco Pizana resided at the Hotel “Regis” at Avenida Juárez no. 73, arguably one of the finest and most luxurious address in the city, before moving on to the far less glamorous Hotel “Danky” at calle Donato Guerra no. 10 in the district of *Juárez*. After a few months, his first permanent address would then be just a little further down the same street into the district of *Centro* in calle Artículo 123.<sup>31</sup> When the German writer Gustav Regler arrived in the city in September 1940, he stayed at first at the elegant Hotel “Montejo” at the Avenida de la Reforma no. 240 before moving into the apartment number 116 at calle Sindicalismo no. 99 in the south-western district of *Escandón*.<sup>32</sup> During those

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28 Interview with Rómulo García Salcedo (conducted by Dolores Pla, Mar-Apr 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/056, pp. 81-2; It is possible that he intended to refer to the Conference of Casablanca in January 1943 when the Allies’ intentions to keep Franco in power first became clear to the global public; cf. „La entrevista de Casablanca“, *Adelante* II/25 (1 Feb 1943), p. 3; cf. also on Winston Churchill’s later statement before the House of Commons on 24 May 1944: Richard Wigg: *Churchill and Spain. The survival of the Franco regime, 1940-45* (London / New York, 2005), p. 128; Churchill’s statement was widely criticised among the Spanish-republican community in Mexico, cf. the reaction at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca sobre el Exilio 44/2, fol. 9 (3 Jun 1944); „La Comisión Coordinadora de Entidades Republicanas Españolas ante el último discurso de Churchill“, *España Popular* V/193 (9 Jun 1944), p. 5.

29 Interview with Teresa Almdares de Lozano (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Oct-Nov 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/048, pp. 81-2.

30 According to the files of the Jewish *Comité Pro-Refugiados* at the *Comité Central Israelita de México*: CDICA, Comité Pro-Refugiados, no. 11 (6 Apr 1941). See also: Franz Pfemfert: *Erinnerungen und Abrechnungen. Texte und Briefe*, ed. by Lisbeth Exner and Herbert Kapfer (München, 1999), p. 660.

31 Interview with Pedro Carrasco Pizana (conducted by Marisol Alonso, Jul 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/080, pp. 78-80.

32 See Gustav Regler: *Sohn aus Niemandland. Tagebücher 1940-1943* (Frankfurt a.M., 1994),



days of summer in 1940, Pablo Neruda spent his early days as Chilean consul in the Hotel “Montejo”. Neruda, like Octavio Paz a participant in the second anti-fascist International Congress in Defence of Culture in Spain in 1937, had been active in organising the evacuation of Spanish republican refugees to the American hemisphere, and his lodgings soon became a gathering point for the supporters of the Spanish republican cause and the broader spectrum of the transnational Left in the city.<sup>33</sup>

This first phase of the presence of European refugees in Mexico City was, thus, characterised by a high degree of fluctuation between temporary accommodations in the local hotels and the first private lodgings around the city districts close to the city centre. This frequent relocation of refugees occurred against the backdrop of an upsurge of tourism across the country during the summer of 1939 when in the capital of Mexico City alone more than 10,000 visitors were reported during the month of July. It is not clear, however, whether such numbers included the thousands of newly-arrived European refugees who were hastily booked into the hotels and lodging houses: “Metropolitan hotels are crowded, patrons in some cases sleeping on cots in bars. Local lodging houses and private rooms are also full.”<sup>34</sup> Not everyone, though, moved out of hotel accommodation quickly. From the subscription records of left-wing periodicals in the city it emerges that some refugees stayed at their hotels for years: In March 1943, Julio Alonso subscribed to the Spanish communist newspaper *España Popular* from his lodgings in room 51 of the Hotel “Pánuco” at calle Ayuntamiento no. 148 in the district *Centro*, as did Francisco Pozo Olivares at the Hotel “Buenos Aires” at calle Motolinía no. 21 in the *Centro Histórico*.<sup>35</sup> Gregorio Bailis followed the Mexican communist paper *Voz de México* from his room number 7 at the Hotel “España”, located at Puente de Alvarado no. 100 on the northern edge of the *Tabacalera*. José Baeza Onsina stayed at the Pensión “Flores” at calle República de Salvador no. 53 in the *Centro Histórico*.<sup>36</sup> As late as in November 1944, the Japanese choreographer Seki Sano (who collaborated with the German-American dancer Waldeen von Falkenstein in the creation of a politically engaged dancing theatre in Mexico) had his address listed as the Hotel “Hunter” at the Calzada Manuel Villalongín on the northern limits of the district of *Cuauhtémoc*<sup>37</sup>, and Manuel Jiménez García received *España Popular* at his lodgings in the boarding house “La Asturiana” at calle República de Uruguay no.

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pp. 448 and 458.

33 See Volodia Teitelboim: *Neruda: an intimate biography* (Austin, 1991), p. 244.

34 „Tourist Boom hits Mexico; hotels turn away patrons“, *Mexico Today* I/19 (22 Jul 1939), p. 1.

35 See the surveillance of communist newspaper subscriptions by the US embassy (15 Mar 1943) at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02 Gibson (Jan-May), s. fol.

36 See the surveillance of communist newspaper subscriptions by the US embassy (31 Mar 1943) at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 800Political Affairs - C, s. fol.

37 See the surveillance of communist newspaper subscriptions by the US embassy (8 Nov 1944) at USNACP, RG84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

117 in the *Centro Histórico*.<sup>38</sup> In the same boarding house resided the mathematics professor Celestino Blanco de Barrio, suspected by the intelligence unit of the US embassy of pro-Soviet espionage.<sup>39</sup> The left-wing US-American journalist Frank Jellinek had arrived in Mexico City after covering the Spanish Civil War, but years later still resided at The Hotel “Monte Carlo” in the same street of República de Uruguay where he received the Mexican communist paper *Voz de México*.<sup>40</sup> Among the German-speaking community of refugees and local anti-fascists the *Secretería de Gobernación* found several followers and supporters of the movement *Alemania Libre* staying in hotels during 1943/44: Alfonso Kunze Zimmer at the Hotel “México”, the chemistry student Gabriel Freudenstein at the Hotel “Hipódromo” (today’s Hotel “Roosevelt”) at Insurgentes no. 287 in the district of *Hipódromo*, E. Heitmann Dahl at the Hotel “Isabel” at calle Isabel la Católica no. 63 in the *Centro Histórico*, and W. Obuch in room number 110 at the Gran Hotel at calle República de Uruguay no. 12 in the historic city centre.<sup>41</sup> A year later, a survey by the US embassy identified among the “friends of *Alemania Libre*” not only Gabriel Freudenstein (still at Hotel “Hipódromo”)<sup>42</sup>, but also Marco Antonio Haalck, staying at the Hotel “San Diego” at calle Basilio Badillo in the district *Centro*<sup>43</sup>, and the “wealthy” Eric Angerslow Nielsen at the prestigious Hotel “Reforma” on Avenida de la Reforma no. 125 (on the southern tip of the *Tabacalera*).<sup>44</sup> The habit of residing in hotel accommodation could last even longer than these examples suggest: When in the spring of 1949 the leading Spanish republican intellectuals launched the *Ateneo Español en México*, the centre of intellectual life in exile during the post-war decades, they counted among them not just the Peruvian writer Felipe Cossio del Pomar and his wife Estrella Font de Cossio who at the time stayed at the Hotel “Ritz” in the *Centro Histórico*, but also the Spanish anarchist writer José Bullejos in the Hotel “Montejo” on Avenida de la Reforma.<sup>45</sup> One of the less likely members joining the *Ateneo Español* around 1954 was Pedro de la Fuente, manager of a furniture store and ten years earlier an officer of the nationalist *Casino Español*, who gave his address as the Hotel “Carlton” at calle Ignacio Mariscal no. 32-B in the

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38 See the surveillance of communist newspaper subscriptions by the US embassy (9 Nov 1944) at USNACP, RG84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

39 See the personal memorandum (18 Sep 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

40 See the surveillance of communist newspaper subscriptions by the US embassy (8 Nov 1944) at USNACP, RG84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

41 According to the list at AGN, DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fols. 59-65.

42 See the memorandum on Freudenstein (9 Jan 1945) at USNACP, RG84, UD2984, 820.02 Gibson, s. fol.

43 See the memorandum on Haalck (19 Dec 1944) at USNACP, RG84, UD2985, 820.02, s. fol.

44 See the memorandum on Nielsen (23 Apr 1945) at USNACP, RG84, UD2984, 820.02 Gibson, s. fol.

45 See the record of *socios* of the *Ateneo Español de México* at AEM, caja 50, exp. 492, fols. 128-9.

*Tabacalera*.<sup>46</sup> Even later in 1956, Alejandro Campos Ramírez joined the *Ateneo Español* from his room at the Hotel “Toledo” at calle de López no. 22 in the district *Centro*.<sup>47</sup> Though for most refugees the hotels of the city clearly only provided very temporary accommodation during the first days and weeks in the city, some (particularly when they were single) chose to turn their first lodgings into a way of life in exile.

The hotels could also provide spaces of sociability in their lobbies, bars, and restaurants – spaces of exile which created spheres of social exclusivity as well as of political practice among the more distinguished members of the community of exile. When Ceferino Palencia had arrived in the city by bus, he was immediately directed towards the Hotel “Royalty” (he probably meant the Hotel “Imperial”) on Paseo de la Reforma at the corner of calle Morelos in front of the monument to Cristobal Colón. He remembered the café in the lower part of the hotel where “great figures of the emigration and Spanish individuals of some standing here [in Mexico]” would meet:

among them, for example, Tomás Perrín, a disciple of Cajal and a magnificent stomatologist. There also appeared the doctor Costero, the doctor Martínez Báez, Juan de la Encina, Enrique Díez Canedo, and finally a number of intellectuals, Spanish professionals, they met for coffee and to reassure each other that Franco would fall before long – which did happen from the point of view of Einstein’s theory of relativity, because it took no more than 40 years.<sup>48</sup>

While substantial numbers of European political refugees concentrated in the hotels of the city, these places also attracted the attention of the Mexican security agencies as topographical markers of transnational European politics from the opposite end of the ideological spectrum. During the summer of 1939, the secretary of the Spanish *Falange*, Ángel Urraza Saracho, resided at the Hotel “Majestic” at calle Madero no. 73 in the *Centro Histórico* and was counted among the “prominent *Franquistas*” who cooperated fully with Augusto Ibañez Serrano, the unofficial diplomatic representative of the Franco regime in Mexico, and Francisco Moslera, the leader of the Spanish *Falange* in Mexico.<sup>49</sup> In October 1941, the *Secretaría de Gobernación* became suspicious of the activities of Ernest James Piper, a British citizen who had already lived at the Hotel “Geneve” at calle

46 See the record of *socios* of the *Ateneo Español* at AEM, caja 50, exp. 492, fol. 138; cf. the list of officers of the *Casino Español* compiled by the US embassy (18 Mar 1943) at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02 Gibson (Jan-May), s. fol.

47 See the record of *socios* of the *Ateneo Español* at AEM, caja 50, exp. 492, fol. 141.

48 Interview with Ceferino Palencia (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Sep/Oct 1981 and Aug/Sep 1988) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/83, pp. 181-2; on the circle of Spanish refugees meeting in the Hotel “Imperial” see also José Moreno Villa: *La Cornucopia de México* (Mexico D.F., 1940), pp. 59-60.

49 See the memorandum (18 Jul 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 4, exp. 14, fol. 8.

Londres no. 130 in the district of *Juárez* for almost two years since November 1939. Piper was noted for “his open sympathy with all aspects of Nazism” which he expressed towards the hotel staff, and for his claims to have met personally with Adolf Hitler in Munich. His lavish lifestyle and apparent social proximity to German and Japanese individuals prompted further investigations.<sup>50</sup> A few days later it emerged that Piper did, indeed, receive frequent visits by Andrés Quintana, the nephew of Augusto Ibañez Serrano, at the hotel. Even though such observations hardly amounted to any clear evidence to support suspicions against Piper, inspector PS-53 insisted that he was generally regarded as a “fervent supporter of Hitler [...] since he seeks to sound out [people’s] political ideas and to convince them of totalitarianism.”<sup>51</sup> Such general suspicion surrounding the hotels of the city during the early years of the European war contributed to an atmosphere of heightened tension and susceptibility to second-hand information and rumours. In July 1939, two individuals were allegedly overheard in the Hotel “Reforma” referring to a shipment of 600 hand grenades being stored somewhere in the district of *Churubusco*. Both would have a meeting at the Edificio “Aztlán” in Avenida Juárez to collect their payment for this delivery, and their description illustrated the contemporary economy of suspicion when it came to surveying the transnational spaces of the hotels in the capital city: the first of the two was described as “North-American, tall, slim, white coloured. Uses a moustache à la »Chaplin«, also known by the name à la »Hitler«.” The second, by contrast, appeared as “short, well-built, with a reddish face, such as someone who often abuses alcoholic drinks”, and was reported as being of Mexican nationality.<sup>52</sup> Irrespective of the degree of veracity of such reports, it may serve as a characterisation of the social and political atmosphere present in the hotels of Mexico City during those months when a substantial number of European political refugees often lived door-to-door with very different milieus of transnational politics and police informers.

José Bargés had already found a first business opportunity as a salesman of pistachios and candlenuts which guaranteed him a modest income of about 90 pesos per month (a little more than 10 dollars in contemporary exchange rates). Still, he was able to utilise the support of the CTARE when finding his first place to stay in the city: “Of course, I did not go to a hotel.” He avoided the expenses of rented accommodation by obtaining a place in the *albergue* at calle Lucerna no. 65 in the district of *Juárez* very close to the Avenida de la Reforma: “It was a building, ground floor, first floor and second floor, all in red brick.” The collective accommodation provided by the Spanish aid organizations was often overcrowded, and he presented himself as in urgent need of accommodation on the grounds of his ill health:

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50 See the report (23 Oct 1941) at AGN DGIPS, caja 87, exp. 1, fol. 89; an identical copy at AGN DGIPS, caja 124, exp. 48, fol. 2.

51 Report by Inspector PS-53 (28 Oct 1941) at AGN DGIPS, caja 124, exp. 48, fol. 4.

52 See the report (31 Jul 1939) at AGN DGIPS; caja 81, exp. 4, fol. 90.

I presented myself there to the caretaker who was, of course, a refugee and said: »Look, I have come here because I contracted malaria«, (in fact, I had contracted malaria in Champuso where they injected me with quinine), and I said: »I had to go there, but I need medical attention and have come here to Mexico [City]«. And he said: »Ok, but at the moment we don't have any vacant bed; if you want we can put up a bed in the lower level, in the mezzanine.«”

Bargés stayed in these circumstances for about a week together with the cooks of the canteen of the *albergue* and admired the ample supplies of available fresh food.<sup>53</sup> His name is documented as a resident of the *albergue* at calle Lucerna no. 65 during October and December of 1939, though it appears that later during the year of 1939 he had to take his meals at a different location, the *comedor* of the *albergue* at calle Serapio Rendón no. 125 in the district of *San Rafael*.<sup>54</sup> Bargés, who was soon selected to work as a teacher at the *Colegio “Luis Vives”*<sup>55</sup>, shared one room with 5 other refugees, most of them Catalans, among them the brothers Francisco and Josep María Miquel i Vergés who would later become actively involved in the activities of the *Orfeó Català* and the Spanish-republican embassy in Mexico City, respectively. Another resident of this room in the *albergue* was Pere Calders, a well-known Catalan journalist and writer, who returned to Spain in the early 1960s as a leading figure and celebrated representative of Catalan culture during the Spanish *transición* of the latter half of the 1970s.<sup>56</sup> The temporary and crowded accommodation at the *albergues* was, thus, an environment which could bring into close contact refugees from different walks of life as well as foster the reconstruction of regional bonds (in this case among the Catalans) which underpinned the experience of political exile in the city.

In other cases, though, the accommodation at the *albergues* could cause the separation of families and couples. Between the different locations there existed a system of catering for different groups of refugees, separated along the lines of gender and marital and family status. Silvia Mistral de Mestre recalled being separated from her husband during the first days since her arrival in the city, as her husband, Ricardo Mestre Ventura, was allocated to an *albergue* dedicated exclusively to single men while she had to stay at another location – evidently an incentive to search for alternative accommodation in the city as soon as possible

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53 Interview with José Bargés (conducted by Dolores Pla, Mar 1992) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/104, pp. 49-50.

54 See the lists of residents at BNAH, fondo CTARE, sección Auxilios y Albergues, rollo 121, exp. 6423, fol. 23; *ibid.*, fol. 18; see also the – undated – list of refugees eating at the CTARE comedores at BNAH, fondo CTARE, sección Auxilios y Albergues, rollo 121, exp. 6434 (caja 1773), fol. 11.

55 See the entry of occupation in the list (22 Dec 1939) at BNAH, fondo CTARE, sección Auxilios y Albergues, rollo 121, exp. 6423, fol. 18.

56 Interview with José Bargés (conducted by Dolores Pla, Mar 1992) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/104, p. 50; cf. Pla Brugat: *Els exiliats catalans*, pp. 234-5.

and which they then found at the *Casa Arsenia* at calle Tacuba in the *Centro Histórico*.<sup>57</sup> The surviving records of the CTARE administration indicate that during the last months of 1939 three *albergues* were exclusively inhabited by men: the *albergues* at calle Lucerna no. 65 and at calle Niza no. 71, both in the district of *Juárez*, and at calle Serapio Rendón no. 125 in the district of *San Rafael*.<sup>58</sup> The latter was also the first residence of 28 musicians of the *Agrupación Musical Madrid* (or simply: *Banda Madrid*), the military music band of the Spanish republican armed forces.<sup>59</sup> Under the leadership of the musical director Rafael Oropesa (and later, after Oropesa's death in October 1944, Pedro Mendizábal) the band frequently participated in public events and appearances of the Spanish republican refugees in different locations across the city, not least during the Mexican May Day parades.<sup>60</sup> The other *albergues* also offered provisional accommodation to couples and, above all, families, in particular the *albergues* at Calzada de Tacubaya no. 26 and at calle Atlixco no. 49 in the district of *Condesa*, at calle Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz no. 112 in the district of *Santa María*, at calle Chilpancingo no. 164, and at calle Huatusco no. 32, both in the district of *Roma Sur*.

The residential structure of those who did not stay at the *albergues* but still relied on the support of CTARE for their daily meals may be gathered from the documentation of guests at the CTARE canteens (the *comedores*) which had been installed at calle Lucerna no. 65, calle Sor Juan Inés de la Cruz no. 112, calle Niza no. 71, calle Serapio Rendón no. 125, and Calzada de Tacubaya no. 26. Of the about 500 refugees (registered heads of family and their additional dependent family members) coming in for meals every day from privately rented accommodation elsewhere in the city, the residential addresses break down into city districts as follows:

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57 Interview with Silvia Místral de Mestre (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Feb-Mar 1988) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/097, p. 371-4; Interview with Ricardo Mestre Ventura (conducted by Enriqueta Sandoval, Mar-Apr 1988) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/099, pp. 438-9; see also the record of Ricardo Mestre staying at the *albergue* at Calzada de Tacubaya no. 26 on the western edge of the district of *Condesa* at BNAH, fondo CTARE, sección Auxilios y Albergues, rollo 121, exp. 6423, fol. 18 and taking meals there together with his wife.

58 According to the surviving lists of residents (Oct-Dec 1939) at BNAH, fondo CTARE, sección Auxilios y Albergues, rollo 121, exp. 6423, fols. 18-9 & 22-25; *ibid.*, exp. 6420, fols. 1 & 6; *ibid.*, exp. 6424, fols. 17-8 & 23-4.

59 See the list of residents at BNAH, fondo CTARE, sección Auxilios y Albergues, rollo 121, exp. 6424, fols. 23-4.

60 See the recollections of Amaro del Rosal (interview conducted by Elena Aub, Apr 1980, Sep/Oct 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/ESP19, p. 249; see also: „Actividades de la emigración española“, *España Popular* IV/153 (10 Sep 1943), p. 3.

*Accommodation of visitors to the comedores established by CTARE (1939/40)*<sup>61</sup>

Location	heads	fam. members	total	percentage
Centro Histórico	55	35	94	19 %
Juárez	30	50	80	16 %
Tabacalera	28	49	77	15 %
Guerrero	23	41	64	13 %
Centro	33	24	57	11 %
San Rafael	16	13	29	6 %
Other/unknown location	45	51	96	20%
<b>total</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>497</b>	

Given the unequal size of these city districts, the highest density of refugees registered by CTARE at the *comedores* who did not stay at the *albergues* was to be found in the *Tabacalera* surrounding the *Monumento a la Revolución* and in the district of *Centro* just south of the *Alameda Central*. Generally, this segment of the Spanish republican refugees was thus centered, at first, either in temporary accommodation in the historic city centre or around the northern end of the *Paseo de la Reforma* at *Plaza de la Reforma* with its equestrian statue of the Spanish king Charles IV., more commonly known as the “*Caballito*”. The *Caballito* served as a popular marker in the geography of the city and commemorated one of the last colonial rulers of Mexico who, as it happened, had himself been forced into exile by the Napoleonic invasion of 1808 which in turn helped pave the way for the rise of the Mexican independence movement of 1810. To José Moreno Villa, the *Caballito* represented more than just an artistic left-over from the Spanish colonial legacy but an indictment of the subsequent incompetence of the Spanish monarchy:

The horse marches now towards the calle Bucareli. To see it well, prominent against the sky, against the clouds (which is how those phantoms of history must progress), one needs to focus on it from the ground. Seen like that, and against the light, it acquires dramatic effect. One sees him parading in the twilight of the day and in that of his lineage. And following his misleadingly triumphal march, the spectator recapitulates the one-hundred and fifty years of national history and sees perched on the same pedestal Fernando VII, the organ grinder of Avapiés [a neighbourhood in Madrid], Isabel II, the female on the throne with her little sheep Francisco, and all the others who are, unfortunately, fresh in memory as well as in life.

The *Caballito*, thus, became a topographical marker for not just for the colonial legacy of Spanish rule, but also for an inscription of Spanish republican bitterness and resentment over the course of post-colonial Spanish history. Moreno Villa

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<sup>61</sup> Numbers are compiled from BNAH, fondo CTARE, sección Auxilios y Albergues, rollo 121, exp. 6434, fols. 1-2 & 4-20.

spelled out his melancholy in exile: “Names, names. Why mention them? The clouds are now made of blood. All the façades of Spain now have the colour of those clouds. The horse no longer treads on the arms of the Aztecs but on other symbols. And if it [once] had traces of a Roman horse, now one sees the Teutonic cross.”<sup>62</sup>

The *comedores* did not only serve as important tent poles of the infrastructure of aid provided for the Spanish refugees by the *Comité Técnico* (CTARE), but represented spaces of ritual sociability which helped reconstruct hierarchical spaces of respectability, however provisional and unsatisfactory the conditions may have been. The facilities were staffed by refugees themselves, among them some experienced and well-mannered professionals who did not always appreciate the not-so-distinguished manners of the majority of refugees frequenting the *comedores* for their daily meals. Claudio Esteva Fabregat stayed at the *albergue* at calle Atlixco no. 49 and made his way to calle Lucerna for his meals at the *comedor* located at no. 65 where he encountered the head waiter serving the meals to refugees while he appeared “very annoyed by us, because he was a head waiter who had always served gentlemen.”

He used to serve, if I am not mistaken, at the Equestrian Club in Barcelona which was a club of grand gentlemen, the great land owners; so this man was used to serving gentlemen including the way of laying out the table cloth, the way of setting the plates, the way of serving... It all appeared like those butlers who you never know whether they are aristocrats or butlers, but you can sometimes confuse them because they are totally identical. So this man was enormously irritated that we ate so much [...] He was a man who disliked very much seeing the lack [...] of self-restraint we displayed by not observing the manners [...] that you should leave a bit, a bit of soup to indicate that you are well-mannered and you are not so much..., aren't hungry but simply eat because you need to eat instead of living for the meal. Well, at that time, we really lived for the meal a little.<sup>63</sup>

During the autumn and winter of 1939/40 the quality of those meals at the *comedores*, as well as the quality of the CTARE services in the *albergues* in general, became the object of complaints and a subsequent investigation by CTARE which resulted in a detailed documentation of the aid services available at

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62 José Moreno Villa: *La Cornucopia de México* (Mexico D.F., 1940), p. 40. Such implicit inscriptions of post-colonial entanglement into the urban topography of Mexico City could also be related to regional identity within Spain, see, for example: „La estatua ecuestre de Carlos IV. Magnífica obra de un gran artista valenciano“, *Levante. Órgano mensual de la Casa Regional Valenciana* 1/2 (3 May 1943), p. 4.

63 Interview with Claudio Esteva Fabregat (conducted by Elena Aub and Enriqueta Tuñón, Jun / Dec 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/ESP29, p. 129.



the time.<sup>64</sup> Typical meals served for lunch and for supper at the *comedores* of CTARE would look like the following menu documented in the files of CTARE:

Lunch	Noodle soup Stew à la Madrileña with vegetable and potatoes Beef, bacon, and Chorizo Lettuce salad Dessert and coffee
Supper	Vegetable Soup Steak with fried potatoes Tomato and lettuce salad Dessert and coffee <sup>65</sup>

Not only were these rather generous provisions in comparison to what the refugees back in the French internment camps or in exile in North Africa had to make do with (and certainly to what the majority of the Mexican population could afford), but the CTARE *albergues* also catered for special dietary needs among the refugees, for sufferers from diabetes, lactose intolerance, arteriosclerosis, liver disease, and gastric ulcers.<sup>66</sup> The *comedores*, therefore, provided substantial and comparatively excellent services for the Spanish-republican community of political refugees in the city. Complaints about the performance of CTARE need to be seen against the mounting financial difficulties of the *Comité Técnico*, which had to terminate its activities before autumn 1940, and were also politically motivated.

Among the most frequent allegations raised against the work of the *Servicio de Evacuación de los Refugiados Españoles* (SERE) and its Mexican subsidiary, the *Comité Técnico de Ayuda a los Refugiados Españoles* (CTARE) was the suspicion that it harboured a political bias in favour of the popular front policies of the last republican government headed by Juan Negrín who spent his years in exile in London, and later in France. The complaints raised against SERE and CTARE (which led to the formation of the *Junta de Auxilio a los Republicanos Españoles* (JARE) directed by Indalecio Prieto in Mexico) thus centered around its alleged preference of evacuating and supporting communists and their left-leaning socialist political allies while anti-communist groups were believed to lose out on rescue and support offered by SERE and CTARE. It is therefore worthwhile examining the installations of CTARE in Mexico City as centres of political sociability. The surviving registers of individuals who frequented the *albergues* and *comedores* either as lodgers and/or as guests at the canteens can be cross-referenced with available records of political affiliation

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64 Cf. the materials at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 121, exps. 6430-2.

65 Example taken from BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 121, exp. 6431 (1940), fol. 9.

66 Cf. *ibid.*, fol. 13.

among the Spanish community of refugees in Mexico City in order to arrive at a more accurate estimate of the political camps that benefitted from the support of CTARE. In many cases records of political affiliation are incomplete (if they exist at all), but in some cases the CTARE records held at the *Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia* (BNAH) can be combined with the records of Spanish political associations in Mexico prepared by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* held at the *Archivo General de la Nación* and those of the US embassy in Mexico City at the US National Archives to establish areas of overlap.

In the case of the Spanish communists, this political camp may be understood as consisting of the membership of the *Partido Comunista Español* (PCE) and the *Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña* (PSUC) as well as of the subscribers to the communist periodical *España Popular* as they were recorded during 1943/44. It appears that 83 individuals who benefitted from the services of CTARE at the *albergues* and *comedores* belonged, in this definition, to the communist camp in exile.<sup>67</sup> The other political group that can be reconstructed is that of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists adhering to the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT) or subscribing to and donating towards the periodicals associated with the different wings of the Spanish anarchists in Mexico (the *Agrupación* and the *Subdelegación*), the journals *CNT* and *Solidaridad Obrera* respectively. Remarkably, the share of Spanish anarchists registered with the CTARE services in Mexico City was even slightly higher than that of the communists – 93 individuals who frequented the *albergues* and *comedores* can, in this way, be identified as affiliated with the anarchist camp.<sup>68</sup> Given the open animosity, if not hostility between the two political groups since the events of Barcelona during May 1937, the available evidence does not suggest much of a pro-communist bias of the SERE and CTARE services. The membership of organised socialists among the *clientèle* of the CTARE facilities is far more difficult to establish, mainly for the absence of comprehensive membership records of the socialist *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT) which in part

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67 This figure is based on cross-referencing undated information on PCE members at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 10, fols. 81-3, and at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 800S-800CGeneral: list of communist leadership (10 Jan 1941); *ibid.* 800C – 801.01Rod: memorandum on PC Euzkadi (8 Sep 1943); *ibid.* 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May: list of subscribers to *España Popular* (15 Mar 1943); *ibid.* UD2895, 820.02: memorandum on PCE (20 Jul 1944); *ibid.* list of subscribers to *España Popular* (9 Nov 1944) with the records of CTARE at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 117, exp. 6367, fol. 6; rollo 121, exp. 6420 (Dec 1939), fols. 1 & 6; *ibid.* exp. 6421 (22 Dec 1939), fol. 8; *ibid.* exp. 6422 (28 Oct 1939), fol. 13; *ibid.* exp. 6423 (Oct-Dec 1939), fols. 18-25; *ibid.* exp. 6424 (Dec 1939), fols. 18-24; *ibid.* exp. 6425 (22 Dec 1939), fols. A-3; *ibid.* exp. 6434, fols. 1-19.

68 This figure is based on cross-referencing information on the CNT membership at AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fols. 530-43, in the journals *CNT* and *Solidaridad Obrera*, and at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson): memorandum on the building at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50 (21 Sep 1945) with the records of CTARE at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 121, exp. 6420 (Dec 1939), fols. 1&6; *ibid.* exp. 6422 (28 Oct 1939), fol. 13; *ibid.* exp. 6423 (Oct-Dec 1939), fols. 13-23; *ibid.* exp. 6424 (Dec 1939), fols. 17-18; *ibid.* exp. 6425 (22 Dec 1939), fols. A-3; *ibid.* exp. 6426 (1940), fol. 1; *ibid.* exp. 6434, fols. 1-19.

favoured the popular front policies of the left-wing *negrinistas*, and the rival socialist clubs, the *Círculo Pablo Iglesias* (since 1940) of the anti-communist *prietistas* and the *Círculo Jaime Vera* (since December 1941) of the left-wing socialist *negrinistas*. Still, 25 UGT members can be identified among those benefitting from the CTARE services<sup>69</sup>, as well as 22 who later are documented as members of the *Círculo Pablo Iglesias* as against only 6 of those who later joined the *Círculo Jaime Vera*.<sup>70</sup> Given the incomplete nature of the available data, little can be deduced with respect to an alleged pro-communist bias of SERE and CTARE, but the strong presence of the Spanish anarchists (even if they were disproportionately documented in the available data or disproportionately in need of assistance by the CTARE) suggests that the aid services of the last popular front government of the Spanish Republic were prepared to assist refugees across the deep ideological divide of republican politics. Political conflicts between the communists and the anarchists in Mexico City were, however, inscribed onto the topographical structure of political sociability of both camps across the installations of CTARE: About 40 percent of the Spanish communists who used these facilities preferred to live or meet for a meal at the *albergue* at calle Serapio Rendón no. 125 in the district of *San Rafael* while an equal share of anarchists chose the *albergue* at calle Lucerna no 65 in the district of *Juárez*. Though judging from these numbers it would be overstating the point to conclude that both camps were strictly divided between those two places, a certain preference of politically motivated sociability can still be observed as the meals evidently went hand in hand with the maintenance of political networks and affiliations in exile in Mexico City.

For those who used the *albergues* of CTARE in the city (whether for monetary or for reasons of political sociability) this provision of support could also simply represent a last resort of subsistence which implied rather little biographical meaning and may even have threatened a personal sense of social respectability. The socialist Veneranda García Manzano (ex-member of parliament of the republican *Cortes*, and during the 1940s a republican activist of *negrinista*

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69 This figure is based on cross-referencing information on the UGT membership from the journals *Adelante* and *España Popular*, and at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 800N-Y: appeal to US president (10 Jul 1948) and *ibid.* UD2895, 820.02: memorandum on Spanish political organisations in Mexico (19 Apr 1944) with the records of CTARE at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 121, exp. 6420 (Dec 1939), fols. 1 & 6; *ibid.* exp. 6421 (22 Dec 1939), fol. 8; *ibid.* exp. 6425 (22 Dec 1939), fols. A-4; *ibid.* exp. 6434, fols. 1-20.

70 These figures are based on cross-referencing information on the respective membership from the journals *Adelante* and *El Socialista*, the collection „Hemeroteca del Exilio“, 43/1, 43/2, and 45/1 in the fondo Tomás Bilbao at the *Acervo Histórico* at the *Ateneo Español de México*, the records of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* at AGN, DGIPS, caja 100, exp. 5, fol. 13; *ibid.* caja 116, exp. 70, fols. 1&4; *ibid.* caja 315, exp. 10, fol. 51; *ibid.* exp. 11, fol. 39, with the records of CTARE at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 121, exp. 6420 (Dec 1939), fols. 1&6; *ibid.* exp. 6422 (28 Oct 1939), fol. 13; *ibid.* exp. 6423 (Oct-Dec 1939), fol. 23-24; *ibid.* exp. 6424 (Dec 1939), fol. 24; *ibid.* exp. 6425 (22 Dec 1939), fol. A-4; *ibid.* exp. 6434, fols. 1-18.

loyalties and representative of the left-wing socialist *Círculo Jaime Vera*<sup>71</sup>) simply erased from her autobiographical narrative the fact that during 1939/40 she and her four children took their meals at the *comedor* at calle Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz no. 112 in the less than prestigious district of *Santa María*.<sup>72</sup> Instead, she preferred to recount her first steps into the city as a mixture of modest luxury and regional affiliation which apparently rivalled her political loyalties to some extent. She remembered the first lodgings of her family of five at the Hotel “El Porvernir”, in her own words “completely without any luxury”, close to the train station where she had arrived from Veracruz. She recalled being welcomed to the city by a Spanish ex-patriate in Mexico, Antonio Ariás, an Asturian entrepreneur of anti-fascist republican loyalties.<sup>73</sup> While she managed to cook the family breakfast in her hotel room, it was probably Ariás who directed her to the *Centro Asturiano* for the daily meals of the family,

where back then one could eat very cheaply, for two-and-a-half pesos; [...] you already know that the Asturians and the Galicians, we are famous for over-eating, aren't we? (laughs) We ate very well back then, *paella*, *fabada* [a typical stew from Asturia, with beans, pork, and bacon], we ate very well, but, well, it was two-fifty for each one.<sup>74</sup>

While two pesos and fifty centavos may have sounded very cheap by the standards of 1980 (when this interview took place), it represented a considerable financial burden on the family budget at the time. On their daily walks towards the *Centro Asturiano* at Calle 16 de Septiembre no. 14-16 in the historic city centre, one of her sons alerted his mother to a much cheaper restaurant which advertised meals for one peso and fifty centavos. “Indeed, the next day we went there to eat,

71 See her activities in: „Se constituye en México un patronato de ayuda a nuestros presos“, *España Popular* I/43 (21 Dec 1940), pp. 1&4; „El P.S.O. en el Congreso Antifascista“, *El Socialista* I/2 (1 Feb 1942), p. 6; „El gran acto en memoria de José Díaz y Pedro Checa“, *España Popular* IV/128 (26 Mar 1943), p. 3; „En el segundo aniversario de la muerte de José Díaz“, *España Popular* V/183 (30 Mar 1944), p. 4; „Homenaje al pueblo francés“, *España Popular* V/209 (29 Sep 1944), p.1; after the end of the Second World War, she joined the Spanish communist party (PCE), cf. interview with Veneranda García Manzano (conducted by Elena Aub, Feb-Mar 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/ESP15, pp. 76-9; „Saluciones de los nuevos militantes“, *España Popular* VIII/376 (12 Dec 1947), p. 2.

72 See the record of her and her children at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 121, exp. 6434, fol. 8.

73 José Antonio Ariás is recorded as a wealthy Asturian businessman (at the time a resident in Mexico for 25 years and „known as an anarchist“ to the US embassy) who owned the building occupied by the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* (which he also sponsored financially) at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50, see the memorandum on the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* (21 Sep 1945) at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02(Gibson), s. fol.; in 1950, he was recorded as the president of the *Centro*, see the confidential memorandum on the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* (25 Feb 1950) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 11, fol. 43; more generally on the role of the Asturian community *vis-à-vis* the Spanish republican exile cf. Jorge Belarmino Fernández Tomas: *Los Asturianos en los orígenes del exilio en México 1939* (s.l., 1987).

74 Interview with Veneranda García Manzano, (conducted by Elena Aub, Feb-Mar 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/ESP15, p. 69.

but it was very little and so bad what they gave us to eat [...] well, I could have tolerated it, but my sons, above all my two elder sons...". They soon returned to the restaurant of the *Centro Asturiano*, "that was how I first entered Mexico", she summarised this episode.<sup>75</sup>

What is remarkable in the context of Veneranda García's recollections is the absence of any reflection of the political loyalties of the *Centro Asturiano*. Across the city, the institution was widely known for its nationalist and pro-fascist sympathies, and the attacks on the building by Mexican trade unionists in the wake of the Fascists' victory celebrations in early April 1939 (only shortly before Veneranda García's arrival in the city) were far from arbitrary. In 1942, the Asturian community among the Spanish republicans in the city began to organise in a separate association, known as the *Bloque Asturiano*, in order to stage social events for the financial benefit of those Spanish republicans left behind in France and North Africa.<sup>76</sup> Evidently, the *Centro Asturiano* did not provide a platform for such activities. In June 1943, an internal memorandum summarised the intelligence available to the US embassy about the *Centro* as follows:

[...] beginning in 1936, upon the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, it was converted into a stronghold of Franquista propaganda. [...] although some of the members are of democratic inclinations, such individuals are members of the club simply because the regional character of the organization attracts them more than its political ideal. [...] the organization is a fortress of totalitarian propaganda in Mexico and one of the principal centers of Franquista activity.<sup>77</sup>

García Manzano did, however, remember vividly the generally negative attitude of the Spanish ex-patriate community in the city towards the republican refugees. Antonio Arias, whom she mentioned as a supportive fellow republican, she characterised as an "honourable exception".<sup>78</sup> So it appears that regional loyalties, such as in the case of the *Centro Asturiano*, could overcome even deep political enmity when good regional cuisine was concerned which fundamentally defined the construction of Spanish identity across the Mexican capital.<sup>79</sup> Veneranda

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75 Ibid., pp. 69-70.

76 See the invitation to a „festival benéfico“ in May 1942 and a general statement of the *Bloque Asturiano* at Fundación Pablo Iglesias (FPI), Archivos Particulares, Ramón Lamonedá Fernández ARLF-170-12, fols. 1-2.

77 Memo on Centro Asturiano (1 Jun 1943) at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, s. fol.

78 Interview with Veneranda García Manzano, (conducted by Elena Aub, Feb-Mar 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/ESP15, p. 71.

79 Cf. on the less than perfect relationship of many Spanish refugees with their Mexican host environment: Jorge de Hoyos Puente: „Simpatías y antipatías de los exiliados republicanos en México. Discursos políticos y prácticas sociales“, in: Elena Díaz Silva, Aribert Reimann, Randal Sheppard (eds): *Horizontes del Exilio. Nuevas aproximaciones a la experiencia de los*

García Manzano soon moved to a private apartment at calle Versailles no. 78 on the intersection with calle Barcelona in the central district of *Juárez*, and it is this address which she supplied to CTARE when she registered herself and her children for regular meals at the *comedor* at calle Sor Juana de la Cruz no. 112.<sup>80</sup> Her memory was dominated by the extremely low cost of living, especially with regard to veal and vegetables and the availability of cheap furniture at the market of *La Lagunilla* in the north of the historic city centre.<sup>81</sup> Four decades later, her reliance on the aid and support of the CTARE canteens no longer fitted in with the narrative of re-establishing her family home.

The German actress Steffi Spira succeeded in setting up home for herself, her husband Günter Ruschin, and their little son Tomas at Avenida Michoacán no. 26 in the district of *Hipódromo* just one block removed from *Parque México*. Her domestic arrangements differed significantly from the emphasis on national and regional identity which prevailed among much of the Spanish community in exile. Spira managed to hire the services of a Mexican maid, Lupita, and recalled the way in which she used the traditional Mexican cuisine to shape the experience of exile in the city:

I never reprimanded my so enchanting *criada* Lupita, I rather maintained a friendship with her. Lupita prepared wonderful dishes, only the tortillas were brought over ready-made, everything else she prepared herself in an inimitable gracious way. Her salads, the *frijolitas*, brown beans – everything was prepared in the most beautiful clay bowls which we had bought together at the market for a few *centavitos*. She taught me to choose fruit unknown to me according to their required ripeness. What a good fruit the *papaya* is, or the *zapote negro*, prepared with lemon juice, similar in appearance and also in flavour to plum puree, I learned from her. Yes, and still the *mangos*, apricot-like fruit with delicious juice and wonderful flesh. I also learned from Lupita how to keep and feed the turkey for New Year's Eve on the *azotea*.<sup>82</sup>

In Spira's case, the Mexican cuisine of her hosts and neighbours turned out to be less of a threat to her tastes and culinary preferences, much less a challenge to her national or regional identity, but rather an inspiration for her private practice of cultural hybridity which marked the memories of her exile in Mexico. Compared to the relatively fragile social and institutional networks of the non-Spanish

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*exilios entre Europa y América Latina durante el siglo XX* (Frankfurt a.M., 2018), pp. 145-68.

80 BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 121, exp. 6434, fol. 8.

81 Interview with Veneranda García Manzano, (conducted by Elena Aub, Feb-Mar 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/ESP15, pp. 70-1.

82 Steffi Spira-Ruschin: *Trab der Schaukelpferde. Aufzeichnungen im Nachhinein* (Berlin/Weimar, 1984), pp. 177-8..

refugees in Mexico City which made necessary a closer relationship with the Mexican population, the well-established Spanish community in the city with its social centres and provision of aid and support made it easier to maintain a private and social practice of national and regional identity.

The non-Spanish refugees in exile, who had no access to the kind of financial and logistical support which the Spanish aid organisations and regional centres in the city were able to provide, often relied on personal assistance and private offers of first lodgings, before they could establish themselves in the city. When the German-speaking refugees registered with the *Comité pro-Refugiados* of the Jewish *Comité Central*, many gave their addresses as “in care of”, or “c/o” of other private residents in Mexico City: Ernestina Morgenstern first stayed at the house of her son Roberto Stern at calle Amberes no. 9 in the district of *Juárez*, the Czech writer Lenka Reinerová left her contact address as that of Greta Katz at Avenida Amsterdam no 121 in the district of *Hipódromo*, the Austrian philosopher Alfred Stern found a first place to stay with another German refugee, the journalist and writer Paul Gutmann, at the *Edificio Condesa* in the district of the same name, the German socialist and former *Reichstag* depute Walter Öttinghaus gave as his address that of Fritz Fraenkel, a veteran doctor of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War and a political refugee in Mexico, at calle Tabasco no. 110 in the district of *Roma Norte*, the Austrian tradesman Hermann Weiss stayed with his brother Otto and their mother Nina at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 90 in the district of *Hidalgo*, and the German bookbinder Walter Zenker used the address of the German writer Gustav Regler at Avenida Juárez no. 141 in *Coyoacán*, once a prominent political commissar of the International Brigades in Spain who had since turned his back on communism.<sup>83</sup>

In December 1941, the newly-arrived German communist publisher Walter Janka found an opportunity to stay with the US-American writer Ralph Roeder who would personally serve Janka his breakfast: “A breakfast which I had never seen before: orange juice, boiled eggs, a pot of coffee, butter, fresh rolls.”<sup>84</sup> Roeder lived in a new and modern building designed and only just completed in the International Style by the German-born architect Max Cetto in collaboration with the Mexican modernist architect Luis Barragán at Parque Melchor Ocampo no. 38 in the district of *Cuauhtémoc*. Here, Janka would encounter a transnational group of artists and intellectuals, many of whom were exiled from non-European parts of the world and offered an opportunity of integration into a broader network of transnational politics and culture of the city:

The Cuban-born wife of the well-known muralist Xavier Guerrero, Clarita Porset, who lived on the floor below Ralph Roeder and – as an

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83 Information compiled from the card catalogue of the *Comité Pro-Refugiados* of the *Comité Central Israelita de México* at CDICA, *Comité Pro-Refugiados*, nos. 20, 47, 89, 109, 122, 139.

84 Walter Janka: *Spuren eines Lebens* (Berlin, 1991), p. 187.

interior designer – had decorated her apartment in ultra-modern style, often invited me for coffee. Simultaneously the US-American dancer of German origin Waldeen von Falkenstein. When it dawned on me that Clarita charmingly intended to pair me off with Waldeen, I started to decline the invitations.<sup>85</sup>

Janka swiftly moved on to alternative accommodation. In April 1942, he entered the National Register of Alien Residents under the address of calle Juan de la Barrera no. 166 in the district of *Condesa*. Around 1943/44 his name appeared on the membership of the German exile organisation *Alemania Libre* under the address of calle Manuel Villalongín no. 214-3 on the northern edge of the district of *Cuauhtémoc*, and when he and his wife Charlotte re-visited Mexico in 1994, they returned to the house where they had found a home together at Avenida Michoacán no. 81 at the junction with Avenida Tamaulipas in the district of *Condesa*.<sup>86</sup> Evidently, many refugees moved their first accommodations frequently before they began to settle into the topography of the city more permanently.

## **b. The residential Topography of Exile**

The precise geographical structure of the communities of exile in the city is difficult to establish since no comprehensive and reliable register of political refugees in the city exists. The immigration records usually only recorded their very first addresses in the country and were hardly updated while many refugees also tended to move around the city (and the country) without registering their changes of location. Some more precise records were, however, produced by the Mexican authorities and US-American surveillance of specific groups of refugees (usually based on political suspicions) and by institutions of the exiled communities themselves. Though such records were far from comprehensive and in no way should be taken as representative of the general topographical experience of exile in the city, they provide indications of the geographical structure of specific groups among the communities of exile in Mexico City.

Since May 1942, when Mexico declared war on Germany as an ally of the anti-Hitler coalition, the German community of exile was closely monitored by Mexican *Secretaría de Gobernación* as well as the Military Intelligence unit of the

85 Walter Janka: *Spuren eines Lebens* (Berlin, 1991), p. 188; on Clara Porset cf: Randal Sheppard: „Clara Porset in Mid Twentieth-Century Mexico: The Politics of Designing, Producing, and Consuming Revolutionary Nationalist Modernity“, *The Americas* 75/2 (April 2018), pp. 349-79.

86 See *Letzte Zuflucht Mexiko. Gilberto Bosques und das deutschsprachige Exil nach 1939*, Ausstellung Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin e.V. (Berlin, 2012), p. 150; membership list of *Alemania Libre* at AGN, DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fol. 57; see the TV documentary „Flucht nach Mexiko. Deutsche im Exil“, directed by Gerlinde Böhm (SFB / Goethe-Institut, 1994), Min. 34:55 – 35:15; cf. Walter Janka: *Spuren eines Lebens* (Berlin, 1991), pp. 188-9.



US embassy in Mexico City. Both aimed at producing a reliable register of the membership of the most important German exile organisation *Alemania Libre* which was dominated by German communists in exile and reached out to the German ex-patriate community. This composition of *Alemania Libre* in Mexico resulted in a mixed structure of exiles and resident ex-patriates in the city which both the Mexican domestic intelligence service of the *Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales* (DGIPS) and the intelligence unit of the US embassy tried to document in lists subdivided into a small core-group of active members (mostly political refugees) and a much bigger group of followers or “friends” (as the individual US dossiers described them) of uncertain migratory or political background. The origin of the information is unclear, but it seems likely that the second part of the lists represents the subscribers of one of *Alemania Libre*’s periodical journals: either the monthly *Freies Deutschland*, a political and literary journal which appeared since December 1941, or the bi-weekly *Demokratische Post*, aimed specifically at the German ex-patriate community since August 1943. A collation of these lists with the membership records of the local pro-fascist organisations of the German colony does, in fact, reveal that out of a total number of 646 individuals at least 70 adherents to the movement *Alemania Libre* appear on the membership list of the *Casino Alemán (Deutsches Haus)* in 1936, an institution which displayed regularly its loyalty to the Nazi government. Furthermore, 47 followers of *Alemania Libre* had been inscribed at the *Centro Alemán*, the *Deutsche Volksgemeinschaft* at Calle de Uruguay no. 80 in the *Centro Histórico* (the pro-fascist umbrella organization of the German colony in Mexico), while ten followers of *Alemania Libre* can even be identified in the membership records of the Mexican branch of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) during the 1930s. The US embassy dossiers classified a total of 81 individuals associated with *Alemania Libre* as “pro-Nazi”, even though this appears to have been a rather broad concept and somewhat fluent in its meaning.<sup>87</sup> Still, allegiance to *Alemania Libre* cannot be equalised with ideological persuasion but may also reflect a profound sense of pragmatism among the German business community, displaying their loyalty to the Nazi regime during the 1930s while demonstrating support for the allied cause against Nazi-Germany once Mexico joined the anti-Hitler coalition in May 1942.<sup>88</sup>

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87 These numbers result from collating the membership list of *Alemania Libre* at AGN, DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fols. 57-68 and the individual dossiers produced by the intelligence unit of the US embassy at USNACP, UD 2895, 820.02, Military Operations, Intelligence (1944) and *ibid.*, UD 2894, 820.02 (Gibson) (1945), s. fols., with the membership record of the *Casino Alemán* and the NSDAP in Mexico at BAL, NS 19, Persönlicher Stab Reichsführer SS, no. 4057, fols. 27-45, and at *ibid.* SAPMO, SgY14/16, fols. 132-136 rev.; on the sometimes rather paranoid and confused definition of German political refugees in Mexico by the US surveillance as “Communazis”, cf. Alexander Stephan: *Communazis. FBI Surveillance of German Emigré Writers* (New Haven / New York 1995).

88 This mixed structure of *Alemania Libre* helps to explain debates over the size of the organisation; cf. Wolfgang Kießling: *Alemania Libre in Mexiko. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des antifaschistischen Exils (1941-1946)*, vol. 1. (Berlin, 1974), p. 288; Fritz Pohle: *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus*

The urban topography of this group of Germans associated with *Alemania Libre* in the files of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* and in the personal dossiers produced on each individual associated with *Alemania Libre* by the US embassy points toward certain geographical centres: the politically active core group appears to have numbered between 67 and 85 individuals, about 60 % of whom resided in the western districts of the city on both sides of the Paseo de la Reforma, the different parts of the district of *Roma*, and the districts of *Condesa* and *Hipódromo*. A further significant residential area can be identified further south-west in the districts of *del Valle*, *Tacubaya*, *Escandón* and *San Miguel* whereas the presence of the German exile community was clearly negligible elsewhere in the city. The most important neighbourhoods for the politically active communist members of *Alemania Libre* were the districts of *Condesa* and *Roma Sur* at about two kilometres walking distance. The German writer Alexander Abusch recalled the social practice that resulted from this geographical structure of the urban community of German communists in exile thus:

Most of our party members lived in the same area, within about 20 minutes walking distance, not very far from Avenida de los Insurgentes, even back then miles long, the first of the giant roads that would later cut across this city. In this way, we could easily visit one another; centres of friendly gatherings were the apartments of Egon Erwin Kisch and André Simone, the one of Bodo Uhse connected to a little roof garden, occasionally that of actress Ruschin-Spira.<sup>89</sup>

The group of followers or “friends” of *Alemania Libre*, by contrast, appears to display a more balanced residential topography with a significantly higher presence in the business district of the *Centro Histórico* and the more prestigious residential city districts at the periphery, for example in *Lomas de Chapultépec*, *Mixcoac*, and *Villa Obregón* in the far south. This structure was clearly influenced by the geographical presence of the German business community in the city.

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*Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 201-2.

89 Alexander Abusch: *Mit offenem Visier. Memoiren* (Berlin, 1986), p. 35.

*Movimiento Alemania Libre (active members and followers)*

	Secretaría de Gob. c. 1944 <sup>90</sup>		US Embassy reports 1944/45 <sup>91</sup>	
	mesa dir.	all	members	"friends"
Centro Histórico	2	68	2	9
Centro	1	30		10
<b>total city centre</b>	<b>3 (4.5 %)</b>	<b>98 (15.2 %)</b>	<b>2 (2.4 %)</b>	<b>19 (6.7 %)</b>
Condesa	12	67	17	21
Hipódromo	2	52	3	35
Juárez	2	25	6	9
Cauhtémoc	5	18	4	8
Roma	10	35	6	16
Roma Norte		24	4	17
Roma Sur	8	33	14	10
<b>total city (west)</b>	<b>39 (58.2 %)</b>	<b>244 (37.8 %)</b>	<b>54 (63.5 %)</b>	<b>116 (40.6 %)</b>
del Valle	1	31	2	18
Escandón	2	19	3	10
Tacubaya	1	19	2	16
San Miguel	2	12	2	1
<b>total south-west</b>	<b>6 (9.1 %)</b>	<b>81 (12.5 %)</b>	<b>9 (10.6 %)</b>	<b>45 (15.8 %)</b>
Tabacalera	2	9	2	2
San Rafael	1	7	1	3
Guerrero		2		1
Santa María		11		5
Santa Julia				1
<b>total north-west</b>	<b>3 (4.5 %)</b>	<b>31 (4.8 %)</b>	<b>3 (3.6 %)</b>	<b>12 (4.2 %)</b>
Lomas de Chpltpc.		28	2	16
Mixcoac		13	2	6
V. Obregón	1	20	2	16
Coyoacán	3	7	2	4
Polanco		3		4
<b>total periphery</b>	<b>4 (6.0 %)</b>	<b>71 (10.9 %)</b>	<b>8 (9.4 %)</b>	<b>46 (16.1 %)</b>
other/none	8	116	9	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>286</b>

90 Data according to the list at AGN, DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fols. 57-68; the list is unmarked and undated, but can be identified by its contents as a membership list of *Alemania Libre* not before the autumn of 1943; cf. the report on „German Communist Party in Latin America“ (25 Jun 1945) at USNACP, RG84, UD2894 820.02 (Gibson), p. 3; cf. also Paul Merker: *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika. Erinnerungen, Dokumentationen und Berichte* (1965) at BAL, SAPMO, NY 4102/5 (Nachlaß Paul Merker), fols. 46-61; The address provided for Anna Seghers (Av. Industria 215) is her domicile after her traffic accident in June 1943, cf. her letter to Wieland Herzfelde in New York (1 Nov 1943), in: Anna Seghers / Wieland Herzfelde: *Ein Briefwechsel 1939-1946* (Berlin / Weimar, 1985), p. 47.

91 Data obtained from a total of 371 personal dossiers created by the intelligence unit of the US embassy in Mexico City between September 1944 and June 1945 on the members of *Alemania Libre* and their „friends“; USNACP, UD 2895, 820.02, Military Operations, Intelligence (1944) and *ibid.*, UD 2894, 820.02 (Gibson) (1945), s. fols.

The Austrian anti-fascists in exile in Mexico represented a much smaller community in the city which also tended to settle in a much more concentrated way west of the city centre. The total number of Austrians inscribed in the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM – founded in December 1941 and belonging to a network of Austrian exile organisations across the American hemisphere that campaigned for the restoration of Austria as an independent state and rejected any ideas of a restoration of the Habsburg monarchy) did probably not significantly exceed one hundred. The Austrians in exile consisted of a comparatively large percentage of Jewish refugees and maintained close contacts with the Jewish community in the city via the German-speaking organisation *Menorah* as well as with the German-speaking communists in Mexico.<sup>92</sup> The surviving membership records of the ARAM show a very clear geographical structure: a full 80 per cent of the members of ARAM lived in the city districts west of the city centre, above all in the districts of *Roma*, *Condesa*, and *Hipódromo* – the latter two of which were traditionally associated with the Jewish community in Mexico City.

*Acción Republicana Austriaca en México (ARAM)*<sup>93</sup>

Centro	4	del Valle	2
Centro Histórico	2	Tacubaya	1
<b>total city centre</b>	<b>6 (6 %)</b>	<b>total south-west</b>	<b>3 (3 %)</b>
Condesa	24	Lomas	1
Hipódromo	15	Mixcoac	1
Juárez	5	Polanco	1
Cuauhtémoc	7	<b>total periphery</b>	<b>3 (3 %)</b>
Roma	16	San Rafael	1
Roma Norte	2	Santa María	1
Roma Sur	7	Tabacalera	1
<b>total city (west)</b>	<b>76 (80 %)</b>	<b>total north-west</b>	<b>3 (3%)</b>
Other	4		
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>		

This geographical concentration was also reflected in the locations of the preferred meeting places of the Austrian republicans in the district of *Hipódromo*: the Café “Parque” at Avenida México no. 71, the bookshop “Librería Internacional” owned from March 1942 by one of ARAM’s leaders, the socialist Rudolf Neuhaus at Avenida Sonora no. 204 close to Avenida Amsterdam, the Café “Victoria” which opened on Plaza Popocatepetl in 1942, and the Hotel

92 Cf. the interview with Silvia Mistral del Mestre (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Feb/Mar 1988) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/097, p. 426, who refers to the area around Parque España in the district of *Condesa* as a Jewish quarter in Mexico City.

93 Data according to the card catalogue of *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/1b, no. 2903/2, and no. 19329, s. fols.; another undated list survives at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 12859, s. fól. - here, a total number of 106 ARAM members is mentioned, but the list remained incomplete.

“Hipódromo” on the corner of Avenida Insurgentes at no. 287 – all of which places were geographically close to the centre of German speaking Jews in Mexico, the *Menorah*, at Avenida Yucatán no. 15. It made much sense to establish the offices of the ARAM in the neighbouring district of *Condesa* at calle Sultepec no. 34 in 1943, only a few steps away from Neuhaus’ own private home at calle Cholula no. 85.<sup>94</sup> The Austrian community in exile in Mexico City can, thus, be described as by far the most concentrated and geographically coherent.

The urban topography of the Spanish community in exile, by contrast, is more difficult to establish. The records of CTARE provided a first glimpse of early patterns of accommodation in the city. The Spanish communists, however, were closely monitored by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* and the intelligence service of the US embassy and can be reconstructed by collating an undated membership record of the PCE with two separate lists of subscribers to the communist periodical *España Popular* dating from March 1943 and November 1944. After eliminating redundancies between these records, a total of about 600 individuals associated with the Spanish communists can be located within the city. The US-American surveillance files also provide an opportunity to compare the geographical pattern of the Spanish communist community in exile with two lists of subscribers to the periodical *La Voz de México* associated with the Mexican communist party (PCM) which contain a total of 300 individuals. When compared with regard to the distribution across the city districts, it appears that the Spanish communist community settled in a less uniform manner across the city with a higher concentration in the western city districts of the different parts of *Roma*, the districts of *Condesa* and *Hipódromo*, as well as along the Paseo de Reforma in *Cuauhtémoc* and the district of *Juárez*. The most prominent concentration of residence among the Spanish communists, however, occurred in the north-west of the city in the districts of *Guerrero*, *Santa María*, and, above all, in the districts of *San Rafael* and the *Tabacalera* surrounding the *Monumento a la Revolución* where more than 20 % of the Spanish communists had found residence. This area to the west and north of the *Caballito* displayed a closely-knit network of communist residence and political activity in the city.

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94 The *Acción Republicana Austriaca de México* (ARAM) was founded on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of Dec 1941 in the Café “Parque”, see the report by Inspector PS-53 (10 Dec 1941) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 87, exp. 1, fol. 113; see also the memoir by Arthur Bonyhadi (23 Jun 1977) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 12859, s. fol.; on Rudolf Neuhaus and his bookshop see the memo on ARAM (10 Apr 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2894 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol., and the report by Robert Kolb, in: *Österreicher im Exil, Mexiko 1938-1947. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Christian Kloyber and Marcus G. Patka (Wien, 2002), pp. 447-50; the Café „Victoria“ was first advertised in *Austria Libre* I/3 (15 Oct 1942), p. 2; the Hotel „Hipódromo“ was used by the „Klub der Oesterreicher in Mexiko“, *Austria Libre* III/6-7 (Jun-Jul 1944), p. 8; the *Menorah* opened its venue in April 1943, cf. *Alemania Libre* II/4 (1 Apr 1943), p. 4; the venue at calle Sultepec no. 34 was first used by the ARAM on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 1943, cf. the invitation (5 Jun 1943) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 3637, s. fol., and „Asamblea de Afiliados“, *Austria Libre* II/5 (1 Jun 1943), p. 3.

*Spanish Communists and Subscribers to Communist periodicals*

	“España Popular” & PCE <sup>95</sup>	“La Voz de México” <sup>96</sup>
Centro	93	25
Centro Histórico	74	65
<b>total city centre</b>	<b>167 (28.2 %)</b>	<b>90 (30.0 %)</b>
Condesa	12	9
Hipódromo	20	7
Juárez	63	7
Cuauhtémoc	19	8
Roma	15	5
Roma Norte	15	7
Roma Sur	6	2
<b>total city (west)</b>	<b>150 (25.3 %)</b>	<b>47 (15.5%)</b>
Del Valle	3	8
Escandón	1	1
Tacubaya	1	6
San Miguel	1	1
<b>total south-west</b>	<b>6 (1 %)</b>	<b>18 (5.9 %)</b>
Lomas	1	7
Mixcoac		3
Coyoacán	1	2
V. Obregón		2
<b>total periphery</b>	<b>2 (0.3 %)</b>	<b>14 (4.6 %)</b>
Guerrero	43	22
San Rafael	56	4
Santa María	17	10
Tabacalera	72	8
<b>total north-west</b>	<b>188 (31.8 %)</b>	<b>44 (14.5 %)</b>
Hidalgo	10	11
Narvarte		2
Obrera	7	8
Alamos	4	1
Algarín	1	1
<b>total south</b>	<b>22 (3.7 %)</b>	<b>23 (7.6 %)</b>
other/none	57	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>592</b>	<b>304</b>

95 Data according to the membership list of the PCE at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 10, fols. 81-3; lists of subscribers to *España Popular* (15 Mar 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fols.; and list of subscribers to *España Popular* (9 Nov 1944) at ibid. UD 2895, 820.02 „Military Operations, Intelligence“, s. fols.

96 Data according to the lists of subscribers to *La Voz de México* (31 Mar 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800PoliticalAffairs – 800C, s. fols.; list of subscribers to *La Voz de México* (8 Nov 1944), ibid. UD 2895, 820.02 „Military Operations, Intelligence“, s. fols.

Such patterns of residence, however, cannot be taken as representative of the whole of the Spanish community in exile. Given the large number of Spanish refugees in the city and the fact a large proportion of them were organised separately in a great number of various political and social organisations in exile (or not organised at all), different patterns of residence may apply to different social and political groupings. Other insights into the geographical distribution of residence among the Spanish community of exile can be obtained from the institutions of Spanish intellectuals in exile in Mexico City, such as the *Unión de Profesores Universitarios Españoles en el Extranjero* (UPUEE), an international body of Spanish university professors in exile. The organisation was set up upon the collapse of the Spanish Republic in the spring of 1939 and recorded its membership in Mexico in two separate lists, dated probably around 1950. The first list contains a total of 71 members who resided predominantly in the middle-class west of the city: about one third or 23 of its members are listed along the Paseo de la Reforma in the city districts of *Cuauhtémoc* and *Juárez* while another third resided in the adjacent districts of *Roma*, *Roma Norte*, *Condesa*, and *Hipódromo*.<sup>97</sup> A second list (compiled later, but before May of 1953) shows a rise in membership to a total of 85 members, 27 per cent of whom now resided in *Cuauhtémoc* and *Juárez* while only 22 per cent still gave an address in the districts of *Roma*, *Roma Norte*, *Condesa*, or *Hipódromo*. Significantly, the proportion of university professors inscribed in UPUEE from the less prestigious but politically highly active city districts of *Tabacalera* and *San Rafael* more than doubled from about 7 to more than 15 per cent.<sup>98</sup> Such changes in the urban geography of exile point towards a slow levelling of geographical concentrations which, in this case, were the result of members moving to other districts and the influx of new members.

Another indication for the longer-term patterns of residence of exile in Mexico City may be arrived at by way of analysing the residential patterns of the alumni of one of the most important schools set up by Spanish republican refugees in the city. The *Instituto "Luis Vives"* operated since 1939, originally as a school for the children of Spanish refugees, though over time it began to attract students from among other communities in exile and ultimately from among the Mexican middle classes who intended to benefit from the excellent quality of education offered by eminent Spanish scholars exiled in Mexico City. In this sense, the residential data of the alumni which were compiled by the school in January 1952 do not exclusively represent the residential structure of the second generation of Spanish exile in Mexico, and in many cases (when siblings were listed under the same address) it remains unclear whether the addresses refer to the residences of second-generation refugees or simply to the location of the parent household. Keeping such qualifications in mind, the register of 340 alumni can provide some

97 Data according to membership list of UPUEE at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 36, exp. 380, fols. 11-14.

98 Data according to membership list of UPUEE at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 36, exp. 380, fols. 16-20.

indication of how the school and its catchment area fitted into the social geography of the city.

*Alumni/ae of Instituto "Luis Vives" (1952)*<sup>99</sup>

Centro Histórico	14	Coyocán	3
Centro	16	Lomas de Chpltpc.	2
<b>total city centre</b>	<b>30 (8.8 %)</b>	Mixcoac	2
		Polanco	1
Condesa	15	San Ángel	2
Cuauhtémoc	19	<b>total periphery</b>	<b>10 (2.9 %)</b>
Hipódromo	8		
Juárez	27	Hidalgo	9
Roma	15	Narvarte	9
Roma Norte	20	Obrera	2
Roma Sur	8	<b>total south</b>	<b>20 (5.9 %)</b>
<b>total city (west)</b>	<b>112 (32.9 %)</b>		
		del Valle	14
Guerrero	18	Escandón	3
San Rafael	29	Tacubaya	4
Santa María	19	<b>total south-west</b>	<b>21 (6.2 %)</b>
Tabacalera	22		
<b>total north-west</b>	<b>88 (25.9 %)</b>	other / none	59
		<b>total</b>	<b>340</b>

Again, the prominence of residential areas in the west of the city, for example the districts of *Juárez*, *Roma Norte*, *Cuauhtémoc* and *Condesa* is evident, as is the importance of the less affluent city districts of the north-west, above all the *Tabacalera* and adjacent district of *San Rafael* further west. Other areas, notably the city centre, but also the more well-to-do south-west and the exclusive periphery of the city, saw only a marginal presence of alumni and may well reflect the inclusion of a smaller number of Mexican students.

For a more comprehensive and long-term understanding of such patterns of the shifting urban geography of the Spanish intellectual class in exile, it is useful to take a closer look at another centre of the Spanish intellectual elite in exile which emerged in 1949 as the *Ateneo Español de México* (AEM). A first attempt to establish an *Ateneo Español* can be traced back to a meeting organised by the poet León Felipe, the historian Ramón Iglesia, the philosopher Prof. Agustín Millares, the writer and painter José Moreno Villa, and Josep Renau, one of the most prominent Spanish painters and muralists in exile in Mexico, on the 13 July 1940 in the rooms of the short-lived *Casa de la Cultura Española* at calle Dinamarca no. 80 in the district of *Juárez*.<sup>100</sup> This cultural centre was directed by

<sup>99</sup> Data according to the list of alumni compiled by the *Instituto „Luis Vives“* (20 Jan 1952) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 31, exp. 354, fols. 1-8.

<sup>100</sup> See the invitation (9 Jul 1940) at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 140, exp. 6597, s. fol.; *ibid.* also the first concept of an „organismo de intelectuales españoles en México“ under the name *Ateneo Español*.



the *Junta de Cultura Española* as a forum in defence of democratic culture in Spain and in exile documented by the journal *España Peregrina* and provided an early focal point for the cultural life of the Spanish community in exile in Mexico City.<sup>101</sup> The Mexican branch operated under the leadership of the writer and editor José Bergamín whose publishing company *Editorial Séneca* (supported by funds of the CTARE) was also temporarily housed in the building. This first initiative to set up an *Ateneo Español* in Mexico evidently did not come to fruition as it was only nine years later in 1949 that the *Ateneo Español* was established under the guidance of its first president Joaquín d'Harcourt, the painter and art critic Ceferino Palencia, and the Mexican writer Alfonso Reyes at calle Morelos no. 26, about two blocks south of the *Caballito* in the district *Centro* on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 1949.<sup>102</sup> The *Ateneo Español de México* kept a meticulous membership record which testifies to its broad appeal across many political sub-divisions of the Spanish community.<sup>103</sup> During the first decade of its existence, between 1949 and 1959, the *Ateneo* attracted more than 1.300 members, or *socios*, as they were called, about half of them at its inception in 1949. Membership, however, was increasingly subjected to profound fluctuation, due to a number of *socios* resigning from the *Ateneo*, moving out the country, or simply passing away as the exile of 1939 turned into an exile of three-and-a-half decades until Franco's death in November 1975. When, probably around 1970, the *Ateneo Español* decided to consolidate its membership records (which, until then, had been kept simply as a continuous membership roll according to accession dates), it turned out that of the 1.378 *socios* who had joined until 1959, only about 200 were left as *socios* while the total membership still stood at about 360. A collation of the membership records at different dates gives some insight into the urban topography of the Spanish intellectual elite in the city (though the *Ateneo Español* was open to non-Spanish members as well). The geographic structure of membership appears to have been exceptionally stable during the first ten years of its existence: almost a third of the *socios* signed up from the west of the city, the districts of *Condesa*, *Hipódromo*, and the different parts of the *Roma*, but above all from the districts adjacent to the Paseo de la Reforma, *Cuauhtémoc* and *Juárez*. Other parts of the city featured far less prominently.

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101 Cf. *España Peregrina* I/1 (Feb 1940), pp. 42-3; see also the notice of its inauguration: *España Peregrina* I/2 (Mar 1940), p. 88; cf. Dolores Pla Brugat: *Els exiliats catalans. Un estudio de la emigración republicana española en México* (México D.F., 1999), pp. 240-1.

102 See the proceedings at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 52, exp. 510, fols. 11-30; cf. Francisco Javier Elvira Guinda: *Fundación del Ateneo Español de México* (presentation at ITESM, 2012), [https://www.academia.edu/11321891/Fundación\\_del\\_Ateneo\\_Español\\_de\\_México](https://www.academia.edu/11321891/Fundación_del_Ateneo_Español_de_México) [25 Mar 2015]; José María López Sanchez: „El Ateneo Español de México y el exilio intelectual republicano”, *Arbor – Ciencia, Pensamiento y Cultura* CLXXXV/735 (2009), pp. 41-55; see also Patricia W. Fagen: *Transterrados y Ciudadanos. Los republicanos españoles en México* (México D.F., 1975), pp. 94-9.

103 Cf. interview with Enriqueta Ortega (conducted by Concepción Ruiz-Funes, Apr 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/030, p. 47.

*Residence of the socios of the Ateneo Español de México (AEM)*<sup>104</sup>

	in 1949	until '59	increase	remaining c. 1970
Centro	66	119	x 1.8	8
Centro Histórico	36	83	x 2.5	7
<b>total city centre</b>	<b>102 (14.9)</b>	<b>201 (14.6 %)</b>	<b>x 2</b>	<b>15 (7.5 %)</b>
Condesa	24	57	x 2.3	4
Hipódromo	17	32	x 1.9	10
Juárez	81	151	x 1.9	9
Cuauhtémoc	53	100	x 1.9	8
Roma	8	27	x 3.4	2
Roma Norte	19	52	x 2.7	10
Roma Sur	12	24	x 2	2
<b>total city (west)</b>	<b>214 (31.3 %)</b>	<b>443 (32.1 %)</b>	<b>x 2.1</b>	<b>45 (22.6 %)</b>
del Valle	8	39	x 5	18
Escandón	4	14	x 3.5	
Tacubaya	2	13	x 7.5	2
San Miguel	2	6	x 3	2
<b>total (south-west)</b>	<b>16 (2.3 %)</b>	<b>72 (5.2 %)</b>	<b>x 4.5</b>	<b>22 (11.0 %)</b>
Lomas d. Chpltpc.	17	30	x 1.8	10
Mixcoac	3	7	x 2.3	4
Polanco	5	26	x 5.2	23
V. Obregón	2	4	x 2	2
Coyoacán				8
<b>total periphery</b>	<b>27 (4.0 %)</b>	<b>67 (4.9 %)</b>	<b>x 2.5</b>	<b>47 (23.6 %)</b>
Guerrero	3	16	x 5.3	1
San Rafael	24	41	x 1.7	4
Santa María	8	26	x 3.3	
Tabacalera	34	62	x 1.9	2
<b>total (north-west)</b>	<b>69 (10.1 %)</b>	<b>145 (10.5 %)</b>	<b>x 2.1</b>	<b>7 (3.5 %)</b>
Hidalgo	5	18	x 3.6	
Narvarte	6	28	x 4.3	4
Obrera		8		1
Alamos		3		
<b>total (south)</b>	<b>11 (1.6 %)</b>	<b>57 (4.1 %)</b>	<b>x 5.2</b>	<b>5 (2.5 %)</b>
None/other	244	445		58
<b>Total</b>	<b>683</b>	<b>1.378</b>	<b>x 2</b>	<b>199</b>

It needs to be kept in mind that the number of unidentified locations of residents in these records is rather high and limits the interpretative value of the geographical breakdown. When combined with the consolidated list of around 1970, however, the earlier membership records reveal a high percentage of *socios* who moved their domicile within the city between their entrance into the *Ateneo*

104 Data according to the lists of *socios* of the *Ateneo Español de México* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fols. 29-35 and 119-44.

*Español* at some point between 1949 and 1959 and the consolidation of their data in the list of around 1970. Among the 199 *socios* still active by then in the *Ateneo Español*, 164 changes of domicile can be identified (including cases of repeated moves). These data, therefore, allow for an analysis of patterns of movement within the city over a longer period of time (1949-70) among a specified sub-group of the Spanish community in exile:

*Patterns of movement among the socios of the AEM (c. 1949/59-70)*<sup>105</sup>

from		to	
Juárez	38	Polanco	20
Cuauhtémoc	20	del Valle	17
Roma Norte	12	Lomas de Chpltpc.	10
Condesa	11	Hipódromo	10
Hipódromo	7	Cuauhtémoc	9
Roma Sur	5	Coyoacán	8
Roma	4	Roma Norte	7
<b>total city (west)</b>	<b>97</b>	Nápoles	6
	<b>(59.1 %)</b>	Condesa	5
Centro	10		
Centro Histórico	8		
<b>total city centre</b>	<b>18</b>		
	<b>(11 %)</b>		
Tabacalera	11		
San Rafael	6		
Guerrero	1		
<b>total north-west</b>	<b>18</b>		
	<b>(11 %)</b>		
other	31		72
<b>total</b>	<b>164</b>		<b>164</b>

Bearing in mind that these numbers include 18 cases of moves within the same city district (for example, four times within *Hipódromo* and three times within *Juárez*), a certain tendency of direction, nevertheless, becomes apparent: the intellectual elite of the Spanish community, on balance, tended to leave the geographical centres of Spanish exile in the west of the city, above all the area close to Paseo de la Reforma in the districts of *Juárez* and *Cuauhtémoc*, and headed towards the new and more affluent city districts of the southern and western periphery, such as *Polanco*, *del Valle*, *Lomas de Chapultépec*, and other neighbourhoods on the periphery which offered a socially more exclusive setting. This meant that the successful professional and social integration of the Spanish intellectuals into the post-revolutionary elite of Mexico became visible as a pattern of geographical movement, following the Mexican elites in their desire to leave the traditional residential areas close to Paseo de la Reforma for the leafy districts of americanised luxury further south or around the northern and western edges of Parque de Chapultépec. This topographical observation may serve as an

<sup>105</sup> Data according to the list of *socios* of the *Ateneo Español de México* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fols. 29-35 and 119-44.

illustration of the general trajectory of collaboration and integration of the Spanish community of exile into the increasingly hierarchical and authoritarian structures of the Mexican state and the post-revolutionary social order.<sup>106</sup>

### c. Islands of exile

A further characteristic of the patterns of accommodation among the European communities of exile was a tendency towards local concentrations in individual buildings. Such clustered locations of accommodation often reflected the political sympathies of real estate owners who were prepared to provide housing for the anti-fascist political refugees in the city at affordable conditions. After her initial lodgings in metropolitan hotels, Ágelines Jiménez and her family had the opportunity to move into an apartment at the Plaza de los Ferrocarriles Nacionales no. 11, just off Paseo de la Reforma in close proximity to some of the most prestigious locations such as the Hotel “Reforma” and the University Club. A modern building had just been completed at the site, owned by Pedro Lascurain, “who was a complete gentleman, a lovely person, very humanistic”, as she recalled him responding to her inquiry about accommodation for her family: “You are most welcome, then it is my intention that you may live happily and content in my building; already there are three other Spanish families who are going to live with you, and the price of the apartment is one-hundred-and-five pesos.” Jiménez remembered their new situation as “fabulous, Paseo de la Reforma, in such a new building”, and the neighbours contributed to the Spanish-republican camaraderie in the building: the writer Paulino Masip was a next-door neighbour, the painter Josep Renau lived on a lower floor, as did a coronel of the republican infantry, Mariano Fernández Barbiela, expert in Arabic languages and founding member of the *Ateneo Español*, and finally José Bergamín, the founder of the *Editorial Séneca*, a publishing company subsidised by the CTARE.<sup>107</sup> Some years later, the building at Plaza de los Ferrocarriles Nacionales no. 11 would house other members of the intellectual elite in the *Ateneo Español*, such as Federico Gavarrón, Jesús Ruiz del Río, leading member of the *Izquierda Republicana*, and his son Ramón Ruiz Plá, alumnus of the *Instituto Luis Vives*, as well as Wenceslao Roces, communist law professor and former under-secretary of education during the Spanish Republic.<sup>108</sup> The landlord, Pedro Lascurain, was, in fact, a former mayor of Mexico City and Mexican foreign secretary during the revolutionary

106 Cf. Jorge de Hoyos Puente: „México y las instituciones republicanas en el exilio: del apoyo del cardenismo a la instrumentación política del Partido Revolucionario Institucional, 1939-1977”, *Revista de Indias* LXXIV/260 (2014), pp. 275-306; Sebastiaan Faber: „Los exiliados españoles y las instituciones mexicanas. Entre la autonomía y la cooptación”, *Historia del Presente* 22 (2013), pp. 77-84.

107 Interview with Ágelines Jiménez de Dorrnsoro (conducted by Matilde Mantecón, Apr 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/057, pp. 64-6; on Fernández Barbiela see AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 494, fol. 61; on Bergamín, cf. the interview with Carmen Dorrnsoro de Roces (conducted by Matilde Mantecón, Jun/Jul 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/059, p. 205.

government of Francisco I. Madero. At the end of the *Decena Trágica* in February 1913, following the execution of president Madero and vice-president José María Pino Suárez, he had acted as de-facto president of Mexico for less than an hour before handing over power to Victoriano Huerta.

In the district of *Roma Sur*, Alexander Abusch and his wife Hilde had settled into an apartment at the Calzada Río de la Piedad no. 31, a building which housed a number of German communists: the German-speaking Czech writer and journalist Otto Katz (known under his *nom de plume* André Simone), the German journalist Rudolf Feistmann (until April 1942), the foreign-languages secretary Charlotte Scholz who lived in the city as a Czech national under the name of Wormova (she later married Walter Janka, the director of the publishing house *El Libro Libre* in Mexico, and moved with him to Avenida Michoacán no. 81 in the district of *Condesa*), and another German communist under the name B. Meisels, possibly identical with Bruno Meissel, an activist of *Alemania Libre* and collaborator of the periodical *Demokratische Post*.<sup>109</sup> During 1942, another inhabitant of the building was Alfred J. Brooks, a US-American journalist and activist on behalf of the Spanish community of political refugees who maintained contacts between the exile communities in Mexico and the United States. Brooks used the pseudonym of “Efren Farrill” to write from Mexico for the *Daily Worker*, the most important left-wing periodical in the United States.<sup>110</sup> Abusch remembered the house and its owner: “It was a simple tenement building, a raised ground level and four floors, its owner being a progressive Mexican general with whom we once met in passing and who did not hide his sympathies for Cárdenas and the union leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano.”<sup>111</sup> Political sympathies helped in establishing more permanent accommodation in the city, as the European political refugees enjoyed the support of the Mexican post-revolutionary elites not least as tenants of wealthy real estate owners closely connected to the political, military, and social elite in the city.

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108 See AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fol. 119 and 124; on Rocés see the personal dossier (31 Aug 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2895 820.02, s. fol.

109 On Alexander and Hilde Abusch see the personal dossiers (26 Sep 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2895 820.02, s. fol.; on Katz/Simone: personal dossier (27 Mar 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2895 820.02, s. fol.; on Feistmann see dossier (7 Jul 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2894 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; on Charlotte Wormova/Janka, see card catalogue of *Comité Pro-Refugiados* of the *Comité Central Israelita de México*, CDICA, fondo Comité Pro-Refugiados, fol., 136, and Paul Merker: *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland*, at BAL SAPMO, NY 4102/5 (Nachlaß Paul Merker), fol. 513; on Meisels/Meissel, see membership list of *Alemania Libre* at AGN, DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fol. 67, and the memorandum (25 Jun 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2894 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

110 See dossier (20 Jul 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2894 800M-800Ref, s. fol., and the dossier (24 May 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2895 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

111 Alexander Abusch, *Mit offenem Visier*, p. 35.

One of the best-known and iconic locations of political exile in Mexico was the building at Plaza de Río de Janeiro no. 56, the so-called *Casa de las Brujas* in the district of *Roma Norte*. In 1984, Sergio Pitol chose the building as the location for his novel *El Desfile del Amor*, a story surrounding the mysterious death of an Austrian immigrant in front of the building during the 1940s. He captured the characteristics of this red-brick structure which today is known as the *Edificio Río de Janeiro* in these words: “Four unusual towers, also of red brick, mark the corners of the building. For decades, the building represented an architectural extravaganza in this neighbourhood of quiet residences in another style.” And he went on to describe the “squalid spectacle that the interior of this construction had to offer [...] Just as the building did not correspond to the neighbourhood, and, at close inspection, not to the city, its internal part was also not coherent with the false gothic of the façade, to the mansards, the porthole windows and the four towers.” Pitol referred to the “corridors which ran around every floor of the building”, the “Art Decó interior designed in 1914 by one of the most prestigious architects of those days”.<sup>112</sup> The building was situated just opposite the early location of the *Casa de España* and was therefore an attractive location to live for the Spanish intellectual elite in exile: the geologist and entomologist Cándido Bolívar Pieltáin the writer and journalist Roberto Castrovido, the pharmacologist and former state-secretary Pierre Ferrer Batlle, the ex-minister of the Catalan government Artemio Aguadé y Miró, Prof. María Teresa Toral, and the biology professor Enriqueta Ortega Feliú.<sup>113</sup> Ortega recalled how the building became her home during her stay in Mexico: she had announced her arrival from the United States to friends who already lived in Mexico, “and they went to meet me and said: »Look, we live in a building at the Plaza de Río de Janeiro, and we have rented a student accommodation for you which is no more than a room and a bathroom, but since the building is large, you could stay with your mother.« Of course, one offers support to one another when in critical situations such as this one, and I rented this apartment, and I lived in this building until I left Mexico again.” Ortega would move to other apartments in the building, trying to obtain more space as she established herself as a biology teacher at the *Instituto “Luis Vives”*. The building gained a reputation for housing a great number of European political refugees.<sup>114</sup> Among them were also some Germans,

112 Sergio Pitol: *El Desfile del Amor*, in: Id.: *Tríptico del Carnaval* (Barcelona, 1999), pp. 31-2; cf. Michaela Peters: „Los exiliados no abrieron las ventanas al mundo...” – el exilio europeo en México en la obra de Pitol y Taibo II, in: Giovanni di Stefano and ead. (eds), *México como punto de fuga real o imaginario: el exilio europeo en la víspera de la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Munich, 2011), pp. 103-16.

113 On Castrovido and Bolívar see the list of eminent Spanish refugees at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 10, fol. 77; the addresses of Aguadé and Ferrer appear on two cards sent to the US ambassador (19 Dec 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2894 800M-800R, s. fol.; Ortega and Toral appear as members of the *Ateneo Español* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fol. 142; see also the membership record of UPUEE at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 36, exp. 380, fols. 13 & 19.

114 Interview with Enriqueta Ortega (conducted by Concepción Ruiz-Funes, Apr 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/030, p. 29.

such as Benno Gottschalk and his widowed mother Emilie. Both were active in the German-speaking Jewish association *Menorah* and were counted among the “friends of *Alemania Libre*” by the intelligence unit of the US embassy.<sup>115</sup> Kurt Noltmaier, on the other hand, an employee of one of the most important companies of the ex-patriate German colony in Mexico, the *Casa Bayer*, was suspected of being an active Nazi agent in the city.<sup>116</sup> In fact, Noltmaier had been used by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* in October 1939 as an unwitting source of information about the origin of German propaganda material in the city which he revealed was entering Mexico concealed among merchandise imported from Europe, mainly by the companies of Bayer and Boker.<sup>117</sup> The building, thereby, also represented some of the polarised political culture of immigration which reflected the violent conflicts in Europe. The demarcation lines of these conflicts would, at times, run through one and the same building in Mexico City, housing Spanish republicans, German Jewish refugees, and a minor collaborator of Nazi propaganda activities.

Other sites of accommodation in exile appeared less conflict-ridden. During the early days of European political exile in Mexico City the building at calle Revillagigedo no. 47 in the city district *Centro* housed a number of European refugees. Carmen Romero recalled this boarding house of Doña Satur, the wife of a former chauffeur of the last Spanish-republican president Manuel Azaña named Vela, who would later run the school transport of the *Colegio Madrid*:

In this »historic« boarding house and restaurant, situated at Revillagigedo 47 and Victoria, one could eat *paella*, salad, and dessert for 50 centavos. Besides, it was very pleasant to meet up with many acquaintances and to be able to comment on all sorts of events relating to the environment into which we wanted to integrate.<sup>118</sup>

She therefore decided to rent a room at this address which appeared to offer Spanish republican sociability. The building appeared as the domicile of a number of subscribers to the communist periodical *España Popular*<sup>119</sup>, such as Jaime Grau Cot, an activist of the Catalan syndicate of landless vine growers, the *Unió de Rabassaires*, who later became involved in the negotiations leading up to the establishment of the Spanish-republican government in exile in 1945<sup>120</sup>, his fellow

115 See the two dossiers (11 Apr 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2984, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fols.

116 See „Germans List B - minor agents“ (1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2894, 820.02, p. 2.

117 See the report by Inspector PS-1 at AGN, DGIPS, caja 122, exp. 45, fol. 7.

118 Carmen Romero: „Testimonio de una mujer en el exilio“, in: *Nuevas Raíces. Testimonios de mujeres españolas en el exilio*, ed. by Blanca Bravo (México D.F., 1993), p. 139.

119 See the list (15 Mar 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, s. fols.

120 See the report on Juan Negrín’s activities in Mexico (24 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

syndicalist Gregorio Pastor<sup>121</sup>, and Castor Sanz Juste, an early member of the *Ateneo Español* in 1949.<sup>122</sup> Another inhabitant, Antonio Cano, served as a board member of the *Juventud Republicana Española*.<sup>123</sup> The political trustworthiness of the Spanish republicans at this boarding house could, however, come into question at any time, especially when a republican refugee intended to travel to the United States. In July 1943, José Gallardo Manchón had been investigated in Mexico City for pro-Franco sympathies, but he insisted to be a Spanish republican, and his case appeared resolved<sup>124</sup>, until in November he travelled to San Francisco to visit his son, when the intelligence unit of the US embassy decided to re-open his case:

According to Source A the subject arrived in Mexico City from Guatemala City, Guatemala, and while in Mexico City resided at Calle Revillagigedo 47, which is a boarding house where many of the Spanish refugees in Mexico City reside. According to some of the persons living in this house the subject, although claiming to be a Spanish republican, acted in a suspicious manner and gave some the impression that he was chief of the *Falange* agents in the Republic of Guatemala. It is said that Gallardo departed from this address in a very suspicious manner and was believed to have gone to the United States.<sup>125</sup>

Even though the background and veracity of such allegations must remain obscure, it appears that the atmosphere at such places of Spanish-republican cohabitation could, at times, be a little more tense and distrustful than the memory of witnesses such as Carmen Romero would reveal after 40 years.

Another building mentioned by Romero has entered the memory of the experience of exile in Mexico City as part of the general urban topography of exile – the building at calle de López no. 82 in the district of *Centro*.<sup>126</sup> One of the first historians of Spanish-republican exile in Mexico, Carlos Martínez, already characterised the whole street just south of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* as the epicentre of exiled life in the city, displaying the typical markers of Spanish identity:

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121 Cf. „¡Viva la solidaridad de los pueblos de América con la lucha del pueblo español!“, *España Popular* IV/150 (20 Aug 1943), p. 3.

122 Cf. AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fol. 123.

123 See the memo on JRE (20 Jun 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, s. fol.

124 See the memo (1 Jul 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jun-Aug 1943, s. fol.

125 Memo on José Gallardo Manchón (16 Nov 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, 820.02 (Gibson) Sep-Dec 1943, s. fol.

126 Carmen Romero: „Testimonio de una mujer en el exilio“, in: *Nuevas Raíces. Testimonios de mujeres españolas en el exilio*, ed. by Blanca Bravo (México D.F., 1993), p. 139.



The calle de López was transformed into a street that was reminiscent of the crowded streets of any Spanish city. All the Spanish accents could be heard, and can still be heard there. It connected to a market – already demolished – it smelled and still smells of roasted coffee, of fish and meat. In [calle de] López are the best butcher shops and fishmongers, those that supply the storage of wealthy cooks, of those who do their shopping by car.<sup>127</sup>

The apartment building at no. 82 certainly was an important location for the Spanish community in exile. Over the years, a substantial number of *socios* of the *Ateneo Español* resided in the building, including the air force colonel Carlos Nuñez Maza<sup>128</sup> who was also active as co-founder and vice-president of the pro-Soviet *Comisión Española de Ayuda a la URSS* and the dentist Mariano Nuñez Maza<sup>129</sup> who observed similar political loyalties, as did the pharmacist Juan López López and Dr. Víctor Cuquerella.<sup>130</sup> The poet Matías Conde de la Viña lived in the building<sup>131</sup>, Francisca Libertad Semitiel who demonstrated her republican loyalties in the *Movimiento Español '59*<sup>132</sup>, Romualdo Martín de Jorge<sup>133</sup>, the actor Sergio Jurado<sup>134</sup>, and the journalist Antonio Gazol Santafé, alumnus of the *Colegio Madrid* who later served as treasurer for the *Agrupación de Periodistas y Escritores Españoles en México*.<sup>135</sup> The author Fermín Zugazagoitia played an active role as spokesman and general secretary of the *Federación de Juventudes Socialista de España* since 1943.<sup>136</sup> Arturo García Igual remembered the building as a kaleidoscope of the most diverse experiences and fortunes:

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127 Carlos Martínez, *Crónica de una Emigración (la de los republicanos españoles en 1939)* (México, D.F., 1959), p. 21; cf. “Una calle de españoles en pleno centro de México”, *El Universal* (17 Feb 2018), <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/colaboracion/mochilazo-en-el-tiempo/nacion/sociedad/una-calle-de-espanoles-en-pleno-centro-de-mexico>

128 See AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fol. 133; cf. „Se constituye en México la Comisión Española de Ayuda a la URSS“, *España Popular* II/177 (15 Jan 1943), p. 3.

129 See AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fol. 119; cf. „El trabajo de los comunistas en España para desarrollar la Unión Nacional y la lucha del pueblo contra Franco y Falange“, *España Popular* V/190 (19 May 1944), p. 3. This article documents a speech given by Vicente Uribe at the former *Casino Alemán*, subsequently the social centre of the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* at calle de López no. 23.

130 For López López see the memo (7 Aug 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.; Cuquerella appears as a subscriber to *España Popular* (15 Mar 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, s. fol.

131 See AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fol. 121.

132 See AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fol. 134; cf. „Declaración de Principios“ by the *Movimiento Español '59* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 45, exp. 441, fol. 13.

133 See AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fol. 142.

134 See AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fol. 151.

135 See AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fol. 140; cf. the list of alumni of the *Colegio Madrid* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 31, exp. 355, fol. 83; „La Agrupación de Periodistas y Escritores Españoles en México“, *España Popular* XVI/757 (1 Apr 1955), p. 2.

The comfort of the neighbourhood, frozen rents and common misfortune filled the number 82 of the calle de López with Spanish refugees. Some with tragic histories: like the wife and daughters of [Manuel] Molina Conejero, last republican governor in Valencia who died shouting »¡Viva la República!« in a »sack« of 26 prisoners; or those of Julián Zugazagoitia – director of *El Socialista* – delivered by the German Gestapo to Franco along with President Companys and, like him, shot. With more luck, the Villarías who related to the Zuga, the dentist [Mariano] Nuñez Maza – who committed suicide, I do not know why – a Tarot card layer, the fine poet señor Conde, and the family Pareja – La Pajarera, I called them – who consoled their respective widowhood by adding children to those which they had separately.

To García Igual the local cohort of Spanish refugees functioned as an extended surrogate family: “in those days, the neighbours were your closest relatives [...]. All appreciated each other regardless of ethnic, linguistic or regional, not even political differences – which is saying something among an emigration so divided. Even the proudest Basques joined in with the Spanish crowds, [...]”. In this vein, he painted the picture of a closely-knit sociability in exile surrounding the main residential locations, in this case centred on the family of the doctor Andrés Semitiel and his wife Leonor who gathered a circle of stage and cinema actors and other Spanish celebrities: “very joyful reunions where cider was uncorked – champagne for Leonor [...]. My old comrade from the *Banco Popular*, Jaime Calpe, sometimes came to make his contribution with his guitar and his little Jaimito singing *El Pichi*.”<sup>137</sup> Such memories completed the impression of a Spanish-republican surrogate family in exile in Mexico City. But the building was also shared by other European refugees, such as Hedwig Urich-Sass who registered her address of with the refugee committee of the Jewish *Comité Central* and was later an active member of the German association of “democratic women”, an organisation affiliated with the *Movimiento Alemania Libre*.<sup>138</sup>

Other sites displayed similar concentrations of refugees, above all in the city districts of *Centro*, as in the case of the building at calle Ayuntamiento no. 93 where Santiago Genovés Tarazaga lived with his mother Concepción Tarazaga and his brother and sister, alongside a number of *socios* of the *Ateneo Español*: Francisco Robles and Luis M. San José, in 1943 an affiliated member of the

136 See his letter to the editor of *Excelsior* (1 Nov 1950) at AEM, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 50/53, fol. 22; cf. „Carnet Juvenil – Elección del Comité“, *Renovación. Órgano de las Juventudes Socialistas de España en el Exilio* IV/35 (5 Oct 1947), p. 10.

137 Arturo García Igual: *Entre aquella España nuestra...y la peregrina. Guerra, exilio y desexilio* (Valencia, 2005), p. 154-5.

138 See card catalogue of *Comité Pro-Refugiados* of the *Comité Central Israelita de México*, CDICA, fondo Comité Pro-Refugiados, fol., 110; cf. „Viva México! – Das Fest der Deutschen Demokratischen Frauen“, *Demokratische Post* I/20 (1 Jun 1944), p. 2.

*Hogar de la Juventud Española*.<sup>139</sup> During the early days of exile the building also accommodated a number of refugees who registered with the *comedores* of CTARE for their daily meals, such as Mariano and Navidad Herranz and Maximino Domínguez González and his two children.<sup>140</sup> At about the same time, general José Miaja Menant lived in the building.<sup>141</sup> A few years later, the Mexican authorities characterised their neighbour Guido Picco, an Italian opera singer who shared the second floor with the Genovés Tarazagas and Francisco Robles, as rather unpolitical.<sup>142</sup> The attraction of the district of *Centro* was also connected to the availability of affordable meals around the Chinese quarter of Mexico City. Ramón Esturau Calvo recalled his first accommodation in the city at calle Ayuntamiento no. 14 which he shared with his friend Félix Martín Iglesias just one block away from the Chinese restaurants in calle Dolores.<sup>143</sup> In the district of *Juárez*, the building at calle Dinamarca no. 25 was popular among the Spanish political refugees. The Romanian architect A. León Hirsch lived under this address<sup>144</sup> before early in 1943 the Spanish writer Margarita Nelken moved into the building with her mother Juana Mansberger Vd. de Nelken and her daughter Margarita Salas. Among the *socios* of the *Ateneo Español*, the house at calle Dinamarca no. 25 was a popular domicile: for the engineer Manuel Goiri and Magdalena Lillo de Goiri, Ramón Carabias and Juan Hernández Sarabia, general Leopoldo Menéndez, Francisco González Gómez, and the artist António Palacios Martos and Lucía Palacios Galera.<sup>145</sup> One block south, Spanish intellectuals lived at Plaza Washington no. 9: the writer Daniel Tapia (a founding member of the *Ateneo Español* in 1949 with the membership no. 3) lived here with his wife Pilar Villalba de Tapia and their son Luis Tapia Villalba. The painter and art critic Ceferino Palencia and his wife Isabel Oyárbabal de Palencia (the former ambassador of the Spanish Republic in Sweden) and Marisa de Palencia resided in the building, as did Diego, Manuel, and Luis del Castillo, and the pathologist Germán Somolinos d'Ardois.<sup>146</sup>

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139 See the list of *socios* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fols. 125, 127, and 132; cf. also interview with Santiago Genovés Tarazaga (conducted by Matilde Mantecón and Marisol Alonso, Nov 1979, Feb and Jun 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/049, p. 39; on Luis M. San José cf. the memorandum on the *Hogar de la Juventud Española* (6 Aug 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894 820.02 (Gibson) Jun-Aug, s. fol.

140 See the register of CTARE at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 121, exp. 6434, fols. 4-5.

141 See the list of prominent members among the Spanish political refugees compiled by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* (17 May 1940) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 10, fol. 77.

142 See the memorandum on Picco (30 Jan 1945) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 87, exp. 1, fol. 284-5.

143 Interview with Ramón Esturau Calvo (conducted by Dolores Pla, Nov 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/061, pp. 147-8.

144 See the list of professionals inscribed with the *Comité Central Israelita de México* (1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

145 See the list of *socios* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fols. 29, 30, 121, 126-8, 132, 134, 139.

146 See the list of *socios* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fols. 119, 120, 125, 126,

When the intellectual elite mixed with the political elite of the Spanish emigration, the result was a politicisation of private residential spaces, as in the case of the building at calle Río Amazonas no. 26 in the city district of *Cuauhtémoc*. This address was the residence not only of members of the Spanish academic class in exile (the medical doctor Francisco Barnés, Julio Berdegúe, the classicist Urbano González de la Calle, and Ricardo Galán López) but also of José Giral Pereira, leading member of the *Izquierda Republicana*, former prime minister and multiple ex-minister of Spanish-republican governments until 1939, and Mariano Ruiz Funes, professor of penal law and former ambassador of the Spanish Republic in Belgium, with his wife Carmen Montesinos.<sup>147</sup> When in August 1945 the political leadership of the Spanish Republic formally reconstituted a Spanish republican government in exile, the building became the site of negotiations between the different republican factions. For a brief moment during the visit of former prime minister Juan Negrín to Mexico the house in the north-east of the district of *Cuauhtémoc* became a centre of attention for Spanish-republican hopes – however misguided – to reconstitute a form of democratic sovereignty that would find the recognition of democratic post-war governments across the globe.<sup>148</sup>

The politicisation of private accommodation did not always take place in such circumstances of public high visibility. For left-wing politics in exile, the *Tabacalera* represented the most important neighbourhood of private residence as well as political activity. The building at Avenida del Ejido no. 27 between the *Caballito* and the *Monumento a la Revolución* acquired special significance: in 1939 it was the address of the Mexican painter Xavier Guerrero<sup>149</sup>, and the location began to attract Spanish refugees, such as Sabino Jurado Romero with his wife and three children.<sup>150</sup> In 1941, the US-American journalist Alfred J. Brooks lived in the building (before he moved on to the Calzada Río de la Piedad no. 31)<sup>151</sup>, as did his fellow correspondent for the *Daily Worker* and *El Popular*, the German emigrant Alfred Miller.<sup>152</sup> The German communist Andreas Ewert

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137, 143, 150.

147 See the list of *socios* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fols. 123, 131, 134, 135, 140.

148 See „Giral fué encargado de formar gabinete hispano“, *Novedades* (23 Aug 1945), p. 11; press report „Quedó integrado el gobierno español en el exilio, que no ha sido reconocido“ (25 Aug 1945), at AEM, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 45/1, fol. 222-3.

149 See the memorandum (1 Oct 1945) on the Japanese choreographer Seki Sano (for whom Guerrero recommended the status as political refugee) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

150 See the registration with CTARE at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 121, exp. 6434, fol. 9.

151 See the report on his activities (20 Jul 1942) at USNACP, RG84, UD2894, 800M-800Ref, s. fol.

152 See the report on his activities (22 Sep 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; see also the list of subscribers to *España Popular* (15 Mar 1943) at USNACP, RG 84,

inhabited the building during his first days in the city<sup>153</sup>, and soon more refugees had their communist newspapers delivered to the house, including Angelita Soler, Maquedonio Garza, and Armén Ohanian.<sup>154</sup> The Spanish communist Ángel Palerm Vich recalled living in the Avenida del Ejido next to Joan Comas, his wife Regina Lagos, and Juan Rivaud.<sup>155</sup> The area became known for its communist political sociability, centred on personalities such as the art critic Margarita Nelken who lived close by at calle Ezequiel Montes no. 14 until July 1942 before she was expelled from the PCE by October 1942.<sup>156</sup> José Muní, a leading activist of the *Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña* (PSUC) lived just a few steps away at no. 4 and did not move house for twenty-five years.<sup>157</sup> A circle of communists was observed by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* connected to the president of the *Asociación de Inmigrantes Españoles en México* (AIEM), Tiburcio Carrasco, who lived at calle Jose Ma. Iglesias no. 51. Meetings were reported to include Bartolomé Cayo, the doctor Ester Chapa (who lived not far away at calle Ribera San Cosme no. 27 in the neighbouring district of *Santa María*<sup>158</sup>), Carlos Contreras (in reality: the Italian Vittorio Vidali, a key figure of international communist networks in the city who held varying addresses around the city<sup>159</sup>), and Encarnación Fuyola, either at Carrasco's house or at Avenida del Ejido no. 17. It is the presence of Carlos Contreras that links the communist circles of the *Tabacalera* with another building a few kilometres to the south on the edge of the district of *Roma Sur* at calle Tonalá no. 320 on the corner with Avenida Baja California. Contreras even registered his move to this new address formally under the date of 31 May 1942.<sup>160</sup> The building housed a number of German-speaking communists who belonged to the leadership of the German exile organisation *Alemania Libre* and the Austrian *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM): Josef and Frieda Foscht, members of ARAM, and their daughter Rosa

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UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jun-Aug, p. 13.

153 See the list of professionals registered with the *Comité Central Israelita de México* (1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD28894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

154 See the list of subscribers to *España Popular* (15 Mar 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jun-Aug, pp. 9, 13, 17; see also list of subscribers to *La Voz de México* (31 Mar 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800PoliticalAffairs-800C, p. 33.

155 Interview with Ángel Palerm Vich (conducted by Marisol Alonso, Mar, Apr, Jun-Sep 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra PHO/10/013, p. 422.

156 See the report by Inspector PS-12 (10 Feb 1941) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 11, fol. 3; cf. also „Margarita Nelken expulsada del Partido Comunista“, *España Popular* III/105 (23 Oct 1942), p.3.

157 Interview with José Muní Sala (conducted by Elena Aub, May 1980 and Feb 1982) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/ESP20, p. 176.

158 See the memorandum on her (6 Oct 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

159 Cf. the report (19 May 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

160 See the digest of intelligence on Contreras compiled by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* during 1948 at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 11, fol. 51-2; see also the memorandum on Contreras (30 Dec 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

María, an alumna of the *Instituto Luis Vives*<sup>161</sup>, Hans Marum and Sophie Gradenwitz<sup>162</sup>, and during 1942 Erich Jungmann<sup>163</sup>, all three active members of *Alemania Libre* and the associated cultural organisation *Heinrich-Heine-Club*. Contreras' wife Isabel Carbajal de Vidali still lived in the house in October 1944.<sup>164</sup> In short walking distance from the building at Río de la Piedad no. 31 emerged a closely-knit community of German, Austrian and Italian communists in the east of the district *Roma Sur*: Vidali's Italian comrade Mario Montagnana, a leading member of the Italian exile organisation *Alianza Internacional "Giuseppe Garibaldi"*, resided in the building of calle Bajío no. 28 at the corner with calle Toluca during 1942/43 before moving on to Río de la Piedad no. 45.<sup>165</sup> The district of *Roma Sur* thereby displayed a form of transnational European sociability of communists similar to the Spanish communist neighbourhood of the *Tabacalera*.

Other prominent locations of residence in exile in Mexico City included the *Edificio Condesa* in the city district of the same name. The building takes up a whole block south of calle Agustín Melgar between Avenida Mazatlán, calle Juan de la Barrera, and calle Pachuca. While the building had originally been conceived for employees of the petroleum industry, it quickly turned into a popular domicile for European political refugees.<sup>166</sup> Still in 1936, the assistant bank director Ewald Bork, a leading member of the Mexican branch of the German National Socialist Party (NSDAP) had lived in staircase G before moving on to a more exclusive location in the district of *Lomas de Chapultépec*.<sup>167</sup> The main characteristic of this location was the high proportion of German-speaking emigrants in the building, as was the number of Jewish refugees: the Austrian

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161 See the ARAM membership records at DÖW, Exilarchiv, nos. 2903/1b and 2903/2, s. fol.; the personal memorandum on Josef Foscht (21 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; and the list of alumni of the *Instituto Luis Vives* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 31, exp. 354, fol. 3.

162 See their personal dossiers (26 Sep 1944) at USNACP, RG84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

163 See intercepted telegrammes in the memorandum on Leo Zuckermann (25 Sep 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Sep-Dec, s. fol.; and in a memorandum on Paul Merker (25 Aug 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jun-Aug, s. fol.; see also *Freies Deutschland* II/2 (Dec 1942), p. 38.

164 See the compilation of intelligence on María Luisa Carnelli (26 Jun 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

165 See the extensive memorandum on Montagnana (14 Jun 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

166 Cf. „Festejan centenario del edificio Condesa, reducto del barrio“, *La Jornada* (30 Oct 2011), online resource: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2011/10/30/capital/031n1cap>

167 See the NSDAP membership list for Mexico, published by the US Congress in 1946 at BAL, SAPMO, SgY 14/16, fol. 132 rev.; cf. the short memorandum (1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894 820.02 (Gibson) „Germans; agents“, p. 1; Bork was eventually deported from Mexico in May 1942, shortly after the Mexican declaration of war against Germany; see the memorandum by the Civil Attaché of the US embassy (28 Jul 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jun-Aug, s. fol.

chemist Alfred Stern had found accommodation courtesy of Paul Gutmann in staircase M, and Dr. Leo Deutsch and Emil Karl Mischner also belonged to the Austrian community in exile.<sup>168</sup> Moritz Ellenbogen, an associate manager at the periodical *Ultramar*, and Arthur Fischer belonged to the members of ARAM.<sup>169</sup> From the members of *Alemania Libre* at least 6 individuals resided in the *Edificio Condesa*: Elsa Bloch, manager of the silver shop “Lafayette” at Avenida Madero no. 30 in the historic city centre, C.L. Ellenbogen, the piano teacher Margarete Holtet, Hans Schendel, the student Jehuda Sonnabend, and Wolf Sonnabend, an employee of an export agency in calle República de Uruguay no. 21 in the city centre<sup>170</sup> – the latter also belonged to the directors of the Polish-Mexican organisation *Unión Democrática Polaco-Mexicana “Tadeusz Kosciuszko”*, a pro-Soviet political group in support of the post-war regime in Poland.<sup>171</sup> During the 1950s, two *socios* of the *Ateneo Español*, Flora Bottón B. and Gabriel de Alba Albaterra, completed the community of European emigrants in the building.<sup>172</sup>

Further south-east, in the district of *Hipódromo*, existed another location of residence with special importance for the German-speaking community of exile in the city, the *Edificio Lafayette* at calle Citlaltépetl no. 36. In 1942, the mineralogist Martin Schwarz and the physics professor Marietta Blau had registered with the *Comité Central Israelita* as tenants in this prominent triangular Art-Deco building in the pointed corner with calle Culiacán.<sup>173</sup> The leader of the German-speaking Jewish association *Menorah*, Dr. Paul Drucker, appears as a member of the exile organisation *Alemania Libre*, as does Werner Dresel, a commercial employee for a the jewellery company in the historic city centre at Avenida 5 de Mayo no. 43, the same building which also housed the Mexican *Comité Nacional Anti-Sinarquista* and the *Federación de Residentes Anti-Nazifascistas Estranjeros en Mexico* (FRAEM) – the intelligence services of the US embassy attested Dresel “Free German sympathies” and “communistic ideas”.<sup>174</sup> Margarita Erdos and Hanna Grossmann were equally associated with *Alemania Libre*, as were the physician Dr. Bruno Strauss and the business

168 On Stern see the list of professionals registered with the *Comité Central Israelita de México* (1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 2; on Deutsch and Mischner see the card catalogue of ARAM at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/2, s. fol.

169 See the card catalogue of ARAM at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/2, s. fols; and the dossier on Ellenbogen (20 Mar 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

170 See the list at AGN, DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fols. 60, 62-3, 65; cf. also the dossier on Elsa Bloch (15 Dec 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.; the dossier on Margarethe Holtet (4 Jun 1945) at USNACP, RG 2984, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; the dossiers on the Sonnabends (16 Apr 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fols.

171 See the memorandum on the *Unión Democrática Polaco-Mexicana „Tadeusz Kosciuszko“* (30 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

172 See the list of *socios* of the *Ateneo Español de México* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fols. 142 and 151.

173 See the list of professionals registered with the *Comité Central Israelita de México* (1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 1-2.

representative Siegmund Strauss who together with Paul Drucker served on the governing board of the *Menorah* in 1944.<sup>175</sup> Maria Halpera belonged to the Austrian community of anti-fascists organised by the ARAM.<sup>176</sup> The most prominent inhabitants of the building were, however, the Austrian family Rubin: the lawyer Dr. Erwin Rubin (by the Austrian title of *Hofrat*) who served as vice-president of ARAM in 1944<sup>177</sup>, his wife Ludovika<sup>178</sup>, their son, the musician and musical director Marcel Rubin, a prominent figure in the cultural life of the German-speaking community in exile<sup>179</sup>, and his wife Hilda Maddalena.<sup>180</sup> After the end of the Second World War the building became the location of the *Comité de Ayuda a Austria*, organising material support for Austrians through campaigns of parcels containing foodstuff and other basic necessities.<sup>181</sup> Finally, two Spanish political emigrants also resided at the *Edificio Lafayette*, the communist professor Antonio del Toro and the writer José Ramón Arana.<sup>182</sup>

A special place, however, must be reserved for the most well-known and legendary location of residence in exile in Mexico City, the *Edificio Ermita* in the city district of *Tacubaya*, not only for its sheer size and the number of political refugees who took up residence there, but also for the fact that it was probably the most transnational space of private residence in exile in Mexico City. Constructed in 1930 on the land of the wealthy Mexican family Mier y Pesado, the huge, triangular, and flamboyantly *Art-Déco* structure towered high above the city

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174 See the membership list of *Alemania Libre* at AGN, DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fol. 63; on Dresel see the dossier (1 Dec 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

175 See the membership list of *Alemania Libre* at AGN, DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fols. 60, 64; the dossier on Margarita Erdos (11 Apr 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; the dossier on Siegmund Strauss (16 Apr 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; the dossier describes Siegmund Strauss as a national-conservative and a former member of the *Casino Alemán* which cannot be corroborated from the evidence of the membership list of the *Casino* (1936) at BAL, NS19, no. 4057; on his activities in the *Menorah* see „Wovon man spricht“, *Demokratische Post* I/18 (1 May 1944), p. 4.

176 See the card catalogue of ARAM at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/2, s. fol.

177 See the card catalogue of ARAM at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/2, s. fol.; „Nueva Mesa Directiva“, *Austria Libre* II/02 (Feb 1944), p. 2.

178 See the card catalogue of ARAM at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 19329, s. fol.

179 See the card catalogue of ARAM at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 19329, s. fol.; the membership list of *Alemania Libre* at AGN, DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fol. 59;

180 See the memorandum on „Acción Austriaca Republicana en México“ (27 Dec 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

181 See „Lebensmittelpakete nach Österreich“ (Jun 1946) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 3637, s. fol.

182 On del Toro see the list of subscribers of *España Popular* (15 Mar 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, s. fol.; cf also the US embassy memorandum on the PCE (20 Jul 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.; on Arana see the list of *socios* of the *Ateneo Español* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 494, fol. 60; Arana has been immortalised by the semi-fictional memoir of Simón Otaola: *La Librería de Arana. Historia y Fantasía* (Madrid, 1999).



landscape and was, during the 1930s, one of the tallest buildings in Mexico City.<sup>183</sup> The proprietor was the charitable *Fundación Mier y Pesado* which rented out the property to the tenants at exceptionally affordable prices which certainly contributed to its attraction as domicile for the political refugees in the city. A considerable number of the residents can still be identified, such as Manuel Arguelles Verdera who lived in the building during the early days of political exile in Mexico.<sup>184</sup> According to Pilar Domínguez Prats, the *Edificio Ermita* was also the domicile of Ramón Mercader, the Spanish communist who assassinated Leon Trotsky in August 1940.<sup>185</sup> A contemporary of Mercader during 1940 must have been the Austrian socialist Stefan Kalmar after he had arrived in Mexico in February. He took up residence in apartment no. 412 of the *Edificio Ermita* temporarily before moving on to the district of *San Rafael* further north.<sup>186</sup> At around the same time, the Spanish sociology professor J. López Dóriga who worked for the Mexican *Delegación de Población* lived in the apartment no. 421.<sup>187</sup> On the fifth floor, the Austrian Walter Stein – a leading member of the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana*, the early non-sectarian anti-fascist organization of German ex-patriates and political refugees – moved into apartment no. 518<sup>188</sup>, and his compatriot Rudolf Rífczes, described as the owner of a porcelain factory, lived at apartment no. 513.<sup>189</sup> Heinrich Oswald Neumann, “reported to be a communist”, belonged to the German community in exile and had reached Mexico via Argentina. In Mexico City, he belonged to the organisation *Alemania Libre* and the cultural society *Heinrich-Heine-Club*.<sup>190</sup> Ladislao Gardos was a Jewish refugee from Hungary, working in Mexico as manager of a roof manufacturing company, and lived with his wife and a little son in apartment no. 402.<sup>191</sup> Gardos was a known supporter of *Alemania Libre* and registered with the *Comité Central Israelita*, as did Franz Neumann in apartment 618, a German

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183 See Jorge Vázquez Ángeles: „Edificio Ermita”, *Casa del Tiempo*, época IV, vol. III, n° 35 (2010), pp. 21-4; cf also „Edificio Ermita. Nuevos modos de habitar”, series *Espacios*, no. 4 (TV UNAM, 2016), online resource: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Pri0SXEDIo>

184 See his registration with CTARE at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 121, exp. 6434, fol. 1.

185 Cf. Pilar Domínguez Prats: *De Ciudadanas a Exiliadas. Un estudio sobre las republicanas españolas en México* (Madrid, 2009), p. 135.

186 See the letter by Stefan Kalmar to Joseph Buttinger (alias Gustav Richter) in New York (29 Mar 1940) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 18884/4, s. fol.

187 See the list of prominent Spanish refugees (17 May 1940) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 10, fol. 79.

188 See the letter by Walter Stein to Joseph Buttinger (alias Gustav Richter) in New York (24 May 1941) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 18884/6, s. fol.

189 See memorandum on Rífczes (21 Jan 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

190 See the dossier on Neumann by the intelligence unit of the US embassy (26 Sep 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

191 See the US embassy dossier on Ladislao Gardos (10 Apr 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

reporter and commission salesman who had entered Mexico under Polish nationality.<sup>192</sup> One floor below, Stein's apartment no. 518 was later occupied by a German member of *Alemania Libre* by the name of H. Kratz.<sup>193</sup> The building was also a popular location of residence among the Spanish intellectual elite in exile: the professor in pharmacology José Vázquez Sánchez lived in the building, as did the astronomer Marcelo Santaló Sors who taught science and mathematics at several schools maintained by the Spanish political refugees in the city, such as the *Instituto "Luis Vives"*, the *Colegio Madrid*, and the *Academia Hispano-Mexicana*.<sup>194</sup> Among the *socios* of the *Ateneo Español* were Carlos, Fernando and Coral Ordóñez in apartment 413, as were Antonio and Nestor González Jérez in apartment no. 514.<sup>195</sup> The legal philosopher Francisco Blasco y Fernández de Moreda who was also active in the federation of public servants of the *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT) lived in apartment 512, and the assistant professor for penal law and active socialist organiser in exile Ángel de la Fuente Torres was also a tenant in the building.<sup>196</sup> Another Spanish inhabitant of the building, Luis Castillo Iglesias, worked at different schools as a teacher for geography and history.<sup>197</sup>

Mercedes Maestre Martí arrived in Mexico in May 1942 and recalled how her friends and communist compatriots had greeted her upon her arrival and had prepared an apartment for her in the *Edificio Ermita*: “ [...] they had already prepared, in the *Edificio Ermita*, well, a place, one of the smallest apartments, no more than a bedroom and a sitting room, and in the sitting room we put a bed and there my sister slept; and there we stayed from the day we arrived [...]”. In August of the same year, she would move on to another location in the district of *Tabacalera*.<sup>198</sup> During their stay at the *Edificio Ermita*, she and her sister Carmen became active in the anti-communist camp of Spanish socialism in exile in Mexico and joined the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"* in July 1942.<sup>199</sup> Another way of

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192 See the dossier on Neumann (23 Apr 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

193 See the membership list of *Alemania Libre* (c. 1944) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fol. 58.

194 See the membership list of the *Unión de Profesores Universitarios Españoles en el Exilio* (UPUEE) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 36, exp. 380, fols. 14 & 20; cf. AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 31, exp. 355, fols. 76, 78 & 80.

195 See the list of *socios* of the *Ateneo Español* de México at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fols. 35, 125, 143.

196 See the membership list of the *Unión de Profesores Universitarios Españoles en el Exilio* (UPUEE) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 36, exp. 380, fol. 16 & 17.

197 Interview with Luis Castillo Iglesias (conducted by María Luisa Capella, Nov 1978, Jan-Feb 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/010, pp. 48-9.

198 Interview with Mercedes Maestre Martí (conducted by Marisol Alonso and Elena Aub, May 1979 / Dec 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/028, p. 83.

199 „Círculo Cultural Pablo Iglesias – asamblea general ordinaria“, *Adelante* I/12 (15 Jul 1942), p. 2.

making use of the building was to obtain the lease of one of the small shops lining the ground floor front on Avenida Revolución. Arturo García Igual used this opportunity to set up a radio repair shop next to the entrance in 1946. From his shop, so he remembered, he would have daily encounters with some of the prominent inhabitants of the building. However, when he described the *Edificio Ermita* as “a Spanish island in a sea of Mexicans” he appears to have missed (or forgotten) the substantial number of other nationalities among the exile community that populated the building.<sup>200</sup>

This distinctly transnational outlook of the community of exile in the *Edificio Ermita* was not lost on one its most famous inhabitants who has contributed to the legend of the place more than anyone else: after a stay in exile in Cuba, the Spanish writer and poet Concepción “Concha” Méndez Cuesta had arrived in 1944 with her then husband, the author and filmmaker Manuel Altolaguirre, and their daughter Paloma. After spending an initial period of time in Pablo Neruda’s house (who had left the city for a stay in Cuernavaca) their friends offered advice on where to find more permanent lodgings: “They suggested that we should live in the *Edificio Ermita*, since all its inhabitants benefited from very low rents. The building functioned as a hotel, but also had apartments. We moved into a furnished apartment.”<sup>201</sup> The building and its surroundings left a lasting impression on her:

When I looked out of the window, I encountered the Popo[catépetl], all white and high; [...] The building is situated in the Avenida Revolución, in the district of *Tacubaya*, which during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a place of relaxation for the wealthy classes. Because of this, there still are houses of that epoch: spacious and with gardens. When we arrived, it was already a densely populated neighbourhood as it is today, full of little shops: hairdressers, shoemakers, eateries and more. [...] Today the building has become a national monument, because of its Art-Déco style; and because in that period it had a great glass ceiling by the muralist painter Diego Rivera, covering the very high central hall: it gave shelter and let through a colourful light. And then it lost that glass ceiling – I have seen it break – because a child fell into its centre, almost losing its life. The building had eighty apartments and many floors. Downstairs is the *Cinema Hipódromo*, where we spent – since we had no money – our first Christmas in Mexico.<sup>202</sup>

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200 Interview with Arturo García Igual (conducted by Marisol Alonso and Elena Aub, May 1979 / Dec 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/027, pp. 128-9; and Arturo García Igual: *Entre aquella España nuestra... y la peregrina. Guerra, exilio y desexilio* (Valencia, 2005), p. 123.

201 Concha Méndez: *Memorias habladas, Memorias armadas* (Madrid, 1990), p. 116

202 *Ibid.*, pp. 116-7.

Shortly after her arrival in 1944, Méndez witnessed the transnational atmosphere of political exile in this building which created political bonds and loyalties: “I recall the day when the Germans were driven out of France; our joy was so great that all the neighbours together organised a feast in the hall of the building, and we ate and drank until daybreak.”<sup>203</sup> She was impressed by the enormous dimensions of the building, containing 80 apartments of different sizes, “mostly inhabited by foreigners: Spaniards, Germans, Jews, Nazis, refugees in exile.”<sup>204</sup> And Méndez went on to offer a wide variety of portraits of her neighbours in the building which illustrate her literary interest in the experience of exile as a blend of longing, bitterness, loneliness, and eccentricity, although she did not overlook the promise of unlikely romance:

First, I will tell the love story of a Spanish lady who lived in a little apartment with her son. I had made friends with Lucía. During our war she knew a married man and from that story a son was born; later, the same war separated the two, and she went to Russia with her money, which she would use to help other refugees. She was a primary school teacher and continued to be when she came to Mexico, in a school which had been founded by the republicans. Years went by. When the son had grown up and had children of his own, she received a letter from that man, with whom she had always been in love – she may have been seventy years old and he may have approached eighty; the letter told her that he had been widowed and that he wanted to marry her. He was a well-known communist who upon Franco’s death returned to Spain and was celebrated and decorated. Lucía left the building, curled her hair, painted her nails – something she had never done – and went to get married with her only lover in Hungary.<sup>205</sup>

But such poetic closure did not cloud her awareness of the harsh social and emotional consequences of life in exile. The motive of suicide is never far from the surface of the memories of those who lived through the experience of exile, especially when social isolation afflicted those stranded on a different continent: “Next to our apartment lived a Jewish couple who had fled from Hitler. Following the death of her husband, she continued to buy, year after year, two seats for the concerts at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*; surely, in her mind, he was still accompanying her, dressed for the occasion. The woman committed suicide; but before, she went to give her birds to her neighbour, pretending to go on a journey.”<sup>206</sup> In other cases, Méndez presented the social environment of the *Edificio Ermita* as a stage for eccentricity bordering on mental disorder:

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203 Ibid., p. 120.

204 Ibid., p. 117.

205 Ibid., p. 118.

206 Ibid., pp. 118-9.

There happened to be a very eccentric woman. Don José, they called her, because she left her apartment in a dark suit jacket; and when she returned, she took off the skirt to put men's trousers on; and it was for those trousers and her manners that they had given her a male name. And she was remarkable for her lies. Actually, all her toes and fingers were mutilated; she said she had lost them in an explosion; and I said to myself that that was impossible that a bomb should mutilate just the tips of the fingers. She also said that during the war she had been an army captain, when in Spain there had never been a female captain. And when she invited us to have cheese, ham and Spanish wine, she assured us that all these things had arrived for her by plane from Spain. From such lying emerged a likeable woman. For Christmas we went out to meet a group of people from the building, and it was Don José who sang and danced flamenco with exceptional grace; and while dancing she smoked one cigarillo after another. Today the luck has run out on all those foreigners who have no family, who did not bring it with them or did not start one over the years in Mexico; she lives in an asylum, where she still tells the story of her fingers, of the battles won by the soldiers, which makes her shine among those few who still keep her company.<sup>207</sup>

Méndez understood the uprooted existence in exile, as it was evident in the *Edificio Ermita*, not just as an occasion to celebrate the anti-fascist ideological commitment of the communities of exile, but also as a reminder of all those who were unable to cope with the emotional and practical challenges of life in exile – she provided observations for the largely unwritten history of those who vanished from the celebrated legacy of exile in Mexico.

In another apartment lived a German married to a Viennese. She had been married with another man in New York where she had worked as a model for one of the best fashion houses; and she had also been a concert pianist. Her second husband, with whom I met her, was paranoid – because the Germans were not well regarded in Mexico since one took them for Nazis. The poor man spent the day trembling – I do not know whether inside he was filled with remorse – and from all that shaking, he took to drinking, and he passed it on to his wife. [...] The poor woman suffered a very bad fate; years later the talk was that she ended up as a prostitute in Veracruz; and one needs to picture the geography of that life, the bad luck of a neighbour. [...] In another apartment lived a Spanish refugee in exile who did not have any family at all. He entered and left the building without talking to anyone. One day, his neighbours on the floor missed him, and they thought he had left on a journey. Then, because of the stench that

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207 Ibid., p. 119.

emerged from under the door, they realized that he had died. Such an independent man who had come alone to Mexico middle-aged, died alone. And on a floor higher up lived a German with his canary. One day, very loud music could be heard which resonated through the corridors of the building; the German had hired a group of *mariachis* to play for the little bird. He had put the bird cage on a chair, and the *mariachis* stood around it; and here we were, the neighbours, astonished that that man had hired a whole orchestra for his canary.<sup>208</sup>

In this way, the building appeared to be filled with the life stories of a transnational group of refugees who, while each contained a personal tale of dislocation and more often than not tragedy, added up to a symphony of those stranded in the building as victims of the global mid-20th-century conflicts that crystallised between the floors of the *Edificio Ermita*: “the life of the unmarried fashion designers on the seventh floor; the memories of a German woman who lost her only son with the International Brigades; the Jewish child that had to play the violin; the fall of the tenant from the sixth floor (I saw him throw himself out the window, because I had gone out to see the time on the public clock of the building on the other side: when I looked, I saw him fall.)”<sup>209</sup> Méndez had arrived into a diverse blend of people who represented to her poetic eye the fate of exile in Mexico City as individuals as much as a collective: “On which floor did these people live? On any of them, I am not going to say on the first or the third floor. I only know that in the 80 apartments there existed more exceptional lives, because they were standing out, or because they were not.”<sup>210</sup> Méndez, thus, contributed to the popular memory and legend of the building as few others did, although her reference to the numerous non-Spanish refugees who resided in the *Edificio Ermita* has often been forgotten. In the context of the urban topography of exile it is, therefore, important to note the significant geographical reference point that this building represented not just for the Spanish republican community of exile, but for all European communities of refugees in the city.

Other similar locations for transnational cohabitation may have existed around Mexico City, such as the building of the “Casa del Torre Blanco [sic!]” to which Bodo Uhse rather cryptically referred to as the domicile of Ludwig Renn in the district of *Tacuba* in the north-west of the city during 1940: “Yes, that house! A run-down feudal estate.”<sup>211</sup> The place became known as “a former feudal estate populated by foreign anti-fascists”<sup>212</sup>, or, as Uhse characterised the group, “a

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208 Ibid., p. 119-20.

209 Ibid., p. 120.

210 Ibid., p. 119.

211 Bodo Uhse: *Reise- und Tagebücher* (Berlin/Weimar, 1981), vol. 1, p. 488.

212 Wolfgang Kießling: *Brücken nach Mexiko. Traditionen einer Freundschaft* (Berlin, 1989), p. 289.

strange collective”.<sup>213</sup> At around that time, Renn gave his address as Calzada Legaría no. 83 in the neighbourhood of *Torre Blanca* just to the south-west of the centre of *Tacuba*, and Uhse registered with the *Servicio de Migración* under this address in April 1940, probably the domicile of that “strange collective” of “foreign anti-fascists” about which nothing more is known.<sup>214</sup>

#### d. Exploring the cityscape

The physical reality of the city itself often overwhelmed the newly-arrived Europeans who experienced “a mixture of amazement and confusion”<sup>215</sup> It was not only the enormous geographical proportions but also the fundamentally different urban character of the post-colonial Mexican capital which contrasted sharply with European expectations. As the first historian of the Spanish republican emigration to Mexico, Carlos Martínez, recounted:

And Mexico City, what impression did it leave upon the émigrés? Mexico [City] appeared to them to be a great city of enormous proportions. More than as one city, it appeared as an aggregate of several, very different in character from one another, without the uniformity in character and appearance which the great European cities display.<sup>216</sup>

In the same vein, Eulalio Ferrer recorded his own amazement at the proportions of the city, and his testimony stands out from other materials for the fact that it was recorded directly at the time and it is, thus, not subjected to constructions of memory decades later. In February 1941, he noted under the heading “In the great capital”:

It is my turn to get to know another splendour of Mexico, that of its physical magnitude. I am amazed by the Paseo de la Reforma – a kind of Champs-Élysée; The Avenida Insurgentes, so long and lively; the Avenida Juárez, so busy during the day, so deserted at night.<sup>217</sup>

Three months later, he still had not acclimatised himself to the urban experience of the Mexican capital:

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213 Bodo Uhse, *Reise- und Tagebücher*, vol. 1, p. 488.

214 See Uhse’s registration (16 Apr 1940) and Ludwig Renn’s letter to Bodo Uhse (13 Jan 1940), facs. reproductions in: *Letzte Zuflucht Mexiko. Gilberto Bosques und das deutschsprachige Exil nach 1939*, Ausstellung Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin e.V. (Berlin, 2012), pp. 276-7.

215 Domingo Rex, *Un Español en México*, p. 38.

216 Carlos Martínez, *Crónica de una Emigración*, p. 17.

217 Eulalio Ferrer Rodríguez: *Páginas del Exilio* (México, D.F., 1999), p. 113.

I am still amazed at this huge capital city. Its vitality, due to the tremendous force it radiates, gives us the idea of a country the greatness of which cannot be measured in the number of streets, nor in personal biographies, nor in social classes. The sensation of the weight of the country is like a telluric force that pulls one, that drags [one] as if it were a wave or a sea current. It is the constant confrontation with the unexpected.<sup>218</sup>

But apart from the size and sensual impressions of the physical surroundings, Mexico City also featured in the memory of the newly-arrived exiles as a space of experiences of exoticism. Lenka Reinerová felt as if living in a “wonderland”: “Oranges, bananas, pineapples and unknown fruit with melodic names and sweet flesh in abundance: Papaya, Guayama [probably: Guava], Chirimoya.” Again, the exotic sensations of Mexico took centre stage:

The streets are shaded by massive palm trees stretching their leaves in all directions. Flowers everywhere. Two high volcanoes display their snow-covered peaks across the city. The shop windows are full of commodities, and in the evenings – in the evenings thousands of lights and neon advertisements light up the streets. An exuberant, jauntily illuminated city.

The city presented to her “a new, scarcely imaginable, breath-taking world”, and “during the first days, I walk around in a daze”.<sup>219</sup> Mercedes Maestre Martí was similarly impressed, as she recalled decades later: “The city appeared to me wonderful, really wonderful; for once, I liked the centre very much with its original characteristics since here in Spain the old cities were badly designed. I was amazed that the city created back then was a city of rectangular streets, pretty wide; [...] in those days, the expansion [of the city] was for us who had been in Spain something new, of beauty and originality, a garden city, we had never imagined a garden city within the same city, truly marvellous, yes.”<sup>220</sup> But the size and relative uniformity of the topographical lay-out of the city could also pose a challenge to the European perception of urban space, and the first excursions into the cityscape would, at times, prove daunting. María Tarragona Jou recalled her first encounter with the urban space of the Mexican capital as an adventure, even though a successful one, which instilled her with a sense of mastery over the unfamiliar surroundings of the city centre:

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218 Ibid., p. 119.

219 Lenka Reiner[ová]: *Grenze geschlossen* (Berlin, 1958), p. 281.

220 Interview with Mercedes Maestre Martí (conducted by Marisol Alonso and Elena Aub, May 1979 / Dec 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/028, pp. 120-1; cf. also the interview with María Libertad Peña Rambla (conducted by Marisol Alonso and Elena Aub, Apr 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/029, p. 49.



There [in a boarding house at calle Rosales] we spent the night, because my brother told me the other day the following (he worked in a cashmere shop which was called *Casa Palacios* at calle Isabel la Católica between 16 de Septiembre and Madero), he told me (I did not know where to go, or whether they had given me a recommendation for someone): »Tomorrow you go out, you take that pavement and follow it, you walk and walk until you get to a street which is called Isabel la Católica.« And that's how it was, you hear?, I went out, held on to that pavement, and that was my first excursion into Mexico [City]. But not for a moment did I think that I could get lost, not for a moment did I think that anything could happen to me, never for a moment. I continued until I came to look for my brother in calle Isabel la Católica. That was my first excursion into Mexico [City].<sup>221</sup>

Another way to explore the local geography of the city was to interact with the commercial infrastructure, above all the markets which served the local neighbourhoods.<sup>222</sup> Carmen Romero gathered her first impressions of the city during her visits to the market of San Juan just off calle de López in the district *Centro*, a popular location among the Spanish refugees in the city:

The following day, we went to San Juan, since it is said that the markets are the best way to get to know a city. For us, after years of austerity, it was all a spectacle. Everywhere those fragrant still-lives with their fruit, some with hitherto unknown flavours. The *nopales* which we did not believe to be edible, the stands with exotic flowers, the birds with colourful plumage imprisoned in tiny cages... Children who address us: "May I help you, Güerita?" which we hardly perceive among the screaming. The pushing and shoving against the baskets, the music of a marimba, and the carriers who make their way with shouts of "Beware of a blow!"<sup>223</sup>

These new sensations could also test the limits of the refugees' curiosity, as in the case of Águeda Pía Fernández who recounted her first breakfast in the Café "Diligencias": "We saw that almost everyone in the Café ordered a plate of yellow-orange fruit which was unknown to us. Surely, we wanted to enjoy that food. So we ordered a portion of that strange delicacy. It was papaya. To be honest, I could not eat a single bite. The colour, the consistency, and the taste were something which I could not stand at that moment."<sup>224</sup>

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221 Interview with María Tarragona Jou (conducted by Concepción Ruiz-Funes, Mar-Apr 1988) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/100, p. 146.

222 Cf. José Moreno Villa: *Cornucopia de México*, (México D.F., 1940), pp. 11-4.

223 Carmen Romero: "Testimonio de una mujer en el exilio", in: *Nuevas Raíces, Testimonios de mujeres españolas en el exilio* (México, D.F., 1993), p. 138.

224 Águeda Pía Fernández: *Una Mujer en Vilo* (México D.F., 1999), pp. 54-5.

The sense of wonder (or bewilderment) with regard to an unfamiliar and exotic place also related to the post-colonial culture and social composition of the population. The linguistic challenge posed to the Spaniards by the Mexican idiom was soon noticed and resulted in quickly memorised dictionaries of Mexican words which amounted to a new register of their native language which they evidently had not expected, “tinged with sweetness, soft like the eyes. Effectively, it is Spanish... and something more.” Ferrer, writing just days after his arrival in the city, noted the “prosodic accent, interwoven in its terms with castellanisms and indigenisms”:

The first surprise we experienced some days ago in the train station of Buenavista, spacious and welcoming. We had left our suitcases and bags which we had brought from Oaxaca near the platform. A shortish man of uncertain age approached us and said to us in a low voice, as if he were revealing a secret: »*Agusado jefecito, no le vayan a volar el veliz.*« That left me concerned, I knew he was talking Spanish, but I understood nothing. Another onlooker – »my grandparents were *Asturianos*«, he said to me when he approached –, explained to us that what this man was trying to tell us was that we should take care that no-one would steal our suitcases. I shall never forget that. Nor that “*güero*” is the equivalent of “blonde”; that “*vieja*” is a sympathetic reference to the wife; that “*patroncita*” is the mother and that “*cuate*” is a twin brother and also a close friend.

Such incidents and first impressions implied a sympathetic view of the host country, and the “blend of people”, as Eulalio Ferrer recalled it, never ceased to amaze the latest arrivals to the streets of the capital city: “The *indígena* who crosses the streets, fearful of the automobiles, with his sandals; the solemn and well-dressed Mexican; the men with their straw hats, upright and humble; the expressive Creole and the loud-mouthed Spaniard.”<sup>225</sup> Such observations often confounded ethnic and social classifications, as the stark social inequalities appeared inextricably linked to the ethnic divide within Mexican society. Alexander Abusch resided on the southern edge of the built-up modern city which, by that time around 1940, had reached the Río de la Piedad and slowly expanded further south along the tramway lines to Coyoacán and Tlalpan further south. In between, free spaces were quickly occupied by make-shift structures of the sub-proletarian slums which flanked the city from its southern, eastern, and northern periphery. From his modern windows overlooking the Río de la Piedad in the district of *Roma Sur* Abusch witnessed first-hand the stark social segregation reflected in the urban landscape of the capital city – just across the river the “Mexican Slums: a labyrinth of clay and tin huts, without any sanitary facilities, all the Mexican misery ranging from high birth rates to insufficient food and relieving themselves in front of our eyes; but even here a characteristically

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225 Eulalio Ferrer Rodríguez: *Páginas del Exilio* (México, D.F., 1999), p. 113.

Mexican aspiration to cleanliness.”<sup>226</sup> The somewhat patronising attitude of the European perspective on the post-colonial misery concentrating on the Mexican capital city occasionally continued into negative statements about the assumed Mexican national characteristics, as derogatory stereotypes entered the perception and memory of the European political refugees in the city. The genuine shock at encountering the poverty of landless provincial masses migrating into the capital city could go along with judgmental statements about the moral qualities of the Mexican poor, as Estrella Cortichs remembered:

Here in Mexico, people went bare-foot, through Mexico City. Poorly dressed. They also were selling four little things here at a corner, at any corner, they would sit on the ground and sell four little tomatoes, four little potatoes, four little things, right? And badly, with lots of children, when they gave... And above all, that walking bare-foot through the city, it was very sad, right?, one also saw a lot of poverty. And of course, this awoke a great desire to do something, right?, to see whether one could help, right? Later one saw that we could do little, but we had a great longing to help the people, right? There were a lot of things that attracted our attention. For example, in the street I saw men mistreating women, it was a very sad thing. One time, from the window, where we lived, we heard something like a scuffle, and my husband, my »*Quijote*«, looked out of the window and [shouted]: »But what are you doing? Why do you mistreat that woman like that? Why do you beat her? Why that? Calm down, a man should not do that!«<sup>227</sup>

Such attitudes of moral superiority could reach the political leadership of the community of exile in Mexico City. Bodo Uhse had arrived in the city in March 1940 with the help of his fellow veteran of the International Brigades, Ludwig Renn, but quickly noticed in his diaries that Renn “does not love Mexico and despises the Mexicans because of their laziness, unreliability and corruption.”<sup>228</sup> Renn went on to teach at the University of Morelia and later wrote about his Mexican experiences with great affection<sup>229</sup>, so Uhse’s observation may have referred to a spontaneous outburst of frustration over the Mexican bureaucracy that needed to be navigated to obtain visa for political refugees such as Uhse himself. But a sense of fundamental distance from the general population is occasionally visible, even after decades of exile in Mexico, in the oral history interviews conducted with members of the Spanish community in exile. When

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226 Alexander Abusch: *Mit offenem Visier. Memoiren* (Berlin, 1986), p. 35.

227 Interview with Estrella Cortichs (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Apr/May 1979, Dec 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/017, pp. 246-7.

228 Diary of Bodo Uhse at Akademie der Künste (Berlin), Nachlaß Bodo Uhse, Tagebuchaufzeichnungen (24 Mar 1940), fol. 96.

229 See e.g. Ludwig Renn: *Im Spanischen Krieg. Morelia* (Berlin/Weimar, 1977), pp. 417-528.

asked about her social interaction with Mexicans in terms of long-standing friendships, Mercedes Maestre admitted to her Mexican interlocutor that she interacted “not so much, because that’s the thing that the Mexican, we noticed that when we arrived here, that towards us, towards the Spaniards you were a little, a little stiff, you did not have the natural [openness], it was, I don’t know how, something that inhibited us.”<sup>230</sup> José Salamanca did not shy away from objecting to and ostracising the habits of the very poorest in Mexican society, as he recalled his general irritation with the *ambiente* of Mexico City:

The general atmosphere... How is it?, sordid. The Mexican character is introverted, and I don’t like that. The atmosphere..., back then, in Mexico the people were very impoverished, the, the lowest strata of the people had very ugly habits. (unintelligible, laughter) Finally, then there were a number of drunkards sleeping on the pavements, – the sidewalks, as they would say there; I did not like the atmosphere.<sup>231</sup>

Certain negative experiences could trigger and sustain negative judgements about the alleged Mexican national character over decades. Estrella Cortichs remembered one of her first domiciles in the city at the corner of calle Rosas Moreno and calle Sullivan on the southern edge of the district of *San Rafael*, close to the *Monumento a la Revolución* in the neighbouring district of the *Tabacalera*. She continued with a general characterisation of the social environment in Mexico which turned out to be rather unfavourable:

[...] my first impression was a little unpleasant, because (laughs) well, the people are different, right? And ... (laughs) I am sorry, but I have to say that they appeared to me, uh, physically a little deplorable. Uh, most of those one saw in the street, of those who one saw in the street back then, badly dressed, poorly dressed, and they also appeared a little spiritually poor; so, I had a bad impression.

The reason for her generally negative image of the Mexican population had to do with an episode that took place in her house in the district of *San Rafael* – she recalled it immediately after her negative general assessment:

[...] in the house where we lived, [...] the cousins, who were already settled here, they came and: »Let’s go!«, they talked to us through the window, they talked from below in the street, »Come down, so we take some photos here at the *Monumento a la Revolución*«, because it was over there. And I said, »Shall I take my camera?«, and they said: »No, don’t take it, We already have ours.« I left my camera, I left it up

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230 Interview with Mercedes Maestre Martí (conducted by Marisol Alonso and Elena Aub, May 1979 / Dec 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/028, p. 88.

231 Interview with José Salamanca (conducted by Elena Aub and Enriqueta Tuñón, Oct 1979, Nov 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra PHO/10/ESP01, p. 93.

there and it was stolen. Of course, my impression was then even worse, right? Because I had lost my camera, my camera which Ricardo had given to me many years ago, and it was very good, I liked it a lot, I knew it well, I handled it well, it was a Kodak. And, well, I left it at the top of some place without thinking anything. And since then I took a little more caution with this, because I always took little caution and was careless, and I left it like that, without... it bothers me a lot.<sup>232</sup>

The loss of personal possessions imbued with memories and emotions, above all from Spain, that represented happier days from before being forced into exile was a powerful trigger for the rejection of an environment that appeared to have stolen not just an object, but the material reminder of home, love, and identity. Theft, however, was not an uncommon theme in the memory of the city among the communities of exile. The German publisher Walter Janka spent his first days in Mexico City at the house of the US-American writer Ralph Roeder at Plaza Melchor Ocampo no. 38 in the district of *Cuauhtémoc*. Roeder immediately lent Janka a typewriter. During the day, Janka was a regular house-guest for lunch at the home of the Swiss architect Hannes Meyer at calle Manuel Villalongín no. 46-8 about ten minutes' walk to the north-east. Janka suffered a similar fate to that which Estrella Cortichs had experienced just across the park from Meyer's home:

When I returned to my room from my first lunch at Meyer's house, the door was broken, the typewriter stolen. Ralph Roeder kept his calm: »Don't blame yourself. I should have warned you that stealing is quite common around here.«<sup>233</sup>

Evidently, the issue of theft as an ingredient of the experience of metropolitan life in Mexico City could be answered with a degree of calm rather than stereotypical condemnation of the national character of Mexicans – provided that the loss of possessions did not touch upon key areas of personal memory, emotions, and identity.

Another important part of settling into the city was to find employment and regular income. The Spanish *Comité Técnico de Ayuda a los Republicanos Españoles* (CTARE) had set up a labour exchange and employment agency which monitored the employment status of those who claimed subsidies, food, and shelter from the organisation. The surviving records in the files of CTARE are listing a total of 517 refugees in Mexico City and their professional training and employment in Mexico.<sup>234</sup> According to these records, the biggest single employer

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232 Interview with Estrella Cortichs (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Apr/May 1979, Dec 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/017, pp. 235-6.

233 Janka, *Spuren*, p. 187-8.

234 See the records of the *Oficina del Trabajo* of CTARE at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 117,

of Spanish refugees in the city processed by the employment office of CTARE was the metal workshop *Talleres “Vulcano”* which had been established in July 1939 as a means to employ and support metalworkers, carpenters, and some ancillary staff among the Spanish refugees. 140 (or 27 %) of the workforce administered by CTARE’s employment office found a job with this firm which was located at Ferrocarriles Cuernavaca no. 799 on the western outskirts of the city not far from the Spanish Hospital, the *Beficiencia Española* north of the soon-to-be developed district of *Polanco*. Its total workforce, as of the end of 1939, numbered 197.<sup>235</sup> The subsidiary administrative department of CTARE overlooking the entrepreneurial activities of CTARE, the *Comité Técnico de Ayuda a los Españoles en México* (CTAEM) was itself a significant employer of 45 refugees, followed by the financial institution of the *Financiera Industrial Agrícola S.A.* (FIASA) which employed 32 refugees. The records also show 16 intellectuals as employees of the *Casa de España* and a diverse range of other employers in the city, such as hotels, theatres, pharmaceutical companies, construction firms, cinemas (particularly the *Cine Alameda*), and schools. Some refugees also found employment opportunities with Mexican administrative and political or cultural institutions, such as the city government of the *Distrito Federal*, the ministries for agriculture or education, the broadcaster *Radio Nacional*, or the governing state party *Partido de la Revolución Mexicana* (PRM). Of the 166 (or 32 %) of refugees supported by CTARE who were not listed with a current institutional employer, 58 appeared as self-employed who had created their own businesses or worked independently as craftsmen, doctors, photographers, or in clerical services, such as stenographers.

Finding employment in Mexico City often depended on the fabric of sociability which allowed the refugees to integrate themselves into the city. Among the most important locations of sociability among the Spanish community of exile was the Café “Tupinamba” at calle Bolívar no. 44 in the historic city centre. The café enjoyed prominence far beyond the exile community, but was well-known for its important function among the Spanish refugees. When Emilio Rodríguez Mata arrived in the city, the hotel receptionist immediately directed him to the café:

[...] I asked where the Spaniards met, and they told me: »Well, just keep going straight on and you will find the Café »Tupinamba« and

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exp. 6367, fols. 2-11; these numbers may only represent a momentary survey, as much higher numbers of job creation (around 1.000 in total), were reported to president Cárdenas by the chairman of CTARE, Dr. José Puche, see: Dolores Pla Brugat: *Els exiliats catalans. Un estudio de la emigración republicana española en México* (México D.F., 1999), p. 236.

235 On the economically unsuccessful story of the *Talleres “Vulcano”*, see Aurelio Velázquez Hernández: *La otra cara del Exilio: Los organismos de ayuda a los republicanos españoles en México (1939-1949)*, tesis doctoral, Universidad de Salamanca, Facultad de Geografía e Historia (2012), pp. 224-34; cf. also the interview with Rómulo García Salcedo (conducted by Dolores Pla, Mar/Apr 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/056, pp. 74-5.

there I went into the Tupinamba. It had already attracted my attention, I have never been a great coffee house person, all that noise had caught my attention which came from that café, and finally I made contact and talked to the people who were in that café, and step-by-step we started to settle in the city. [...] Well, and soon we began to move around a bit across the city, to get to know the city, primarily the first block, until we ended up meeting in a building which had been, or still was the Spanish Consulate in Mexico, in calle Balderas [...] <sup>236</sup>

The former Spanish consulate in calle Balderas no. 37 had been transformed into the *Centro Republicano Español* in June 1939 and functioned as the geographical centre of political, cultural, and social events.<sup>237</sup> Such networks of personal contacts and information proved vital during the first phase of exile in the city:

And there we met every day, morning and afternoon., those who had arrived on board the ship, exchanging impressions, of the people that one had met, how they treated us, what one would be able to do, etc., until we began to move around a little better. They immediately put us in contact with SERE which already operated in Mexico. They had their offices in the Plaza Miravalle [calle Sinaloa 56] directed by Dr Puche and we then received something, my brother and I received a little subsidy by SERE which, if I am not mistaken, amounted to the enormous sum of 80 pesos which in those days was enough to eat, right?, and to pay the hotel. In this way we spent the first days of conversation and general orientation.<sup>238</sup>

For Rodríguez Mata, this network resulted in an employment opportunity with one of the Mexican institutions for professional training: “[...] after a few days, maybe two or three weeks, of conversation and discussions with the companions and friends of the emigration in that place which I told you of the Spanish Consulate, the building of the Spanish Consulate, I found out that there existed the ESIME, the *Escuela Superior de Ingeniería Mecánica y Eléctrica*.” After presenting himself to the director of the school and to the responsible director for higher education he quickly secured a job offer:

I left my address which was that hotel in calle 16 de Septiembre, and, well, »just tell me when I could enter employment here.« Another couple of weeks passed and then I presented myself again, and he told me: »I just lost your address, I was unable to contact you, but, in fact,

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236 Interview with Emilio Rodríguez Mata (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Jul-Aug 1979) at BNOB, Archivo der la Palabra PHO/10/024, p. 88.

237 See “Se inauguró el Centro Español”, *Excelsior* (11 Jun 1939), p. 3.

238 Interview with Emilio Rodríguez Mata (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Jul-Aug 1979) at BNOB, Archivo der la Palabra PHO/10/024, p. 89.

You can come and work whenever you want.« In that way, after being in the city for a short while, I was able to work at ESIME as a teacher.<sup>239</sup>

Juan López Garachana was still a child when he arrived with his parents and siblings in Mexico City. On the very first day, just moments after entering their first hotel room, the social networks of the Spanish community around the Café “Tupinamba” would prove vital for the way his father managed to establish the first economic subsistence for the family:

We all took a shower to get rid of the stench of the train, and while *mamá* cleaned the clothes, *papá* asked the owner [of the hotel] if he knew any café where the Spanish refugees would meet. He told us that a few blocks away we would find the Café »Tupinamba« where the *aficionados* of bull-fighting, football, and many Spaniards would go. We went there and when we arrived *papá* talked to the owner of the place to whom he explained his situation and told him he looked for work as soon as possible and that he thought that some Spaniard might be able to advise him how to find it. That *señor* [...] pointed toward a table where five gentlemen were sitting and told him he should talk to the tallest of them who was a Catalan builder, as he could probably advise him and, if possible, help him because he was a very fine person. *Papá* introduced himself to the builder and explained his situation: recently arrived, refugee, with three children and almost no money. He told him that he wanted to start working the next morning if possible. That *señor* told him that he could take over some repair work in a house that he was doing in the district of *Santa María de la Ribera*, and *papá* accepted immediately. He wrote down the address and thanked him a thousand times. It is impossible to imagine the joy he caused for *mamá* to know that he had found some work and that he would have a secure income every week.<sup>240</sup>

In other cases, long-standing social contacts dating from republican Spain in connection with transatlantic family ties could yield the necessary personal contacts and opportunities for support that opened up perspectives for employment in the city. Carmen Bahí de Parera recalled such a coincidence which proved important for her to establish the first economic basis for life in exile as well as her presence among the Spanish republican elite in the district of *Cuauhtémoc*. She had “received a letter from a friend of mine in Gerona, directed at one of her cousins, one of her cousins here in Mexico who had a grocery shop in calle de Lerma.”

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239 Ibid., pp. 89-90.

240 Juan López Garachana: *Memorias de un Niño durante la Guerra... y el exilio* (México D.F., 2007), p. 164.



And we went there, I presented the letter and the man asked me: “Well, and now [...] what do you intend to do?” I said: “Work, of course.” The lady had a stand for chicken parts and said to me: “Would you like to learn how to separate chicken?”, I said: “Well, I will learn it, because I know nothing about separating chicken, no more than how to eat it, but I don’t know about it.” She said: “I am going to teach you and once you know, I am going to accompany you to [...] an agency so that they sell you a showcase on credit and you can set up a chicken stand. “ I said: “Ok.” - “And your husband?”, she asked, “He will work in the *Vulcano*.” [...] And so we did it. I learned how to separate chicken, and she gave me some pieces of chicken every day. [...] And we opened a chicken shop in calle [Río] Pánuco, in the district of *Cuauhtémoc*, [Río] Pánuco on the corner of [Río] Ganges; and Ros lived at [Río] Pánuco on the corner of [Río] Mississippi, so we were close. And in this street lived a number of leaders of the [Spanish] Republic: there lived a son of Maciá, there lived the doctor Pi Sunyer, there lived his brothers; a number of personalities.<sup>241</sup>

To find a *niche* to establish an economic base for life in exile could prove difficult, especially when Mexican professionals were not eager to face competition by Spanish refugees. Jorge Piñol was a self-employed doctor who found a way of establishing himself in the health services by identifying an opportunity which Mexican doctors who guarded their positions jealously would not cover. Piñol had found a home for himself and his wife at calle Santa María de la Ribera no. 2 in the city district of the same name and, at first, worked as a pharmaceutical sales representative. In their apartment, however, he began to practice as a doctor, and he found a particular area of medical care that he and his Spanish colleagues could make their own without any conflict of interest with their Mexican colleagues:

And we started like most doctors there, doing emergency services. In those days in Mexico, the doctors of Mexico, generally one could earn good money, because in those neighbourhoods no doctor went out at night. That is to say, if there was a patient at night, an emergency, they did not go because they said that they would not go, that the streets were... they weren’t safe, that things happened, there could be assaults, murder, above all by people who had been drinking, who were drunk, and they would not go out at night. And then, we, the majority of the Spanish refugees, we said: here is the only opportunity we have, every Mexican doctor has his *clientèle*, but in turn they do not go out at night, the night visits is where we can, at least, earn a few pesos so we can live, right?<sup>242</sup>

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241 Interview with Carmen Bahí de Parera (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Dec 1987 / Jan 1988) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/089, pp. 118-9.

And the labour market could also provide an unusual degree of flexibility when arrangements needed to be adapted to personal circumstances or specific needs and talents. Manuel Barberán (who during the mid-1950s would play a prominent role in the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) in Mexico<sup>243</sup>) found himself landed with a job that did not satisfy him, but personal contacts and a benevolent environment of employment allowed him to adapt his situation to his advantage:

My first job was in a factory which was called Eureka. Here in Paseo de la Reforma was a great company which belonged to a very rich Spaniard, very rich, an Asturian, very rich, who through the help of another Spaniard who worked with them hired me to sell products made of uralite, roofs and such things; that was my first job. [...] Well, there we were two friends, and we liked each other a lot, he worked with a [pharmaceutical] laboratory and I worked there. Then one day, we realized that the thing was... We had committed two mistakes, he and I, and that it would be good to swap employment, because he would be much better in selling uralite, since I was a very bad salesman, and I would surely be much better in selling medicines. And so it came that we agreed that we would talk to the directorships of the companies, there were no difficulties, and we swapped. From then on, I dedicated myself to do advertising for doctors, the kind of advertising to educate them, give them samples and talk to them.<sup>244</sup>

The issue of employment also contributed to a sense of national pride among the Spaniards who constructed a narrative of professional success as part of their experience of exile in the city. The relationship with the surrounding Mexican society thereby provided the backdrop of a sense of professional superiority which was exemplified by the higher quality of education and training among the workforce of the Spanish refugees. In this way, the Spanish refugees in the city were able to present their situation as the newly-arrived addition to the country's workforce as a gift to the Mexican economy, justifying their admission as refugees not just on political but also on economic grounds. Sacramento Álvarez Ugena de Herrero expressed such thoughts openly in her oral history interview:

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242 Interview with Jorge Piñol (conducted by Marisol Alonso, Apr 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/031, pp. 54-5.

243 See e.g. "El Siete de Noviembre: una página viril de nuestra historia. Acto en la Casa de España Republicana. Intervención del C. Manuel Barberán", *España Popular* XVI/789 (18 Nov 1955), p. 2.

244 Interview with Manuel Barberán Roda (conducted by Marisol Alonso and Enriqueta Tuñón, Apr 1979, Dec 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/034, pp. 137-8.

- And how did the people receive you? How did the people of Mexico City treat you? The Mexicans.
- Well, they always made fun of us, right?, because of the way we talked, but they did receive us well. And I have seen that they even preferred us in some places as employees.
- Mmh.
- Obviously our level of..., of..., of culture was superior. Let's say, for example, all the girls whom I placed as employees in commerce, well, all of them knew how to add, multiply, make divisions and [how to] talk and treat people. Which the employee of that period did not know. As it was badly paid, well, what could it be, very modest people and without training, right?
- Mmh. Sure.
- Then I saw that they hired us. They clearly preferred us.<sup>245</sup>

Against the prevailing narrative of economic success, however, it is important to note that not everyone from among the community of political refugees was able to establish themselves successfully in the city. The memoirs of Federico Patán offer a rare glimpse into the experience of those refugees who did not find their place in the social and economic fabric of the capital city. Himself still a child, Patán observed the fortunes of his parents, above all his father, to make a living in Mexico. The family had spent several years in other parts of the country, before in 1945 the moment seemed opportune to move to the capital:

In 1945, a great misfortune befell my father: he won the lottery. Not enough to turn into a millionaire, but enough to risk the move to the capital. [...] I recall days in a hotel, while the acquisition of a restaurant was agreed. Located on the second floor in the Avenida Chapultépec, it was called *La Peña Andaluza*. From the beginning, it was a bad investment. At the time, I was unaware of the real causes of the failure. Talk in the family was that the business was economically doomed when my father bought it; it was said that the old *clientèle* resented the change in ownership, and he was never able to bring in other customers; it was said that the new pallet of spices convinced no one. Be that as it may, bankruptcy arrived in a matter of months, a terrible blow for my father who did not know how to recover from this. From believing that the future had been sorted out to seeing oneself without a penny is a disaster which is difficult to take.<sup>246</sup>

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245 Interview with Sacramento Álvarez Ugena de Herrero (conducted by Dolores Pla, Apr 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/058, p. 58.

246 Federico Patán: *De Cuerpo Entero* (México D.F., 1991), pp. 9-10.

Patán then recalled the rapid social decline of the family through swift changes of domicile – to the district of *Hidalgo* south of the city centre and then to the crime-ridden neighbourhood of *Santa Julia* beyond the district of *San Rafael* – until the parents had to leave the children behind in the care of friends and try to consolidate their finances separately. The effect of economic misfortune on the young Federico proved to be permanent: “Sometimes I think that that experience caused me a profound aversion against separating myself from wife and kids when I travel to some congress or a lecture course, be it in the provinces or abroad. It marked me deeply. It was my first definite and painful realisation that something in our life did not work out the way it should.”<sup>247</sup>

### e. The ex-patriate Colonies

In the context of work and employment the relationship between the political refugees and the existing ex-patriate communities of business acquired critical importance. Earlier groups of immigrants to the city had achieved key positions in the economic fabric of the city and controlled some sectors of light industry and retail. The evidence for their interactions with the republican refugees of the late 1930s and 1940s presents a very mixed picture, as some appear to have enjoyed excellent relations with the Spanish ex-patriate community. For Mercedes Maestre Martí, her experience with them “was wonderful, yes, I have [patients] among the Spaniards of the second and third generation... the elderly were the refugees [i.e. immigrants] and later they had children. I visited the grand-children, among all those people they wished me the best, I have the feeling that if something were to happen to me, those people are my family, just like the refugees, yes. Here the solidarity among the Spaniards, first of all among the refugees, and then among many of the ex-patriates was something very special.”<sup>248</sup> Others, such as Veneranda García Manzano were under no illusions about the general attitude of the Spanish colony in Mexico City:

[...] in general the old Spanish colony would have liked to see us being thrown into the ocean, because... the streets of Mexico [City] were plastered with wall posters calling us *rojos*, murderers, but it was not the Mexican people, it was the Spanish, the old Spanish residents, that was the atmosphere when we arrived.<sup>249</sup>

A more balanced assessment would certainly point towards the importance of individual attitudes which could differ quite strongly from the general political

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247 Ibid. , p. 17.

248 Interview with Mercedes Maestre Martí (conducted by Marisol Alonso and Elena Aub, May 1979 / Dec 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/028, pp. 86-7.

249 Interview with Veneranda García Manzano (conducted by Elena Aub, Feb/Mar 1980) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/ESP15, p. 71.

climate among the ex-patriate community. And the large group of Spanish immigrants was in itself politically divided so that no comprehensive ideological consensus should be assumed. In addition, the relationship between the existing ex-patriate community and the republican refugees was also characterised by a process of learning illustrated by the recollection of Daniel Vieitez Cantolla who worked for the *Comité Técnico de Ayuda a los Españoles en México* (CTAEM)<sup>250</sup>:

Among the ex-patriate residents there existed two groups: one of the open sympathizers who were organised and everything. It was, they were called *Amigos* or something, *Amigos de la República Española* or something. They were sympathisers and even helped those most in need with money which they had raised among themselves. Those were the ex-patriate sympathisers. But the majority were *Franquistas* and received us in a very hostile manner. And then it took some work to go and find a place, at first above all, because they came up to one with questions and the like. They believed that we were all a party of criminals, right?, just like the Francoist propaganda had told them. Then it took some work. But when they realised that only decent people had come here, trying to put their lives back together; not to “*hacer la América*” [emigrate to America to make a quick fortune] but almost everyone with families already established, with families, that we needed to work from day one, ok? and because of that, well, then they opened their doors little by little and the people found their place.<sup>251</sup>

One of those who “found a place” was Adelina Santaló de Esturau who described the relationship with her employers in some detail, a company owned by ex-patriate Spanish residents that specialised in the importation of supplies for shoemakers from Argentina and the United States:

They were two partners, one older and the other younger, both married. And both they and the *señora* were very nice to me, they behaved very attentively towards me, very nicely. Of course, I delivered a good job for them, I was good at my job (laughs). They had total confidence in me [...] two months later, the *señora* stopped working, [and] they put me in total control of the office. And they were very, very attentive with me; they never discussed any problems that did not have anything to do with the work, right?, but... they may have had their ideas, but they were always very, very, correct with me.<sup>252</sup>

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250 Cf. his record at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 117, exp. 6367, fol. 10.

251 Interview with Daniel Vietez Cantolla (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Sep, Oct, Nov 1987) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/085, pp. 197-8.

252 Interview with Adelina Santaló de Esturau (conducted by Dolores Pla, Nov 1979) at BNOB,

So the key to a working relationship with the ex-patriate community in the city evidently lay in efforts to de-politicise the professional sphere where everybody “may have had their ideas” but a discussion of political differences was avoided.

A similar pattern can be observed with regard to the German employers in the city. The German business community was well-known for its nationalist loyalties which occasionally culminated in public displays of support for the Nazi regime.<sup>253</sup> Practically all German business leaders in the city had been members of the *Casino Alemán* which was closed on the 28<sup>th</sup> July 1942 and expropriated the following year on account of Nazi propaganda activities being conducted by the organisation.<sup>254</sup> Pascual Casanova Rius started his first job at the pharmaceutical company *Casa Bayer*, one of the most important German businesses in the city at calle Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra no. 52, next to the Spanish Hospital, the *Beneficiencia Española*, just north of what during the following years would be developed into the socially exclusive district of *Polanco*. He remembered the company being administered by the *Junta de Administración y Vigilancia de Bienes del Enemigo* after Mexico had entered the war against Germany in May 1942. Given these circumstances, the work environment for Casanova Rius turned out to be surprisingly friendly. Among his colleagues he remembered Dr. Walther Albers, the head of the scientific department at the *Casa Bayer* who not only had belonged to the *Casino Alemán* but was classified by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* as a card carrying and active member of the Nazi party (NSDAP) in Mexico.<sup>255</sup> But such political oppositions did not overshadow Casanova Rius’ recollections of his work with the *Bayer* company in Mexico City:

I was a Spanish republican *asilado*, technically we were enemies, the Germans and I, precisely because of my background. Among the

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Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/058, p. 57.

253 See e.g. the report “Nazi organizations in Mexico” (17 Aug 1943) by the US embassy at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, s. fol.

254 The involvement of the business elite can be traced by comparing the membership list of the *Casino Alemán*, dated 1st June 1936, with a register of German business properties compiled by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* in May 1942; see BAL, NS19/4057, fols. 27-42; and AGN, DGIPS, caja 70, exp. 1, fols. 93-5 and 99-103; cf. also the report on propaganda activities in Mexico City conducted by the German community including the *Casino Alemán* (15 Oct 1941) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 69, exp. 3, fol. 235-6; see also the memo (29 Jul 1942) on the newspaper report in *Novedades* covering the intervention of the Mexican authorities under orders from the new chief of the *Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales*, Lelo de Larrea at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; cf. “La Quinta Columna enfocada por »Alemania Libre«”, *Alemania Libre* I/29 (5 Aug 1942), p. 2; on the expropriation in favour of the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC) see “Das ehemalige Deutsche Kasino”, *Der Deutsch-Mexikaner* I/1 (15 Apr 1943), p. 4.

255 See the membership list of the *Casino Alemán* (1 Jun 1936) at BAL, NS19/4057, fol. 27; see the memorandum of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* (17 Nov 1942) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 87, exp. 1, fol. 147; his NSDAP membership cannot be verified by the membership list (records up until 1939) at BAL, SgY14/16, p. 125.

Germans at *Bayer* I found great friends, and we made great friendships. The Germans here perhaps held a certain sympathy for Hitler and for Hitler's ideas, right?, you will find out about it. But surely they were very capable, very competent people, very straight, very honourable people, not given to politics. And they regarded me as a European, a man who had come from where they came from. [...] And then they saw me as a person who could bring them some ideas, thoughts that were more trustworthy than what they could read or what they were able to know.<sup>256</sup>

Casanova Rius insisted that politics were never any cause for dispute or lasting discord among the workforce at *Bayer*: "I never let go [of my beliefs], we were discussing and debating, and I told them how I felt, what I thought, but step-by-step I convinced myself that those people were great people."<sup>257</sup> And even though he recalled the aerial bombardments of Catalonia during the Spanish Civil War, his memory turned out to be completely de-politicised: "because it shows that it is not the people that divide us from one another, but often the governments and the manipulation by governments which results in two people either being good friends or mortal enemies."<sup>258</sup> Casanova Rius may have enjoyed an unusually harmonious working relationship with the ex-patriate German community in Mexico City, as others recalled not only acrimonious but also long-standing ideological conflicts with the ex-patriate community in Mexico City. The German actress Brigitte Alexander accepted a job as a translator with the German company *Siemens*, and, speaking in 1993, painted an entirely different picture of her working environment in Mexico City which after the end of the Second World War could still erupt into ideological conflict, even violence:

[...] I recall that there was a Nazi in the company, and he said to me: »All that about the concentration camps and all that nonsense«, he said to me, »all that has been filmed in Hollywood. It's not true. No way that existed!« And that made me so angry that I attacked him with one of the steel drawers – I could have killed him. So there were a lot of Nazis here, with conviction, and still today they are convinced [Nazis]. And still today they are convinced that they have won the war.<sup>259</sup>

Thus, below a pragmatic arrangement of cooperation in the workplace between the ex-patriate communities and the anti-fascist political refugees, there existed

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256 Interview with Pascual Casanova Rius (conducted by Dolores Pla, Aug 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/041, p. 148-9.

257 Ibid., p. 149.

258 Ibid., p. 153.

259 Brigitte Alexander in "Flucht nach Mexiko. Deutsche im Exil", directed by Gertrude Boehm (Goethe-Institut / SFB, 1994), min. 41:30 – 42:18.

the potential for a broad spectrum of interactions, ranging from heartfelt friendship to bitter enmity: Casanova Rius stayed in employment with the German company *Bayer* for 34 years and enjoyed lavish treats and even a two-month trip to Europe and the *Bayer* headquarters in Germany courtesy of the company – something that impressed him immensely and clearly shaped his memory of and attitude towards his employers.<sup>260</sup> Alexander, on the other hand, had lost family and friends during the national-socialist campaign of mass murder of the European Jews, and she never contemplated returning to Germany after the war: “I could not, I did not want to return to Germany. I never contemplated returning to Germany. [...] I am not really able to forgive [the murder of friends and family members]. I have many German friends with whom I have good relations, but I simply don’t want to go there. [...] I am not really able to forgive. Though fifty years have passed now [...] for me it is impossible to forgive or forget.”<sup>261</sup> Such personal trauma made it impossible for her to develop any constructive relationship with those members of the German ex-patriate community in Mexico City who had expressed their loyalty with and support for the Nazi reign of terror in Europe and continued to harbour resentment and refused to face the facts of national-socialist crimes after the war.

Possible areas of contact with the ex-patriate communities in Mexico City extended beyond the workplace. Across the city, both Spanish and German bars and restaurants represented semi-public spheres of politicised urban spaces that could make it difficult for the newly arriving political refugees to navigate the cityscape successfully. From the early days of exile in Mexico City, conflicts over such spaces of sociability seemed unavoidable. On the 12 July 1939, the *cantina* “La Reforma” at calle 16 de Septiembre on the corner with calle Bolívar in the historic city centre was the site of a minor dispute which, nevertheless, offers an insight into the politicised nature of urban space: the reporting agent of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* intended to interview a group of recently arrived Spanish republicans when they complained about a humiliation they had suffered from the owner of the *cantina* “La Reforma”. They had been asked to leave the Pullman seats of the establishment, as those would not be given to clients drinking beer. While the government agent investigated with the owner of the locale, Antonio González Blanco, he, at first, denied any involvement with the actions of his waiters, although it eventually emerged that he had instructed them to deny those seats to the Spanish refugees “who, most certainly, are not welcome because they belong to the government of the Spanish Republic.” González Blanco was instructed to present himself to the *Secretaría de Gobernación* the following morning for questioning. Though it remains unclear what consequences, if any, this incident had for him, a note on the report indicates that the name of the

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260 Interview with Pascual Casanova Rius (conducted by Dolores Pla, Aug 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/041, pp. 151-4.

261 Brigitte Alexander in “Flucht nach Mexiko. Deutsche im Exil“, directed by Gertrude Boehm (Goethe-Institut / SFB, 1994), min. 1:19:32 – 1:21:21.



proprietor of the *cantina* “La Reforma“ was, in fact, Santiago Gutiérrez Farell.<sup>262</sup> That belated information might have been an attempt to distract from the fact that Antonio González Blanco was not only a member of the Spanish immigrant community (and a naturalised Mexican) but also a long-standing member of the *Falange Española* in Mexico City, both in March of 1938 and still in June of 1939 after the fascist organisation had been banned in Mexico in April of that year.<sup>263</sup> The dispute over the Pullman seats in the *cantina* “La Reforma”, thus, illustrated the continuing conflict over European politics and the polarisation of urban spaces between the followers of fascism and the newly arrived anti-fascist refugees. The US embassy was under no illusion as to the continuing activities of the underground *Falange* organisation and followed closely the attempts by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* to stop the political activities of the Spanish fascists in the city.<sup>264</sup> After the Mexican declaration of war against Germany in May 1942, the *Secretario de Gobernación* himself, Miguel Alemán Valdés, took the unusual step to invite the clandestine representative of the Franco regime in Mexico, Augusto Ibañez Serrano, for a conversation in his offices on the 24 June. Alemán made it clear to Ibañez that the Mexican government was aware of the continuing activities of the *Falange* and in possession of comprehensive information concerning its membership and principal officers, and while wishing for amicable relations with the Spanish business community in Mexico he insisted that the *Falange* activities stop immediately before more drastic steps by the Mexican authorities would need to be taken.<sup>265</sup> In response to this conversation, Eulogio Celorio Sardo and Felipe Yurrita Casanueva, who had long been known to coordinate the illegal activities of the Spanish *Falange* in Mexico<sup>266</sup>, immediately assured Alemán that as of the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 1942 the *Falange* had been “definitely dissolved” and “all its activities were suspended”. They continued to portray the previous activities of the *Falange* as purely social and cultural in character and denied any contacts or alliances with any other political parties operating in Mexico.<sup>267</sup> The intelligence chief of the US embassy, Raleigh A. Gibson, was

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262 Report by Inspector PS-15 (15 Jul 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 81, exp. 4, fol. 86.

263 See the membership list of the *Falange Española / JONS* (29 Mar 1938) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fol. 5; cf. the membership list of the *Falange Española / JONS* (Jun 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fol. 170.

264 See e.g. the personal and confidential memorandum on Spanish Falangist activities (3 Feb 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fols.; the assessment given in this memorandum was rather bleak: “Practically the entire Spanish commercial colony is bound to Augusto Ibañez Serrano. It can be stated without exaggeration that at least 90 % of the Spanish merchants contribute to the Franco cause.”

265 See the summary of the conversation in an intercepted letter by Ibañez Serrano to the Spanish ambassador in Guatemala (25 June 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

266 See the report (8 Jun 1939) at AGN DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fol. 77.

267 See the transcript of the intercepted letter in an extensive, 25-page report on the Spanish *Falange* in Mexico (7 Oct 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Sep-Dec, pp. 6-7.

unimpressed by such reassurances, as he indicated in a memorandum to the US ambassador:

The offer of the Spanish Colony Committee to dissolve the Falange, made to the embassy, was either completely dishonest on their part, or Ibañez Serrano is taking advantage of them. While I would like to believe the latter, I do not.<sup>268</sup>

He quoted an excerpt from Ibañez' letter to the Spanish ambassador in Guatemala as proof that the Spanish ex-patriate colony in Mexico positioned itself not only in opposition to the Spanish republican community of exile in the country, but also in opposition to the US-American government and pro-republican aid organisations in the USA:

The Spanish refugees, who are working to set up a republican government and who assert that they are counting on American aid and are going to return to Spain in a short while, naturally take advantage of these circumstances to work against the old Spanish Colony, by making false accusations, by writing in their periodicals, and by exciting the Spaniards on innumerable occasions, but the Spaniards do not sympathize with them. The refugees, audacious and active in their propaganda, count on large economic elements to easily carry on their work.

Such remarks by Ibañez Serrano left Gibson with the impression that "he is a definite enemy of the United States".<sup>269</sup> Both the Mexican government and the US embassy continued to monitor the activities of the fascist underground within the ex-patriate Spanish colony in Mexico and compiled extensive reports and collections of information about the structure, officers, and activities of the organisation.<sup>270</sup> It thereby emerged that the clandestine organisation of the *Falange* had maintained several regular meeting places, among them an "educational centre" in the Plaza Los Ángeles in the north of the district of *Guerrero*. Meetings of the *Falange* were also observed at the outfitters shop "Hermanos Pardueles" at calle 16 de Septiembre, the furniture store "El Puerto de Vigo" at calle Donceles no. 76, in the department no. 2 of calle Venustiano

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268 The US embassy was also in contact with other members of the Spanish ex-patriate colony, such as Carlos Prieto and Ángel Urraza, who informed Gibson of internal conflicts among the Spanish colony. Urraza even expressed the hope that "Ibañez should be removed, but he was not sure how to accomplish this."; confidential memo by Raleigh A. Gibson (26 Sep 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

269 Memorandum to the US ambassador by Raleigh A. Gibson (31 Aug 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

270 See the report by Francisco Blasco de Moreda (21 Oct 1942) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fols. 552-7; the report on the Spanish *Falange* in Mexico (7 Oct 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Sep-Dec, s. fol.

Carranza no. 46, and in the building of calle Mesones no. 127 (the domicile of Eulogio Celorio), all in the historic city centre. After the Mexican declaration of war against Germany, however, it seemed unclear to what extent the *Falange* was still active in the city, as the new circumstances “may perhaps have suggested greater discretion in their actions to those attending those places.”<sup>271</sup> The Spanish communist periodical *España Popular* suspected that fascist meetings still took place at calle 5 de Febrero no. 37-5, just two blocks away from Celorio’s domicile.<sup>272</sup> The clandestine organisations of the Spanish *Falange* in the city included a secret youth organisation by the name of *Punto Azul* directed by the Jesuit Padre Mariano Cuevas who lived at calle Manuel María Contreras in the district of *San Rafael*.<sup>273</sup>

But the role of the clandestine structure of the *Falange* in the city also appeared to have direct impact on public spaces where symbols of political loyalties became the object of a conflict over the hegemony over the politicised public. In 1943, on the occasion of the Mexican Day of Independence, the 16<sup>th</sup> of September, Spanish republican flags had been flown side-by-side with Mexican flags in order to demonstrate the continuing commitment of the Mexican government to the Spanish republican cause. Members of the Spanish *Falange*, however, used this opportunity to interfere with the symbolic politics in the street. As the Mexican organisation in support of the European anti-fascist refugees FOARE complained:

The Falangists undertook to:

- a. buy in the shops all the Spanish republican flags produced to be sold and go on and destroy them so that the colours of the Spanish democracy should not shine in the streets together with the other countries.
- b. steal the Spanish republican flags during the night which together with the Mexican flag were flying off the balconies of houses inhabited by democratic Spaniards.
- c. bribe some people so that they would steal the Spanish republican flags which some car owners displayed because of the festivities of the Mexican independence.<sup>274</sup>

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271 Report by Francisco Blasco de Moreda (21 Oct 1942) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fols. 556-7; cf. The probable source of that information was: “Falange española en México. Como está organizada”, *España Popular* I/42 (14 Dec 1940), p. 6; and “España Popular denuncia a la quinta columna nazi-falangista en México”, *España Popular* III/94 (7 Jul 1942), pp. 1&3.

272 “España Popular denuncia a la quinta columna nazi-falangista en México”, *España Popular* III/94 (7 Jul 1942), p. 3.

273 See the report on *Punto Azul* in the extensive “Intelligence Survey of Spanish Activities” (20 Jun 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, pp. 7-8.

274 “Cínicamente la Falange trabaja en México”, *España Popular* IV/157 (8 Oct 1943), p. 3.

Such petty political sabotage did not amount to more than a symbolic gesture and counted for little when compared with the prominent public presence of the Spanish republicans in the city. A meeting at Ibañez Serrano's home in January 1944 also seemed to indicate that developments in Spain were beginning to have an impact on the organisation of the *Falange*. The meeting of the Spanish fascists in Mexico City reflected the crisis of the Spanish dictatorship of Franco under the impact of the Soviet victory at Stalingrad, the fall of Mussolini in July 1943, the extraction of the *División Azul* from the Eastern Front, and a disastrous economic development which prompted the return of Spanish foreign policy to "strict neutrality". The monarchic faction within the dictatorship was gaining influence. It also signalled an end to the radical fascist orientation of Franco's dictatorship in favour of a more moderate approach which would allow the regime to survive the inevitable downfall of German and Italian fascism. The Spanish fascists in Mexico had received an emissary from Madrid, Raimundo de la Fraga, and a confidential report gave an almost verbatim version of that meeting:

Ibañez Serrano stated that the circumstances required a change in the political inspiration of the *Falange*. De la Fraga then spoke: »The *Falange* as we all know it has suffered in comprehensible failure in Spain. This failure is attributed to the indifference of the Army and the war which Spanish capitalism has declared against it. We are losing followers every day. I propose that you authorize me, following the instructions I possess, to propose the creation of a Monarchic *Falange*, and that you support same.« These statements were received with surprise [...] Ibañez Serrano intervened, stating that this was not the time for dissention [sic] but for agreement, and that the future of Spain required obedience to the orders received through de la Fraga. As a result, two groups were created, one called Monarchic *Falange*, whose chief is Ibañez Serrano, and the other, called *Falange Sindical Nacionalista*, to be headed by Eugenio Álvarez Cano. At the end of the meeting, Sr. Cano stated that funds from the German organizations camouflaged in Mexico would be available to carry on the work he was going to assign [to] them.<sup>275</sup>

Even though the momentum of the fascist politics of the *Falange* appeared to have been slowed down, its representatives, such as Augusto Ibañez Serrano, remained in the focus of surveillance by local intelligence services.<sup>276</sup> By October 1945, Ibañez Serrano had handed over his unofficial representation of the Franco regime in Mexico to Germán Baraibar and moved his offices into the Portuguese embassy at calle Anatole France in the district of *Polanco*.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Confidential report by Cantwell C. Brown (15 Jan 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

<sup>276</sup> See e.g. the extensive memorandum on Augusto Ibañez Serrano and his activities (25 Oct 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

The politicisation of public spaces also extended to the German community of ex-patriates and their establishments of bars and restaurants. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1943 the Mexican police was called to an incident at the restaurant “Renania” at calle Industria no. 123 in the district of *Escandón* in the south-west of the city. A Mexican guest, Manuel Fávila, had entered into a political argument with some of the other guests and complained to have been physically assaulted by some other guests of German nationality. The press reported a dispute between Fávila who argued the case of the anti-Nazi alliance of the United Nations while his opponents responded with shouts of “Heil Hitler!” and physically expelled him from the locale.<sup>278</sup> The *Secretaría de Gobernación* picked up on such reports and investigated the restaurant “Renania” which was owned by Wilhelm Dohle, a card-carrying member of the German Nazi party in Mexico since February 1938 who was reported as “a very violent character” and a “Nazi of action”. His reputation originated from an investigation into a violent assault against Pablo Neruda, at the time consul general of Chile in Mexico, which had occurred in Cuernavaca on 28<sup>th</sup> of December 1941. The *Secretaría de Gobernación* noted Dohle’s presence in Cuernavaca at the time of the attack.<sup>279</sup> When in early September 1942 a group of 41 ex-patriate Germans were transported as “enemy aliens” from Toluca to the internment camp of Perote by inspectors of the *Secretaría de Gobernación*, they stopped over in the Mexican capital at Dohle’s restaurant for about an hour before proceeding to their destination.<sup>280</sup> Dohle also had previously engaged in heated arguments at the *Cervecería Alemana “Fritz”*, sometimes referred to as “La Palma”, located at the corner of Avenida Chapultépec and calle Dr. Carmona y Valle on the northern edge of the district of *Hidalgo* and owned by Fritz Henninger, a fellow Nazi activist.<sup>281</sup> The Mexican government agent who investigated Dohle’s restaurant, however, was unable to make out any political conversations or pro-Nazi statements by the guests of the restaurant “Renania” and absolved Dohle of any Nazi sympathies.<sup>282</sup>

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277 See “Descarada actuación de los falangistas en México”, *España Popular* VI/264 (19 Oct 1945), pp. 1&4; cf. “Representante de Franco”, *Tiempo* III/78 (29 Oct 1943), p. 9; on Baraibar’s mission cf. Clara E. Lida: *México y España en el primer franquismo, 1939-1950. Rupturas formales, relaciones oficiosas* (México, D.F., 2001), pp. 50-2.

278 See „Incalificable provocación de los Nazis en México”, *Alemania Libre* II/9 (1 May 1943), p. 2.

279 See the NSDAP membership list at BAL, SgY14/16, p. 132rev.; see the memo on leading Nazi activists in Mexico at AGN, DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fol. 30.; cf. “Un atentado audaz de la quinta columna en México. La agresión nazi a Pablo Neruda”, *España Popular* III/82 (3 Jan 1942), pp. 1 & 4; on the attack on Neruda in Guernavaca see also: Mario Casasús: *Pablo Neruda en Morelos, 1941-1966* (Morelos, México, 2016), pp. 8-17.

280 See the report by Inspector num. 112 (29 Sep 1942) at AGN, DGIPS, caja, 94, exp. 13, fol. 11.

281 On Henninger, see *ibid.*; cf. the short memorandum in a list of suspect enemy nationals in Mexico (6 Aug 1940) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 2; Henninger did not conceal his political persuasion, see the memorandum on Fred G. Ahns (14 Jun 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, s. fol.

282 See the report by Inspector PS-1 (30 Jun 1943) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 70, exp. 2, fol. 106-7.

But such incidents were indicative of a far broader network of ex-patriate spaces in the city that supported a social and political structure of followers of European fascism. One of the most notorious places was the *Cantina Luz* located on the corner of calle Veustiano Carranza and calle Gante in the historic city centre. Repeatedly, the *Secretaría de Gobernación* received reports of gatherings of Germans, Spaniards, and Mexicans „almost daily, around 11 pm“ which was suggestive of a well-established transnational subculture of fascism in the city.<sup>283</sup> At that time, the bar was owned by Antonio Weingartshofer, an Austrian immigrant who was a notorious and prominent promoter of national socialism in the city. On 5<sup>th</sup> March 1940, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the annexation of Austria by Nazi-Germany, Weingartshofer and seven other „representatives of the old Austrian colony in Mexico“, among them Hans Baumgartner, owner of a German bookshop in calle República de Uruguay no. 10<sup>284</sup>, and Karl Merk, representative of *Deutz Otto Engines* in calle Gante no. 17 (across the street from the *Cantina Luz*), had placed a note in the metropolitan daily newspaper *El Universal* to the effect that the Austrian community celebrated the incorporation of Austria, „our beloved little fatherland“, into the German *Reich*. The signatories continued with their „profound gratitude towards the Führer Adolf Hitler, chancellor of Greater Germany, for having liberated the great German people from the sharp claws of foreign plutocrats. Now and forever we are with him!“<sup>285</sup> The anti-capitalist diction of this statement reflected the era of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement between Nazi-Germany and the USSR. Weingartshofer also owned the restaurant “Antonio“ on the corner of Avenida Insurgentes and calle Niza directly opposite the US embassy, and his activities did not escape the attention of the intelligence unit of the US embassy.<sup>286</sup> Of similar interest to the Mexican authorities was the restaurant “Franz“ at calle de López no. 13 (in the heart of the Spanish republican community in the city), a place that

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283 Report by Juan Sánchez de Tagle (1 Jul 1942) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fol. 544; see also the instructions to investigate the *Cantina “Luz”* and several similar locations, signed by “Andres Span” (10 May 1944) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 101, exp. 26, fol. 31.

284 See e.g. the report on a raid of Baumgartner’s bookshop by the Mexican police, confiscating 450 books (3 Jun 1942) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 119, exp. 60, fol. 4. Baumgartner was a member of the Nazi party since 1938, and described by the US intelligence as a „Gestapo agent“ and „extremely active in the way of propaganda“ and for German intelligence, see the short summary (1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; cf. also the report „Nuevas actividades de espionaje nazi“ (4 Mar 1942) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 124, exp. 18, fols. 1-2; see also the evidence that Baumgartner sent some publications to the Mexican president Ávila Camacho in April 1941, probably to demonstrate the harmless character of his activities, at AGN, fondo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1141, exp. 704/132.

285 See a copy and related memos at AGN, DGIPS, caja 18, exp. 9, fols. 4, 7, 14.

286 The US embassy’s intelligence records show him as a suspected Gestapo agent in Mexico; cf. the list of enemy alien suspects (7 Jul 1940) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; See also the memo on Weingartshofer (3 Dec 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; an additional note referred to Weingartshofer’s son as the owner of the *Cantina Luz* and reported Antonio Weingartshofer as “dead for several years”.

had an established reputation as “a known hang-out for pro-Nazi Germans.”<sup>287</sup> The owner was Franz Tercel, an Austrian immigrant who had arrived in Mexico in 1924. The restaurant closed regularly at midnight, but German-speaking customers were observed to stay on regularly and draw attention to themselves by loudly singing German songs and „causing scandals“ in the neighbourhood so that on a number of occasions the police needed to intervene.<sup>288</sup> Tercel was described by the intelligence unit of the US embassy as a „minor agent“ who had recently returned from a journey to Germany via Japan and was formerly employed by the German Nazi party in Mexico.<sup>289</sup> The embassy sent an agent to the restaurant to investigate, but the agent described a secretive place where the waiters did not seem to know the last name of their employer who evidently feared to be included in the „black list“ of enemy businesses to be closed, boycotted, or administered by the Mexican authorities. Most guests appeared to him European, „particularly Austrian and Hungarian“ while „none looked to me as German“. The agent finally noted a familiar face among the customers, „an Austrian refugee who used to live in the San Juan de Letrán building where we have our office.“<sup>290</sup>

Evidently, the intelligence agents of the US embassy were sensitive to any indications that foreigners in the city, be it followers of European fascism or those fleeing from it, were monitoring their activities. In the process, the distinction between fascist and anti-fascist political persuasions could become astonishingly blurred, since the US intelligence occasionally made use of the term “Communazi” to characterise all anti-liberal movements of the far-right or the far-left which were deemed undemocratic.<sup>291</sup> Among the followers of the anti-fascist exile organisation *Alemania Libre* the US-American agents suspected a clandestine network of national socialists. Some scepticism, however, regarding the categorisations by the US embassy intelligence seems to be appropriate when such “nazi sympathizers” included members of the *Centro Israelita*, such as Wilhelm Dipner, Walter Neuhaus, or Ernesto Meyer Kugelmann.<sup>292</sup> Assessments

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287 Memo on Fred G. Ahns (14 Jun 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, s. fol.

288 See the report by Enrique González Chao (21 Oct 1942) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 89, exp, 14, fol. 86.

289 See the short summaries on „minor agents“ (1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

290 Report by „F.“ (9 Jan 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; The central offices of US intelligence in the city were identified by Stephen Niblo at the Hotel “María Cristina” at calle Río Lerma no. 31 in the district of *Cuauhtémoc*, see: Stephen R. Niblo: *Mexico in the 1940s. Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (Wilmington, 1999), p. 119; cf. also <http://www.hotelmariacristina.com.mx/historia/> [12 Mar 2018].

291 See the extensive study of FBI surveillance by Alexander Stephan: *Communazis. FBI Surveillance of German Emigré Writers* (New Haven / New York 1995).

292 See the personal dossiers of Wilhelm Dipner (16 Mar 1945), Walter Neuhaus (16 Apr 1945), and Ernesto Meyer Kugelmann (4 Jun 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fols.

of political affiliation could also include cases of “conservative, but sympathizer of Nazis” or even “Nazi, apparently communist”.<sup>293</sup> Some contemporary observers, such as the German writer Gustav Regler, a veteran of the Spanish Civil War who harboured strong anti-Soviet political convictions and was involved in a bitter conflict with the German communists in exile, noticed social contacts between members of the ex-patriate colony and the exile organisation *Alemania Libre* and turned his disgust into bitter satire:

Alemania Libre changed in[to] FFF = Free from Freedom. The influx of former Nazis consequently doubled. The tables at Loza [the social centre of *Alemania Libre* at calle Dr Río de la Loza no. 86] are still segregated between the Jews who are placing bets on the restitution of their property and the Nazis who for a month now are telling dirty jokes about Göring. An ex-officer of the International Brigades is selling sausages and beer. Paper hats are free.<sup>294</sup>

Some locations of the ex-patriate European colonies in the city did, however, offer opportunities for (mainly social) contacts with the anti-fascist refugees, above all in the case of the regional centres of the Catalan and the Basque communities in Mexico City. The most important place for the encounter between republican refugees and the ex-patriate colony of Mexico City was undoubtedly the *Orfeó Català* located in a modest building at calle República de Uruguay no. 49 in the historical city centre.<sup>295</sup> Founded in 1906, the *Orfeó Català* served as the social and cultural centre for the Catalan community in the city. The institution was a key actor during the preparation of the ex-patriate colony for the arrival of the republican refugees, an initiative that was headed by the Mexican FOARE during the spring and summer of 1939.<sup>296</sup> The *Orfeó Català* also established its own *Comité de Ayuda a los Refugiados Españoles* under the direction of José Puig, José Clavería, and Joan Rovira, and offered a first point of contact in the city for the new arrivals.<sup>297</sup> The reasons for the popularity of the *Orfeó Català de Mèxic* for the newly-arrived refugees were of a social, rather than political nature. José Gené best summarised the deep spontaneous affection that many Catalans felt for this urban space that celebrated their national identity:

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293 See the personal dossiers of Albert Hochstrasser Koch (11 Apr 1945) and Leopoldo Burkhart (1 Feb 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fols.

294 Loose and undated leaf, probably written in 1945, from the diary of Gustav Regler: *Sohn aus Niemandland. Tagebücher 1940-1943* (Frankfurt a.M., 1994).p. 524.

295 Generally about the history of the *Orfeó Català* see: Miquel Martí i Soler: *L'Orfeó Català de Mèxic (1906-1986)* (Barcelona, 1989); cf. also Dolores Pla Brugat: *Els exiliats catalans. Un estudio de la emigración republicana española en México* (México D.F., 1999), pp. 251-4.

296 See *ibid.*, pp. 73-7.

297 See the circular letter at AGN, DGIPS, caja 81, exp. 4, fol. 81 (20 Jun 1939); cf. Anna Muria: *Crònica de la Vida d'Agustí Bartra* (Barcelona, 1967). p. 125.



When we arrived, a lot of Catalans arrived, almost all of us went there to the *Orfeó Català*, and, well, the *Orfeó Català* was a place which was very nice, its café, its prices, the rooms and things, it was nice, I was always there, I was also a *socio* there, of the *Orfeó Català*. As a Catalan I felt better there.<sup>298</sup>

Claudio Esteva Fabregat talked about the attraction of such spaces of local identity where the free time after work would be spent: “Everyone dispersed into their own respective constituencies. So that the Galicians went to the *Centro Gallego*; the Asturians to the *Centro Asturiano* [...] the Spain of kingdoms. Everyone started to go to their caves, and then everyone to their tribe [...]”. The Catalan “tribe” appeared to have offered a special environment:

We were at the *Centro Catalán* [*Orfeó Català*], we got to know everyone, the old residents, with very few exceptions, were immediately showing solidarity with all Catalan refugees, unlike in the other [centres]. In the other ones, one maintained the ideological separation between *franquistas* and non-*franquistas*, that is to say, *franquistas* and *republicanos*. The Catalans, the old Catalan residents, they were all *anti-franquistas*, generally. There were exceptions; we counted a few exceptions, but they were very few... They received us in the *Orfeó Català* in a superb way.<sup>299</sup>

The *Orfeó* offered a wide range of social and cultural events, and was a culinary space, too, offering a blend of culture, politics, and sociability. Manuel González Bastante recalled this place as a fixture in the topography of Mexico City where all intellectual interests and a Catalan way of life were catered for:

To that centre, the *Orfeó Català* one went for events, er, which were organized there: round tables, lectures, too, because of all the social centres in exile [...] the most active and which worked with more energy in the cultural field was precisely the *Orfeó Català*. [...] the *Orfeó Català* had a canteen where one would surely eat pretty well, I often went there, but later in the afternoon [...] I was drinking coffee in a room which the *socios* had [...] the lecture hall of the *Orfeó Català* was in a certain way a hall of culture. Groups emerged, one was talking, one was talking about politics, one was talking about art, one was talking about literature, finally one was talking about the things that constitute an expression of intellectual and cultural concerns. And, of course, I went very often to the *Orfeó Català*.<sup>300</sup>

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298 Interview with José Gené (conducted by Concepción Ruiz-Funes, Feb, Mar, Apr 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PFO/10/11, p. 312.

299 Interview with Claudio Esteva Fabregat (conducted by Elena Aub and Enriqueta Tuñón, Jun/Dec 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/ESP29, pp. 130-1.

Generally, the republican refugees felt welcome in this institution of the ex-patriate colony, although they were aware of the extraordinary circumstances: “They accepted us in a very friendly manner. Look, the majority of those who were the *socios* of the *Orfeó Català* welcomed that avalanche, that whole avalanche of refugees, because we arrived like an avalanche, and they welcomed us warmly, that’s to say, they did not reject us, and then we really merged into the rest of them.”<sup>301</sup> But the numerical influx of Catalan refugees into the *Orfeó* was considerable and did cause some tension between the refugees and the old members from the ex-patriate colony. The main interest of the *socios* of the *Orfeó* was to maintain its primary function as a focus for Catalan identity in Mexico above all political divisions which were perceived as a threat to the unity and harmony of the Catalan community. One detail of this policy of limiting the republican influence in the *Orfeó* was the stipulation that the board of directors remained reserved for members of the ex-patriate colony, an act of discrimination against the newly-arrived republican refugees. In December 1940, this problematic situation was resolved by the establishment of a special council of collaborators of the board of directors which effectively co-opted José Andreu Abelló and José Tomás i Piera of the *Ezquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, Francesc Salvat (who later went on to serve as long-standing secretary of the *Orfeó*), and Ignasi Ribera into the board of directors. The office of president, however, remained the exclusive prerogative of the old Catalan colony.<sup>302</sup> The sometimes delicate political atmosphere is best illustrated by the internal debate to what extent the *Orfeó* should engage in the anti-fascist politics of exile. In June 1940, the board of directors had reaffirmed the strictly non-partisan character of the *Orfeó Català* which prevented it from staging a commemoration of the anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> of July 1936, the day that Catalonia resisted the military coup by nationalist and fascist armed forces under the command of Francisco Franco. Given this principal position of the *Orfeó* as a whole, however, the board of directors had explicitly stated that sub-sections of the *Orfeó* would be allowed to participate in such public commemorations. A commemoration was, thus, organised by the group of the *Amics de Catalunya*, dominated by the *Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña* (PSUC), and the ex-councillor of the city council of Barcelona, Jordi Benejam, protested in an open letter to the board of directors against the fact that the choir and the dance group of the *Orfeó Català* had rejected the invitation to participate. The board of directors simply pointed towards the autonomy of the several sub-sections of the *Orfeó*, but the debate revealed fundamental political conflicts which ran through the *Orfeó* in Mexico City as well as involving voices from the Catalan colony in the Mexican

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300 Interview with Manuel González Bastante (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Dec 1987, Jan 1988) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/095, pp. 599-600.

301 Interview with Teresa Armendares de Lozano (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Oct/Nov 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/048, p. 91.

302 See Martí i Soler: *L’Orfeó Català de Mèxic*, pp. 77-8.

provinces.<sup>303</sup> The commemoration finally went ahead at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 1940 (without the participation of the Catalan Choir) but did include the dance group *L'Esbart de Dançaires*, piano recitals, and representations of the Galician and Basque communities in Mexico. The participation of Margarita Nelken, former communist member of the Spanish parliament, as representative of Spain (alongside Aurelio Manrique, director of the National Library, for Mexico) illustrated the political orientation of the event and the organising group of the *Amics de Catalunya*.<sup>304</sup> The *Orfeó Català* remained a welcoming space for the republican refugees and maintained its opposition to the nationalist policies of the Franco government, but its intransigence against attempts to convert this social and cultural organisation into an overtly politicised instrument for the politics of the communist Left (above all, at a time when the USSR maintained its non-aggression agreement with Nazi Germany) would soon lead to a politically motivated split of the Catalan community of exiles in Mexico City.

The *Comunitat Catalana*, a political sub-group of the *Orfeó Català* led by José Tomás i Piera, the composer Baltasar Samper, and the writer Josep Carner, represented the republican commitment of the Catalan community in Mexico since 1941 and maintained links to other Catalan communities across Latin América.<sup>305</sup> It operated from the domicile of the *Orfeó* at calle República de Uruguay no. 49 and attracted attention by staging cultural events at the *Orfeó*.<sup>306</sup> The group *Amics de Catalunya* was an openly pro-communist group dominated by the *Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña* (PSUC) with offices at calle República del Salvador no. 73 in the historic city centre and maintained close links with the Communist Party of Spain (PCE).<sup>307</sup> Its president was José Muni Sala, while José M. Nadal Corral served as secretary of the organisation which maintained transnational political co-operations with other exile organisations beyond the special interests of the Catalan colony, for example attending the foundation of the *Federación de Residentes Anti-Nazifascistas Extranjeros en*

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303 See the exchange of letters and clarifications by the board of directors in: *Actituts i Conductes a L'Orfeó Català de Mèxic* (Mèxico D.F., Sep 1940).

304 See the invitation and the programme of the event (19 Jul 1940) at Orfeó Català de Mèxic, Biblioteca, colecció Activitats 1940-1959, s. fol.; cf. “¡Unidos los pueblos de España, por la Liberación Común! Un homenaje al pueblo Catalán”, *España Popular* 1/23 (1 Aug 1940), p. 3, including a picture of the dance group.

305 See Martí i Soler, *L'Orfeó Català de Mèxic*, pp. 80-2; see also the memorandum on the *Comunitat Catalana* (13 Mar 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

306 See for example the programme of lectures on Catalan history, culture, architecture, and general questions of science during April-June 1942 at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A – 843C (Associations), s. fol.;

307 See the memoranda and reports on the *Amics de Catalunya* of 31<sup>st</sup> of Aug 1944 at USNACP, RG 84 UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.; of 20<sup>th</sup> of Jun 1943 *ibid.* UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, p. 14; of 13 Mar 1945 *ibid.*, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

*México* (FRAEM) in March 1942.<sup>308</sup> At around the same time, on the occasion of the death of the general secretary of the Spanish PCE, José Díaz, the *Amics de Catalunya* chose to call him “our late leader” which illustrated their political loyalties.<sup>309</sup> From this group originated the initiative for the secession of mainly communist Catalans who had encountered increasing difficulties with the leadership of the *Orfeó Català*, and in 1943 they formed the *Casal Català de Mèxic*, located at calle República de Uruguay no. 5 in the historical city centre, just upstairs from the restaurant “Danubio” which enjoyed some popularity among the Spanish exile community.<sup>310</sup> José Puig who had been a director of the *Comité de Ayuda a los Refugiados Españoles* at the *Orfeó Català* led this new centre as president, and José Muni Sala, activist of the *Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña* (PSUC) and former president of the *Amics de Catalunya*, served as secretary general.<sup>311</sup> Beyond the political differences that divided the two camps of the Catalan community in Mexico City, the attraction of the *Casal Català* could, at times, be similar to that of the *Orfeó*, particularly among the younger members of the exile community. Concepción Baixeras belonged to the very youngest refugees in Mexico, having arrived as one of the *Niños de Morelia*, the evacuation transport of children from war-torn Spain in 1937 who had spent their first years at a special boarding school in the city of Morelia in the state of *Michoacán*. After the school closed, many youngsters of this group of evacuated Spanish children arrived in the capital city where, for a while, they found shelter and support in one of the hastily arranged *Casas de Hogar*, organised and financed by the *Comisión Administradora de los Fondos para el Auxilio de los Republicanos Españoles* (CAFARE) which administered the remaining funds of the Spanish aid organization JARE.<sup>312</sup> Baixeras connected with the *Casal Català* through the communist youth organisations which she joined, “those who took care to come and see us and wanting us to do propaganda and all that, those were the communists, the communist youth. I got married to one of them, of course. And... the Catalan issues, because I am Catalan, well, they thrilled me very much, and then we went to the *Casal Català*, we went there often.” And she continued to describe what she remembered best about the location:

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308 See its first public manifesto published in *El Popular* (7 Apr 1942) at BAL, NY4102/54, fols. 1-2.

309 See the letter by the *Amics de Catalunya* to the PCE, as quoted in a memorandum on the *Amics de Catalunya* (31 Aug 1944) at USNACP, RG 84 UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

310 See Martí i Soler, *L'Orfeó Català de Mèxic*, pp. 88-9.

311 See the letter by the *Casal Català* to the US embassy (22 Feb 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800R – Ref, s. fol.; memorandum on the *Amigos de Cataluña* (13 Mar 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

312 On the work of CAFARE see: *Memoria General de la Comisión Administradora de Auxilios a los Republicanos Españoles: 1942-1945* (México D.F., CAFARE, 1945); cf. Aurelio Velázquez Hernández: *La Otra Cara del Exilio: Los organismos de ayuda a los republicanos españoles en México (1939-1949)*, tesis doctoral, Universidad de Salamanca, Facultad de Geografía e Historia (2012), pp. 479-573; id.: “El proyecto de casas-hogar para los niños de Morelia (1943-1948)”, *Tzintzun. Revista de Estudios Históricos* 59 (2014), pp. 139-73.

Look, I am going to give you an idea of the activities that went on there. It was, it was like a kind of restaurant, right? [...] Saturday night, for example, they had dances, and there we went. And on Sunday mornings, this I liked very much, the orchestra *Iberia* played Sardanas, and there were Catalans who were dancing Sardanas, and I liked to go there and watch.<sup>313</sup>

In this way, the regional social centres of the Catalan community in Mexico City served to fuse politics and sociability and became an important topographical focus for the political refugees in the city.

Another important place for the encounter of political refugees and the expatriate colony of Mexico City was the *Centro Vasco* at Avenida Madero no. 6 in the *Centro Histórico* which had originated from the *Asociación Vasca de San Ignacio de Loyola* in 1907 and moved to this address in 1926.<sup>314</sup> Its location on the upper floor of the *Pasaje América*, right next to the famous *Palacio de Azulejos*, placed it at the very heart of the social and commercial life of the city and marked it as an attractive venue for a variety of meetings, banquets, and festivities. At the time of the arrival of the first evacuation transports from Europe, the *Centro Vasco*, together with other places of Spanish sociability in the city, such as the *Orfeó Català*, as well as the mainly Spanish-nationalist *Casino Español* and *Centro Asturiano*, had become the object of a denunciation of illegal gambling, a popular charge against places of sociability that attracted some form of suspicion or hostility from among the metropolitan public. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 1939, a letter to the *Oficina de Gobierno y Trabajo* in the Department for the *Distrito Federal* urged the officials “to put an end here to such immorality, we ask you in the name of our children and of many families who have to suffer the consequences of the tolerance of those disgusting games, and we hope for your attention so that we won’t have to bring our case to the attention of the President of the Republic.”<sup>315</sup> An inspector of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* consequently investigated and found nothing: “Even though having interviewed several persons who are *socios* of the centre in question, and having inspected all annexes of the same, I could not see anything which would give rise to the assumption that in said centre games of the incriminated kind are being played. Furthermore, the locale is open to the public, and it is easy for any person to gain access to all annexes of the same.”<sup>316</sup> To what extent such accusations were connected to the arrival of Spanish refugees during those days of July 1939 remains unclear, but the *Centro Vasco* openly took

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313 Interview with Concepción Baixeras (conducted by Dolores Pla, Jul 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/025, p. 116.

314 See generally Amaya Garritz Ruiz and Javier Sanchiz Ruiz: *Euskal Etxea de la ciudad de México* (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2003), esp. pp. 54-7.

315 As quoted in a memorandum by Cipriano Arriola, Jefe de la Oficina (15 Jul 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 78, exp. 8, fol. 35.

316 Report by Inspector PS-8 (17 Jul 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 78, exp. 8, fol. 36.

a public political position in favour of the republican cause, not least because the right-wing Basques in opposition to Spanish republicanism had long since established their own *Círculo Vasco Español*.<sup>317</sup> In June 1942, the *Centro Vasco* approached the US embassy in an attempt to explore business opportunities for members of the Basque community, and Pablo de Tremoya asked in the name of the *Comisión Pro-Trabajo* of the *Centro Vasco* for the details of US-American businessmen in the city and guaranteed the “industriousness, competence, and honourability” of those it would recommend as well as “the antifascist feelings of the same”.<sup>318</sup> The *Centro Vasco* associated itself closely with the policies of the Basque president in exile in the United States, José Antonio Aguirre, who occasionally visited Mexico and was warmly welcomed at Avenida Madero. In August 1942, Aguirre spoke in the *Anfiteatro “Bolívar”* at calle Justo Sierra no. 16 about the “historical sense of human dignity and liberty among the Basques”, while the communist paper *España Popular* noticed “a profound liberal sense which inspired the legislation and the customs of the Basques throughout history, and as a binding consequence must place this people in opposition to the violent blow and the terror which the *Franquismo* signifies.” His speech, so the paper continued, contained “democratic faith and fervour of unity”, demanded “that all Basques worked every day for the triumph of the democracies and for the liberation of *Euzkadi*”, and was also directed at “the old Basque colonies and at those who have mistakenly followed the *Franquismo*.” The *Centro Vasco* was the natural venue for receptions and a banquet in Aguirre’s honour.<sup>319</sup> On the occasion of the *Fiesta de San Ignacio*, a fixture in the Basque cultural calendar, the *Centro Vasco* stated publicly its “firm, total, and absolute” commitment to “the principles of liberty which we proclaim to be inalienable and which cannot be abandoned without the decline of human dignity.”

In the name of the Basques who neither know how to live without liberty nor infringe upon the rights of others, we proclaim our insoluble union with the cause of democracy.”<sup>320</sup>

When the board of directors changed in September 1942, the out-going president Manuel Mendizábal reassured the Mexican president not only of the respect for the law and the political sovereignty of Mexico but expressed the “pride and satisfaction of conscience in enduring [sacrifices], heart next to heart, together

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317 Cf. Amaya Garriz Ruiz and Javier Sanchiz Ruiz: *Euskal Etxea de la ciudad de México* (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2003), pp. 57-64; cf. on the *Centro Vasco* the intelligence survey on of Spanish activities in Mexico (20 Jun 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, p. 13, which labelled the *Centro* “socialist”.

318 Letter by Pablo de Tremoya to the US consulate in Mexico City (23 Jun 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A-843C, s. fol.

319 „El presidente del Gobierno de Euzkadi, en México”, *España Popular* II/98 (29 Aug 1942), p. 1.

320 *Album Conmemorativo de la Festividad de San Ignacio de Loyola* (Jul 1941), s. p., at AGN, fondo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 187, exp. 135.21/3.

with the Mexican people for such high ideals and generous desires.” The *Centro Vasco* offered a message of unity to the president “in these terrible hours of trials for the liberty of men and of nations.”<sup>321</sup> Since 1943, the periodical *Euzko Deya* was the public voice of Basque republicanism which characterised the position of the *Centro Vasco*.<sup>322</sup> The *Centro's* politics would, however, not be of an unqualified loyalty to the republican cause. Republican centralism, as it manifested itself in the camp of Indalecio Prieto's faction of Spanish socialists, could cause problems for the *Centro Vasco* and led to a certain distance of the *Centro* from the Socialists of the *Centro Republicano Español*.<sup>323</sup> On the other hand, the *Centro Vasco* had little problems with the idea of cooperating with the communists. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 1943, the *Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra*, a communist-dominated charity and lobby group, held its celebratory dinner on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Red Army and the victory at Stalingrad at the *Centro Vasco*. Among the guests were prominent members of the transnational group of left-wing intellectuals in the city, such as the president of the *Colegio de México* Alfonso Reyes, the Catalan writer Josep Carner, the Austrian journalist Bruno Frei, the Czech writer Egon Erwin Kisch, the German writer Anna Seghers, the US-American journalist Ralph Roeder, and others.<sup>324</sup> So it is no wonder that outside observers began to take an interest in the *Centro Vasco* which appeared to belong to a network of communist institutions in the Mexican capital. Suspicious individuals were occasionally traced in their activities to the *Centro Vasco*, such as Mario de Páramo Roldán in January 1944 who spent „a considerable amount of time around the Basque Center, Avenida Madero, Mexico City, drinking coffee and philosophizing on how the government of Spain should be run.“ The informer of the intelligence unit of the US embassy added that „subject is a great talker, frequently having little actual information or knowledge as the basis for subjects about which he talks, but his sentiments are apparently pro-Allied“, thus putting the minds of the investigators to rest.<sup>325</sup> The following year, US intelligence watched Martín Vicente Lizaola Arrancudiaga, a respected veteran officer of the Spanish Civil War who worked for the Mexican FOARE which was regarded by the US-American diplomats as being infiltrated

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321 „Los Vascos Agradecidos. Efusiva Carta al Señor Presidente“ (21 Sep 1942) at AEM, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca España en el Mundo s/f I, fols. 7-8; cf. also the note (25 Sep 1942) at AGN, fondo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 450, exp. 437.3/195, s. fol.

322 See e.g. Miguel de Lekuona: “La Monarquía no sería más Democrática que Falange” *Euzko Deya* I/14, p. 3; very few copies of the journal survive, for example at AGN, fondo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 450, exp. 437.3/195; cf. Amaya Garritz Ruiz and Javier Sanchiz Ruiz: *Euskal Etxea de la ciudad de México* (Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2003), pp. 79-83.

323 See for example: „Inquietud en los Centros Hispanos por las Declaraciones de Indalecio Prieto“, *Novedades* (2 Sep 1942).

324 „Intelectuales rinden homenaje a Rusia“, *Ayuda a Rusia. Publicación mensual del “Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra”* II/5 (Feb 1943), pp. 6-7; cf. “Un homenaje a la URSS”, *España Popular* III/119 (29 Jan 1943), p. 3.

325 Memorandum on Mario de Páramo Roldán (10 Jan 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD1895, 820.02T, s. fol.

by communists.<sup>326</sup> Another organisation with which Lizaola collaborated was the *Comité Mexicano de Ayuda a las Guerrillas Españolas* with offices at calle Tacuba no. 18 in the *Centro Histórico*, an organisation in support of clandestine underground activities against the Franco dictatorship in Spain.<sup>327</sup> An investigation into Lizaola “indicated” that he was an active agent for the Basque Communist Party and held an office at the *Centro Vasco*.

This club is a popular meeting place for Spanish Basques in Mexico and as such has a large reading room. Source E was able to obtain copies of all newspapers, magazines, of books in this reading room and none of them could be construed as being communist propaganda.<sup>328</sup>

The fact that another Basque communist, the musician Pedro García Mendizábal, had his copy of *España Popular* delivered to the *Centro Vasco* may also indicate that it was not available in the reading room (the *Centro* itself did not appear on the list of subscribers).<sup>329</sup> Thanks to the anti-communist vigilance of the intelligence unit of the US embassy (and their informers inside the *Centro Vasco*) it is possible to characterise the *Centro Vasco* as a strongly republican venue that opposed Spanish centralism more than it rejected contacts with the international community of communists, but did not – even in the eyes of US-American agents – in any way engage in the proliferation of party political propaganda.

#### **f. New Centres of Political Sociability in Exile**

The politics of exile which surrounded the regional social centres of the Spanish community in exile could take a different turn, as in the case of the *Casa Regional Valenciana* which came into existence on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 1942 as an initiative of the refugee community alone.<sup>330</sup> A meeting in the Café “París” at calle 5 de

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326 See, for example, the report on FOARE (23 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

327 See the report on the *Comité Mexicano de Ayuda a las Guerrillas Españolas* (1 Jun 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

328 Memorandum on Martín Vicente Lizaola Arrancudiaga (24 May 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

329 See the two lists of subscribers to *España Popular* dated 15 Mar 1943 at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, s. fol., and 9 Nov 1944 at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.; see also García Mendizábal’s record at the *albergue* at calle Serapio Rendón no. 125 during 1939/40 at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 121, exp. 6424, fol. 23.

330 See the facsimile reprint of the hand-written minutes of the foundation of the *Casa Regional Valenciana* in: Juan Ignacio Cruz Orozco (ed.): *La Casa Regional Valenciana de México* (México D.F., 2007), p. 56; on the history of the *Casa Regional Valenciana* generally, see: Juan Carlos Pérez Guerrero: „Esplendor, identidad y ocaso de la Casa Regional Valenciana de



Mayo no. 8, just a few meters away from the northern entrance to the *Pasaje América* where the *Centro Vasco* was located, defined the objectives of the *Casa Regional Valenciana* as a vehicle for regional identity and sociability, but also as a resource for economic support and for the provision of job opportunities. One of its first political actions of the *Casa Valenciana* in autumn 1942 was to name the Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho as honorary president of the *Casa Regional Valenciana*, a decision that was taken “by acclamation” on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 1942. In March 1943, the first president and the secretary of the organisation, José Manaút Nogés and José Montañes Serena, made attempts to meet the president personally in order to ask for him to accept the honour, but it took another one-and-a-half years until the next pair of president and secretary of the *Casa Regional Valenciana*, the republican general Francisco Llano de la Encomienda and Rafael Bohorques, were able to meet with the personal secretary of Manuel Ávila Camacho who finally accepted the honour.<sup>331</sup> As much effort as the refugees from Valencia may have invested into their symbolic recognition by the president, they also carefully avoided any politicisation of the *Casa Valenciana*. This did not mean that the leading figures of the *Casa Valenciana* should be in any way considered apolitical: Llano de la Encomienda was an active member of the *Partido de la Unión Republicana* and participated in efforts to organise the *Junta Española de la Liberación* (JEL, an anti-communist republican political alliance inspired by Indalecio Prieto in autumn 1943), and Bohorques was active in the socialist *Unión General des Trabajadores* (UGT).<sup>332</sup> Still, the *Casa Regional Valenciana* concentrated its efforts on the celebration of regional identity and culture. The organisation first maintained offices in Avenida Juárez no. 77 and soon edited the monthly journal *Levante* under the direction of Pascual Aragonés from offices in calle Artículo 123 no. 40 in the district of *Centro*.

The commemoration of cultural celebrities seemed an activity guaranteeing some degree of political neutrality, as on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1943 with a commemoration of the painter Joaquín Sorolla Bastida on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*.<sup>333</sup> Other such cultural events would include a commemoration of Roberto Castrovido and a

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México”, in: *ibid.*, pp. 37-61.

331 See the memorandum on the *Casa Regional Valenciana* and its officers (1 May 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, s. fol.; see the exchange of letters between the *Casa Regional Valenciana* and the *Secretaría Particular* (including Ávila Camacho’s agreement) at AGN, fondo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 116, exp. 130/307, s. fols.

332 About Llano de la Encomienda and the constitution of the JEL see: “Constituyóse ayer La Junta Española de Liberación”, *Excelsior* (27 Nov 1943); on Bohorques, see „Una reunión de gran importancia del a Unión General de Trabajadores de España”, *Adelante* I/15 (1 Sep 1942), p. 3.

333 See the invitation 28 Sep 1943) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 45, exp. 438, fol. 2 and fol. 192.

literary celebration of Vicente Blasco Ibañez in January 1944.<sup>334</sup> By far the most effective way of fostering bonds of regional identity in exile were the feasts and dances, as well as the typical annual festivities of the region, the *Fallas Valencianas*. At first, the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* was the default location for the festivities of the *Casa Regional Valenciana*, for example with a *Baile Homenaje!* on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 1943.<sup>335</sup> Its journal *Levante* reported in detail about the music that was appreciated by the crowd of guests and did not fail to mention that a painting donated by Francisco Marco Chilet (later to become a Mexican cinematic art director) served as a prize in a raffle that was won by the “beautiful daughter of our administrator Sr. Izquierdo”, the auditor of the *Casa Valenciana*, José Izquierdo, who had worked as a bookkeeper for the *Comité Técnico de Ayuda a los Españoles en México* (CTAEM).<sup>336</sup> “The attendance was extraordinary”, the journal concluded, “and the joy and animation was overflowing until the early hours of the morning.”<sup>337</sup> On the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 1944, the *Casa Regional Valenciana* was able to open its permanent social centre at calle Tacuba no. 12 (just opposite the so-called *Palacio de Marmol* at no. 15 where since January 1943 the *Centro Republicano Español* had found its new domicile) with a celebratory dinner and inaugurated its series of social dance events in June.<sup>338</sup> A typical major social event would, thus, be a dance event, such as the one of 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1944 at the *Frontón México* in the district of *Tabacalera*, a sports centre directly opposite the *Monumento a la Revolución* which was regularly used for social and political events.<sup>339</sup> Other social activities included parties of *paella* and song in the nearby countryside of Tlalpan or bullfighting events at the *Rancho del Charro* in the district of *Polanco*.<sup>340</sup> Such conviviality of the *Casa Regional Valenciana*, however, was based on a strict de-politicisation of the organisation to the extent that communists and followers of the last republican government of Juan Negrín were threatened with expulsion from the *Casa Valenciana* if they did not adhere to this strict de-politicisation.<sup>341</sup> The position was clearly stated:

The *Casa Regional Valenciana* does not participate nor will it be represented in any event that contains the slightest hint of politics,

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334 See the press reports (26th and 31st Jan 1944) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 45, exp. 438, fols. 38 & 48.

335 See the invitation at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 45, exp. 438, fol. 1.

336 See his employment record at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 117, exp. 6367, fol. 5.

337 “Baile, en el Bellas Artes”, *Levante* I/2 (3 May 1943), p. 2.

338 See the invitation at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 45, exp. 438, fols. 3 & 5.

339 See the invitation in: Juan Ignacio Cruz Orozco (ed.): *La Casa Regional Valenciana de México* (México D.F., 2007), p. 46.

340 See: „Paella“, *Levante* I/2 (3 May 1943), p. 2; see the programme of a bullfighting event in 1951 at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 45, exp. 438, fol. 54.

341 Juan Carlos Pérez Guerrero: „Esplendor, identidad y ocaso de la Casa Regional Valenciana de México”, in: Cruz Orozco (ed.): *La Casa Regional Valenciana de México*, pp. 41-4.

since we wish for the conviviality in our locale of all sectors which constitute the exile community that belongs to all political parties and unions.<sup>342</sup>

Evidently, political neutrality implied an institutional neutrality of the *Casa Regional Valenciana* while its leading members actively engaged in the political activities of the anti-communist branch of Spanish socialism associated with Indalecio Prieto. The Spanish communists, however, faced a clear policy of exclusion by the *Casa Valenciana*, a position that eventually would only slowly be reversed over time.<sup>343</sup>

Consequently, across the Spanish community of exile in the *Centro Histórico* a complex situation of interaction and ideological polarisation emerged that defies any simple pattern. As Juan Carlos Pérez Guerrero has noticed, the relationship with the existing colony of ex-patriates could imply open hostility against the Spanish republicans, as in the case of the *Casino Español* or, to a lesser extent, the *Centro Asturiano*. Other centres of sociability, such as the regional institutions of the *Orfeó Català* tried to avoid party politics while offering welcoming spaces to the republican refugees, while the *Casal Català* was a new foundation with clearly pro-communist republican priorities. The *Centro Vasco*, unlike the nationalist *Círculo Vasco Español*, followed a similar policy of cooperation with the refugee community, even collaboration with international communism while its direct neighbour, the *Casa Regional Valenciana*, tried to neutralise its communist members. Smaller associations, such as the republican group *El Cuatro Gatos* which catered for the relatively small group of republican refugees from Madrid, limited their activities exclusively to cultural, theatrical, and social events.<sup>344</sup> A general attitude of “open arms” or “hostility” very much depended on the specific social context and personal relationship between the political refugees and the pre-existing ex-patriate communities in the city.<sup>345</sup>

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342 Facs. repr. of a letter by Rafael Bohorques, secretary of the *Casa Regional Valenciana*, to Domerio Mas and Emilio Pérez, representatives of the “Communist faction of the Casa Regional Valenciana” (27 May 1944), in: Cruz Orozco (ed.): *La Casa Regional Valenciana de México*, p. 42.

343 Juan Carlos Pérez Guerrero: „Esplendor, identidad y ocaso de la Casa Regional Valenciana de México”, in: Cruz Orozco (ed.): *La Casa Regional Valenciana de México*, p. 43.

344 Cf. Juan Carlos Pérez Guerrero: „Espacios, dinámicas y discursos en el exilio republicano en México”, *Studia Zamorensia, segunda etapa VI* (2002), pp. 317-35, esp. 332. With regard to the theatrical group “Los Cuatro Gatos” which offered humouristic evenings at the *Centro Republicano Español*, see also the rather critical response “Para que conste: A propósito del »festejo« del Centro Español”, *UGT – Boletín de Información Sindical II/14* (1 Jun 1941), p. 13, which deemed such events as politically inappropriate.

345 See also the recollections of Ramón Esturau Calvo (interview conducted by Dolores Plá, Nov 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/061, p. 149.

In the case of the German-speaking community of political refugees, the political polarisation seemed much clearer and had produced the publicly visible anti-fascism of the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana*, closely aligned with the Mexican trade union *Consejo de Trabajadores Mexicanos* (CTM) and its leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano.<sup>346</sup> During 1938/39 the organisation managed to capture public attention with a series of highly publicised lectures in the prestigious venue of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* about German culture and the threat that fascism posed to the notion of the “true German culture”. The transmission of these lectures via the broadcasting station of *Radio Nacional* contributed to its public impact as did its short-lived monthly periodical that first appeared in March 1942, *Europa bajo el Fascismo*, which transported reports about the situation in German-occupied Europe as well as news of acts of resistance.<sup>347</sup> The organisation maintained an office at calle Ramón Guzmán no. 125 in the district of San Rafael between November 1940 and March 1943, but never achieved the status of any of the Spanish social centres.<sup>348</sup> Its presence thereby remained ephemeral and failed to leave a lasting impact on the urban topography of exile in the capital city. Other organisations of the smaller nationalities in exile faced similar problems which simply related to a lack of resources.

Under such circumstances, the area of cultural activities could still have an impact on the political culture of the city. A crucial moment in the development of the non-Spanish, mostly central-European communities of exile in the city arrived in the autumn of 1941. In order to establish an organisational base that could rival the still existing openly pro-fascist institutions of the German ex-patriate colony, the German community of exile established a cultural society which would, during five years, set the tone of cultural politics of the German-speaking exile community. A meeting at the home of the Austrian musical director Ernst Römer at calle Concepción Beistegui no. 106 in the district of *del Valle* is said to have taken place in October 1941 before a first formal inaugural meeting at the *Editorial Séneca* at calle Varsovia 35-A in the district of *Juárez* constituted the *Heinrich-Heine-Club*, a cultural society dedicated to the presentation of literature, science, theatre, and music.<sup>349</sup> The first meeting at the private home of Ernst

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346 Generally see: Fritz Pohle, *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 83-200; id.: „Der deutsche Widerstand in Mexiko 1937-1939: die »Liga für deutsche Kultur«, *Anuario del Instituto de Investigaciones Interculturales Germano-Mexicanas A.C.* (2006), pp. 96-105.

347 See, e.g., the first edition of *Europa bajo el Fascismo. Informaciones mensuales de la Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana en México* I/1 (Mar 1942) at BAL, Nachlaß Paul Merker, NY 4102/54, fols. 4-11.

348 See a letter by Heinrich Gutmann to Karl Kautsky (11 Nov 1940) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 18884/5, s. fol.; report by Manuel M. Barrera (25 Mar 1943) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 205, exp. 6, fol. 1.

349 See Rudolf Fuerth-Feistmann: „Die Geburt des Heine-Klubs“, in: *Heines Geist in Mexiko*, ed. by Heinrich-Heine-Klub (México D.F., 1946), p. 11; „Heinrich-Heine-Club in Mexico“, *Freies Deutschland* I/1 (Nov 1941), p. 28; cf. Pohle, *Das mexikanische Exil*, pp. 127-9; the club at

Römer and his wife Irma took place in a house which had acquired the nick-name of “Salon Römer”, a prominent place of German-speaking intellectual sociability with a distinctly Viennese flair, as the Austrian writer Bruno Frei recalled it:

Usually one dreams in bed. In Mexico people gathered around a table to dream together. The lady of the house, a Viennese, may surely not have thought of the famous salons of literary history when she welcomed the curious characters to her home who – almost without money in their pockets and completely without any in the bank – held their heads as high as if they were active members of government or at least state secretaries. The house of the musical director R. was frequented by doctors, merchants, industrialists who settled in Mexico after having been expelled from the land they were born and their fathers are buried. At the table of R. the most audacious dreams could be dreamt without anyone taking offence.<sup>350</sup>

One of those dreams was the German cultural society *Heinrich-Heine-Club* which was constituted at José Bergamín’s *Editorial Séneca* on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 1941. The core group of the *Club* consisted of the president, the German writer Anna Seghers, and the Austrian Leo Deutsch, the German poet Paul Mayer, the communist writer Bodo Uhse, and the German cardiologist Rudolf Zuckermann. The Czech communist writer Egon Erwin Kisch and Ernst Römer himself acted as vice-presidents. The US-American writer Ralph Roeder communicated greetings of the US-American *League of American Writers and Save the Refugees Committee*.<sup>351</sup> At first, the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* relied on different venues for its activities, such José Bergamín’s *Editorial Séneca*, but also used a hall at calle Antonio Sola no. 61 in the district of *Condesa* where Anna Seghers presented excerpts from her new novel “The Seventh Cross”, soon an international best-seller, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 1941.<sup>352</sup> From April 1942, the club was able to use a small theatre hall in the *Casa Schiefer*, a vendor of musical instruments, at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21 in the historical city centre. Other locations included the theatres of the unions of the electrical workers at calle Artes no.45 in the district *Tabacalera* and of the cinematographic workers’ union at Calle Orozco y Berra no. 15 in the district of *Guerrero*.<sup>353</sup> The theatre at the *Casa Schiefer*,

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first used the address of the *Editorial Séneca* as its mailing address, see: “Die Gründung des Heinrich-Heine-Clubs”, *Freies Deutschland* I/2 (December 1941), p. 2; cf. also Merker, *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika* (1965) at BAL, Nachlaß Paul Merker, NY4102/6, fol. 489-94.

350 Bruno Frei: *Der Papiersäbel. Autobiographie* (Frankfurt a.M., 1972), pp. 242-3.

351 *Freies Deutschland* I/2 (Dec 1941), p. 30.

352 *Heines Geist in Mexiko*, ed. by Heinrich-Heine-Klub (México D.F., 1946), p. 25.

353 For example the first performance of the “Three Penny Opera” by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 1943 at the *Teatro de los Electricistas* and film showings during 1945 at the *Teatro de los Cinematografistas*, cf. *Heines Geist in Mexiko*, ed. by Heinrich-

however, soon came to be the most important meeting place of the German-speaking anti-fascists in exile with a series of political and cultural lectures, commemorative events, literary recitals, theatre performances, and musical evenings.<sup>354</sup> It appears that the owners of the *Casa Schiefer* were actively supporting the cultural and political activities of the German communists in exile, although they had also been involved in the cultural life of the German ex-patriate community at the *Casino Alemán* while it was promoting right-wing nationalism during the 1930s.<sup>355</sup> The venue was also used by other left-wing antifascist organisations, such as the *Acción Austriaca Republicana en México* (ARAM) which maintained close links with the German-speaking Jewish community as well as the communist community of refugees or the Basque division of the Spanish communist party (PCE).<sup>356</sup> The building of the *Casa Schiefer* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21 overlooks the southern end of calle Gante in the *Centro Histórico* and was therefore located directly opposite Antonio Weingartshofer's *Cantina "Luz"*, the regular meeting place for German, Spanish, and Mexican fascists in the city.<sup>357</sup> The corner of calle Venustiano Carranza and Gante thus marked a geographically extremely condensed focus for the ideological polarisation of urban space between the European anti-fascist (and largely communist) refugees and the transnational fascist underground in the city.

The foundation of the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* did not occur in isolation but represented the opening of intensified activities of the communist-dominated communities of European political refugees in the city. The date of the 7<sup>th</sup> November 1941 had symbolic implications (irrespective of whether or not the first meeting of the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* at the *Editorial Séneca* actually took place<sup>358</sup>): the day marked the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian October Revolution as well as the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the legendary Defense of Madrid where republican forces had successfully defended the Spanish capital against the advance of Francoist forces in 1936. At a time when German forces were still advancing on Moscow in November 1941, the underlying political significance of the meeting (which was accompanied by the simultaneous launch of the German

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Heine-Klub (México D.F., 1946), p. 27 & 31.

354 See the full list of events between 1941 and 1946, *ibid*, pp. 25-31.

355 See "Peter Schiefer" in the membership records of the *Casino Alemán* (1 Jun 1936) at BAL, NS19/4057, fol. 39; cf. the records of "P. Schiefer" with the private address of calle Edison no. 20 in the district of *Tabacalera* and the firm of "Hnos. Schiefer" among the membership of *Alemania Libre* at AGN, DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fols. 60 & 61.

356 See for example the Austrian *soirée* of a performance of Nestroy's "Judith und Holofernes" and classical music by Schubert, Mozart, Mahler, and Beethoven on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1943: DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 03637, s. fol., and "Oesterreichische Musik – Oesterreichisches Theater", *Demokratische Post* I/1 (Aug 1943); see also: "El Partido Comunista de Euzkadi ante los problemas del pueblo vasco", *España Popular* VIII/333 (14 Feb 1947), p. 2.

357 Report by Juan Sánchez de Tagle (1 Jul 1942) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fol. 544.

358 Pohle voices some doubts about whether this first constitutive meeting had actually taken place, cf. Pohle, *Das mexikanische Exil*, p. 129.

monthly journal *Freies Deutschland*) would not have been lost on anybody.<sup>359</sup> During those days, the foundation of the German *Heinrich-Heine-Club* was accompanied by a string of similar initiatives by other groups of European political refugees in the city: Less than a week later, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1941, the small group of Italian refugees launched the *Alleanza Internazionale "Giuseppe Garibaldi" per la Libertá d'Italia*.<sup>360</sup> Under the leadership of Francesco Frola as president and Mario Montagnana as secretary, the *Alleanza Garibaldi* published their first manifesto setting out the principles of their politics:

1. [...] The liberation of Italy shall be the work of the Italians themselves. [...]
2. We must openly declare that we are for a regime [...] that will put in practice a substantial democracy aiming at the economic emancipation of the toilers. [...]
3. [...] we do not place ourselves at the service of any foreign power but, while defending Italy, we defend our highest ideal of freedom and justice. [...]
4. [...] We think that the representatives of the toiling classes must form, today, the central nucleus of the Alliance and tomorrow the core of reconstruction.
5. [...] Italy must not be oppressed, neither must it be an oppressor. [...] we shall address an earnest appeal to the free men of France, Spain, and Italy, inside and outside the respective national borders, in order to reach an understanding between the peoples of the Mediterranean countries. [...]
6. We stand for the broadest help and genuine solidarity for the USSR which by its heroic action side by side with the democracies, has made possible the final victory against nazifascism. [...]<sup>361</sup>

The *Alleanza Garibaldi* thereby adopted a position that offered a broad platform for all supporters of the Anti-Hitler coalition while clearly stating their allegiance to the cause of the USSR in pursuit of a “substantial democracy aiming at the

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359 See the short notice on the foundation of the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* in: *Freies Deutschland* I/1 (Nov 1941), p. 28; the date follows from the retrospective account by Rudolf Fuerth-Feistmann: „Die Geburt des Heine-Klubs“, in: *Heines Geist in Mexiko*, ed. by Heinrich-Heine-Klub (México D.F., 1946), p. 11; cf. Pohle, *Das mexikanische Exil*, p. 129.

360 The date follows from a short notice in the organisation’s bulletin some eight months later: “Otto mesi di vita della »Garibaldi«,”, *Bollettino della Alleanza Internazionale "Giuseppe Garibaldi" per la Libertá d'Italia* I/4 (Jul 1942), p. 6.

361 „Il Primo Manifesto“ (12 Nov 1941), *Bollettino della Alleanza Internazionale "Giuseppe Garibaldi" per la Libertá d'Italia* I/4 (Jul 1942), pp. 18-20; quoted after a special English edition sent by the *Alleanza Garibaldi* to the US embassy as an “homage to the people you represent”: *Bulletin of the International Alliance "Giuseppe Garibaldi" for the Freedom of Italy* I/4 (Jul 1942), pp. 17-19, at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A – 843C, s. fols.

economic emancipation of the toilers”. A year later, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 1942, the *Alleanza Garibaldi* held a celebratory banquet on the occasion of its first anniversary, attended by approximately 200 persons, and the sources of the intelligence unit of the US embassy reported that “many of the members and leaders of the organization have socialistic ideals and sympathies, and that the above meeting had a »socialistic and somewhat red« atmosphere.” The support that was displayed for the *Alleanza Garibaldi* on this occasion by representatives of the Mexican governing elite, such as Antonio Villalobos, the president of the governing party PRM, and Heriberto Jara, the Mexican Naval Minister, as well as international guests Ignacio Hidalgo de Cisneros, former chief of the Spanish-republican air force, Pablo Neruda, Chilean consul in Mexico, Indalecio Prieto, former Spanish-republican minister of war, and Ludwig Renn, president of the German movement *Alemania Libre*, was duly noted.<sup>362</sup> The organisation did not maintain a permanent centre for its activities but was directed from the office of Francesco Frola who worked for the Mexican state oil company *Pemex* at calle Donato Guerra no. 1-212 in the north of the district of *Juárez*. Despite its small size, the *Alleanza Garibaldi* had a disproportionate impact on the politics of exile in Mexico City.

Around the 25<sup>th</sup> of November, another small group of European political exiles in Mexico City constituted itself in the Café “París” at Avenida 5° de Mayo no. 8 under the name *Hungria Libre*.<sup>363</sup> Under the presidency of Guillermo Weinstock with Aladár Tamás<sup>364</sup> as its secretary, the organisation dedicated itself to the mobilisation of anti-fascist supporters against the dictatorship of Miklós Horthy and associated itself with the policies of Mihály Károlyi, the first president of the Hungarian People’s Republic of 1919. In September 1941, Károlyi – himself exiled to London – had proclaimed five principles for anti-fascist Hungarian policies in exile to which the Mexican group *Hungria Libre* declared its support:

1. Democracy
2. Land for the people of Hungary
3. To lift the living standards of Hungarian industrial and agricultural workers, middle class, and little people
4. It is necessary to abandon the German orientation and to create cooperation with the democracies of the world and its free peoples.

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362 “Report on banquet given by Alianza Internacional Giuseppe Garibaldi” (19 Nov 1942), at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A – 843C, p. 2.; cf. report on meeting of *Alianza Internacional Giuseppe Garibaldi* by Gus T. Jones (17 Nov 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; see also “Il banchetto in onore dell’ on. Francesco Frola”, *Alleanza Internazionale “Giuseppe Garibaldi” per la Libertá d’Italia II* (Dec 1942), pp. 9-19.

363 See the report by inspector PS-53 (10 Dec 1941) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 87, exp. 1, fol. 113.

364 See the personal dossier on Aladár Tamás (21 Jun 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.



5. To commence war not only against Nazism but also against Horthyism.<sup>365</sup>

From June 1942, the organisation published its own periodical journal *Szabad Magyarország (Hungria Libre)*, edited by Aladár Tamás, and *Hungria Libre* generally maintained close links with other German-speaking circles of communists in Mexico City. By June 1943, *Hungria Libre* had established a modest, but permanent domicile at calle Sultepec no. 34 in the district of *Condesa*, and tried to establish constructive relations with the US-American diplomats in the city.<sup>366</sup>

Three weeks later, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1941, the agents of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* observed the foundation of the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM), the organisation of Austrian republican anti-fascist refugees in Mexico. The meeting took place in the Café “Parque” at Avenida México no. 71 overlooking *Parque México* in the district of *Hipódromo*.<sup>367</sup> Among the decisive personalities behind this initiative were the Austrian socialist Artur Bonyhadi, the first president of the organisation Rudolf Neuhaus, the member of the association *Menorah* of German-speaking Jews in Mexico Dr. Robert Schwarz, the former department chief at the Austrian Ministry of Finance Adolf Rubin, the former university professor in Vienna Emil Volk, and the merchant Hans Zagler. The *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* stated as its aims the liberation of Austria from Nazi terror, the adherence to the principles of the Atlantic Charter, the restoration of the independent Austrian republic and the rejection of any attempts of restoring the Habsburg monarchy, the struggle against Nazi collaborators in Mexico, and the desire not to be treated by the Mexican authorities as enemy aliens (since Mexico had never recognised, in fact always protested against, the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in 1938).<sup>368</sup> One peculiarity about the ARAM was that it continuously needed to distance itself from a small group of Austrian monarchists in Mexico which used the title of *Austria Libre*, or *Free Austria Movement* which led to numerous instances of confusion, particularly when its representative in Mexico, Silvio Pizzarello von

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365 Circular letter by *Hungria Libre* (Sep 1944), as translated in a memorandum on *Hungria Libre* (23 Sep 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, p. 2.

366 See the letter by *Hungria Libre* to the US embassy (23 Oct 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, 843Free Hungarians – 845E, s. fol.; in June 1943 *Hungria Libre* already rented out some rooms to the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México*, cf. the invitation (5 Jun 1943) by ARAM at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 3637, s. fol.

367 See the report by Inspector PS-53 (10 Dec 1941) which also includes the observation of the first meetings of *Hungria Libre* and the *Alleanza Garibaldi* at AGN, DGIPS, caja 87, exp. 1, fol. 113; cf. the invitation to the meeting (28th November 1941) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 03637, s. fol.

368 See the introduction of ARAM to the US embassy (1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800M – 800Ref, s. fol.; see also the memorandum on ARAM (11 Apr 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02T, s. fol.

Helmsburg, presented himself as the official spokesman of an Austrian government in exile.<sup>369</sup> The dubious nature of such claims did not escape the US-American diplomatic services while they stayed very sceptical about the activities of the ARAM which they considered to be under “totalitarian” influence.<sup>370</sup> From June 1943 the ARAM was able to use a permanent centre for meetings at calle Sultepec no. 34 in the district of *Condesa*, the same location that *Hungria Libre* used for its own activities.<sup>371</sup>

According to the recollection of Hans Buttinger, another key organiser of the *Acción Austriaca Republicana en México*, it took another two weeks after the foundation of ARAM on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1941 until the German exile organisation *Movimiento Alemania Libre* was founded just before Christmas of 1941 when the weekly bulletin *Alemania Libre* first appeared.<sup>372</sup> The precise date (Buttinger remembered the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December) is difficult to establish since a monthly journal by the name of *Freies Deutschland/Alemania Libre* existed since November of 1941, and activists, the journal, the weekly bulletin, and the exile organisation used the title in their activities without much differentiation.<sup>373</sup> In March 1943, the intelligence unit of the US embassy compiled a memorandum on the activities of *Alemania Libre* and recorded a report by “one rather well informed individual that the publication is financed by a group of wealthy refugee Jews in Mexico City who formerly would have nothing to do with Communists or Communism.” The informer pointed towards a meeting “some time in late 1941” at the home of Kurt Stavenhagen at calle Cuernavaca no. 95 in the district of *Condesa* where André Simone (alias: Otto Katz) had supposedly persuaded “about fifteen of the wealthiest German-Jews in Mexico” to contribute financially to the communist cause as it would be “the most effective means of securing the downfall of the Nazi regime.”<sup>374</sup> In his memoirs, Paul Merker recalls in rather general terms campaigns of donations and fund raisers, such as public lectures and social events which financed the publication of *Alemania Libre*.<sup>375</sup> The fact that Merker, one of the leading figures of *Alemania Libre* in Mexico, does not specify

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369 On the ambitions of Austrian monarchists to establish an Austrian government in exile see: Gerhardt Plöchl: *Willibald Plöchl und Otto von Habsburg in den USA. Ringen um Österreichs „Exilregierung“ 1941/42* (Vienna, 2007).

370 See for example the exchange of messages between the US embassy in Mexico and the State Department at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 11161, s. fols.; see also the report on “trends of groups of totalitarian inspiration” (23 Jun 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, US2895, 800 – 820.02, p. 4.

371 See “Asamblea de Afiliados”, *Austria Libre* II/5 (Jun 1943), p. 3; cf. also the invitation (5 Jun 1943) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 3637, s. fol.

372 DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 12859 (Gedächtnisprotokoll Bonyhadi, 23 Jun 1977), s. fol.

373 Cf. the report on activities of European communities in exile by Inspector PS-53 (10 Dec 1941) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 87, exp. 1, fol. 113, which already mentions the foundation of *Alemania Libre* “directed by German communist refugees”, but it is unclear whether this report referred to the exile organization or to the monthly journal of the same name.

374 Memorandum on “Free Germany Movement” (26 Mar 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, p. 2.

a date of the foundation of the political movement of *Alemania Libre* but only mentions a “preliminary committee” active during the months of December 1941 until May 1942 may illustrate some caution, since the formation of *Alemania Libre* in Mexico considerably pre-dated the formation of the *National Committee Free Germany* in Moscow in July 1943.<sup>376</sup> In February 1942, the organisation communicated its programme to the Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho as follows:

1. Against Hitler – for a free Germany
2. For a union of all free Germans and their organisations without distinction of race, religion or party.
3. For the defence of democracy – for the defence of the nation the hospitality of which we enjoy.
4. For the victory of the Allies over the Axis powers. In support of the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, China, and all nations which signed the Washington Pact.
5. In support of the liberation movement inside Germany; for the union of the German people to topple the Hitler regime.
6. For the right of self-determination of all nations. In support of the liberation movement of the nations subjugated by Hitler. For the collaboration with the democratic movements of all nations.
7. For the eradication of the fifth column and the breaking of the influence of nazi organisations abroad.
8. In defence of the authentic German culture and for the rehabilitation of German prestige ruined by Hitler it is proposed to denounce and punish the crimes of nazism against the German people and all nations of the world.<sup>377</sup>

Due largely to an initial lack of resources the organisation was unable to establish a permanent centre for its activities until October of 1943 when the *Haus der Freien Deutschen* (The House of the Free Germans) was formally inaugurated at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 86 on the northern edge of the district of *Hidalgo*, at a

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375 Cf. Merker, *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika* (1965) at BAL, NY4102/6, Nachlaß Paul Merker, fols. 466-7.

376 Cf. Merker, *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika* (1965) at BAL, NY4102/5, Nachlaß Paul Merker, fols. 25-32; cf. “Los Alemanes Libres en México. El Movimiento »Alemania Libre« en México”, *Alemania Libre* I/29 (5 Aug 1942), p. 4, which mentions the programme of *Alemania Libre* as having been published by February 1942.

377 Ludwig Renn's submission of the programme of *Alemania Libre* to the Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho (8 Feb 1942) at AGN, Fondo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1145, exp. 704/297, s. fol.

short distance south of the *Ciudadela* of Mexico City.<sup>378</sup> The organisation edited a number of publications, starting in November 1941 with the monthly political and literary journal *Freies Deutschland*.<sup>379</sup> This publication was swiftly followed by the bi-weekly journal *Alemania Libre* which was targeted at the Mexican public to promote the case of the German refugees across the city. Starting with its 18<sup>th</sup> edition, the journal included a supplement in German, *Der Deutsch-Mexikaner*, which targeted the German ex-patriate community. In August 1943, this supplement turned into an independent bi-weekly, the *Demokratische Post*, which completed the periodical publications.<sup>380</sup> Since 1942, such publications were accompanied by the activities of a German publishing house, *El Libro Libre*, directed by Walter Janka from offices at calle Mérida no. 213 in the district of *Roma* which until 1946 published 26 titles, among them the best-selling novel by Anna Seghers, “The Seventh Cross”.<sup>381</sup>

Such organising activities of the transnational pro-Soviet Left also included the Spanish socialists. At around the same time of the foundation of *Alemania Libre* in December 1941, the faction of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) which maintained its loyalty to the last republican government of Juan Negrín congregated in the domicile of the *Amics de Catalunya*, the pro-communist secession of the Catalan community in Mexico City, at calle República del Salvador no. 73 to constitute the *Círculo Cultural “Jaime Vera”*, named after a prominent founding member of the PSOE in 1879. The meeting of the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1941 was comprehensively documented in the first edition of the affiliated monthly periodical *El Socialista*.<sup>382</sup> The initiators of the *Círculo Jaime Vera* were the socialists Ignacio Ferretjans (who also acted as manager of the periodical *El Socialista*), the UGT activist Juan José Gómez, Ricardo Pinero, Francisco Lucia, and the Galician socialist Edmundo Lorenzo. Apart from the latter, speakers also included the president of the UGT and the PSOE Ramón González Peña, the secretary general of the PSOE Ramón Lamóneda Fernández, and the former member of the Spanish *Cortes* Mariano Moreno Mateo.<sup>383</sup> The foundation of the *Círculo Jaime Vera* occurred one-and-a-half years after the

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378 See „Einweihung des Hauses der Freien Deutschen“, *Freies Deutschland* II/12 (Nov 1943), p. 33; „Haus der Freien Deutschen. Unsere Einweihungsfeier“, *Demokratische Post* I/6 (1 Nov 1943), p. 4; the house was offered to the organisation rent-free by the German-Mexican artist Herbert Hoffmann; cf. Pohle, *Das mexikanische Exil*, pp. 305-8.

379 Cf. Jürgen Noeske: *Freies/neues Deutschland = Alemania Libre: zur Inszenierung von Wirklichkeit in einer Exilzeitschrift* (Bamberg, 1980); María Clotilde Rivera Ochoa: *Estudio de la revista „Freies Deutschland“*. *Órgano de difusión del Movimiento Alemania Libre en México 1941-46* (México D.F., 1987).

380 See Merker, *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika* (1965) at BAL, SAPMO, NY4102/6, Nachlaß Paul Merker, fol. 468-75.

381 Ibid., fols. 475-89; on the publishing house *El Libro Libre* see: Olivia C. Díaz Pérez: “Der Exilverlag El Libro Libre in Mexiko”, in: *Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch*, vol. 22: *Bücher, Verlage, Medien* (München, 2004), pp. 156-79.

382 „Creación del Círculo Cultural Jaime Vera“, *El Socialista* I/1 (Jan 1942), pp. 1-4.

foundation of the *Círculo Cultural "Pablo Iglesias"*, loyal to the anti-communist line of Indalecio Prieto, in April 1940 and marked the deep ideological split among the Spanish socialists in the city between the *prietistas* who met in the *Centro Republicano Español* and the *negrinistas* who, at first, operated in close connection with the *Amics de Catalunya*.<sup>384</sup> Like the Spanish communists, the *Círculo Jaime Vera* publicly celebrated the 16<sup>th</sup> of February as the anniversary of the Spanish *Frente Popular* of 1936.<sup>385</sup>

Some of the smaller national groups in exile operated in close connection with the German community in exile since many of the Czech, Hungarian, or Yugoslavian refugees belonged to the German-speaking minorities of their respective homelands, and close personal ties existed among them. Since January 1942, the Czech *Asociación Checoslovaco-Mexicana* edited a monthly journal under the title *El Checoslovaco en México*.<sup>386</sup> Its offices were located at calle Medellín no. 128 in the district of *Roma*. This small organisation was headed by Carlos Pospíšil, an ex-patriate who had been a member of the right-wing nationalist *Casino Alemán* in 1936, and Jorge Reich (who also edited the journal) as secretary.<sup>387</sup> The following year, both would be replaced by the new president Theodor Schwarz, who actively cooperated with the Austrian republican refugees of the ARAM, and Arpad Weissmann as secretary. Among the new board of directors were Paul Drucker of the German Jewish associations *Menorah* and German-speaking communists such as André Simone (i.e. Otto Katz) and Lenka Reinerová.<sup>388</sup> The building was shared with the movement *Yugoeslavia Libre* which had come into existence on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 1942, the first anniversary of the German invasion of Yugoslavia. A key figure in this organisation was the Yugoslavian communist writer Dragutin Fodor, known under his *nome-de-plume* Theodor Balk, the husband of Lenka Reinerová.<sup>389</sup> The new organisation used the premises of the *Asociación Checoslovaco-Mexicana* for its constituent meeting

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383 Cf. The minutes of the meeting at Fundación Pablo Iglesias, Archivos Particulares, Ramón Lamonedá Fernández, ARLF-169-19, fols. 1-1rev.

384 Cf. the correspondence between the *Círculo Jaime Vera* and the *Amics de Catalunya* at Fundación Pablo Iglesias, Archivos Particulares, Ramón Lamonedá Fernández, ARLF-170-3.

385 "El Dieciséis de Febrero", *El Socialista* I/2 (Feb 1942), p. 4.

386 On the journal *El Checoslovaco en México* see: Magdaléna Trojanová: *Časopis „El Checoslovaco en México“ v letech 1942-1945*, diploma thesis, (University of Prague, 2011); online resource: <https://is.cuni.cz/webapps/zzp/download/150001361/?lang=en>

387 See e.g. the letter of the board of directors of the *Asociación Checoslovaco-Mexicana* to the US embassy (16 Feb 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A – 843C, s. fol.; cf. Pospíšil's membership in the *Casino Alemán* at BAL, NS19/4057, fol. 37.

388 "De la Asociación Checoslovaco-Mexicana", *El Checoslovaco en México* II/3 (Mar 1943), p. 3; cf. also „Pacto rechazando la restauración de los Habsburgos“, *Excelsior* (11 Mar 1943) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/4, s. fol.;

389 See the personal dossier on Theodor Balk (7 Sep 1943) compiled by the intelligence unit of the US embassy at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Sep-Dec, s. fol., esp. p. 5.

which appointed Juan Gabelich as president while Fodor served as secretary.<sup>390</sup> Finally, in January 1943 the *Federación Polonesa en México* was represented by E.S. Weisblat at the same address of calle Medellín no. 128.<sup>391</sup>

The close chronological link that existed between November 1941 and February 1942 among the creation of the organisations of the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* (7<sup>th</sup> of November), the *Alleanza Internazionale "Giuseppe Garibaldi"* (12<sup>th</sup> of November), *Hungria Libre* (25<sup>th</sup> of November), the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (3<sup>rd</sup> of December), the *Círculo Cultural "Jaime Vera"* with its journal *El Socialista* (21<sup>st</sup> of December and January 1942), *Alemania Libre* (23<sup>rd</sup> of December), the journal *El Checoslovaco en México* (January 1942), and, finally the movement *Yugoslavia Libre* (27<sup>th</sup> of March 1942) suggests a degree of coordination among the pro-Soviet Left across the diverse spectrum of national communities in exile in Mexico City. By the end of the Second World War, the intelligence unit of the US embassy was convinced to confront an integrated organisation of "foreign national communist front organizations".<sup>392</sup> Such fears with regard to the refugee population in Mexico City first originated in November 1941 and found their expression in an article in the oppositional Mexican periodical *Novedades* on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November of 1941. Under the pseudonym of "Mingo Revulgo" the author painted a bleak picture of the activities of international communists in the city:

The communists regard our country as their own and behave in our home as the future rulers and masters of her fate. Here and now they are preparing the future of America for the moment when after the conclusion of the world-wide struggle, according to their cheerful calculations, Russia will assume the command over the United States and Britain. The communists are right now holding a conference of the west branch of the Communist International.

The paper alluded to a meeting of international communists which allegedly had taken place a few days earlier during the international congress of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina* (CTAL), headed by Vicente Lombardo Toledano: "It can be assumed that the coincidence of this important communist meeting and the congress of CTAL is no mere accident but a conscious act of the high art of ambush, of an advanced smoke screen technique and a perfected system of secrecy."

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390 „Una Yugoslavia Libre, en México“, *Excelsior* (29 Mar 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843D – 843Z, s. fol.

391 See the letter by the *Federación Polonesa en México* to the US embassy (25 Jan 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P – 800PolishRefugees, s. fol.

392 See the report on „Communist Activities in Mexico“ (19 Jul 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol., pp. 5.-11.

The coincidence of the congress of the Workers of Latin America with their congress was meticulously planned in order to coordinate the whole communist plan for action with Hispano-America and to give the different delegates and Lombardo Toledano useful instructions on how to increase propaganda activities which, in this hemisphere, have only just started.<sup>393</sup>

While the article breathed the air of passionate anti-communism, its main ingredients of information can be traced back to a “special report of the Spanish monarchical group in Mexico”, dated 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1941. It appears that this report originated from the Austrian monarchists of *Austria Libre* in Mexico who sent the information to Emil Schaale in Costa Rica who, in turn, handed over the information to the US embassy.<sup>394</sup> The report drew attention to a series of clandestine meetings of the Communist International allegedly held between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> of November in Mexico City: “[...] contrary to Communist policy of holding meetings at which only a few of the international agents attend [...] a great many agents attended this meeting. This may be due in part to the importance of the instructions to be given out.” According to this report, among those attending the meeting were a certain “Kalenico” (who was believed to represent Moscow), the Spanish communists Pedro Checa, Antonio Mije, Vicente Uribe, Juan Comorera, Antonio Hierro Muriel, Margarita Nelken, Amaro del Rosal, Ángelín Álvarez, Emilia Elías, Wenceslao Roces, Ignacio Mantecón, Edmundo Domínguez, Pedro Martínez Cartón, and Carlos Contreras (i.e. the Italian veteran commander of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War Vittorio Vidali). From among other nationalities the report mentioned André Simone, “one Kirsh” (probably referring to Egon Erwin Kisch), Isaac Livenson, Bela Mecklenyi, and Walter Stein, “all of these individuals”, the report erroneously claimed, “are of German and Hungarian origin and reside in Mexico”. Simone Téry was mentioned as a French delegate, as was Mario Montagnana for the Italian communists. The presence of Pablo Neruda as Chilean consul in Mexico was noted, as was that of Jadwiga Kaminska for the Polish communists. Among the results of these meetings the report mentioned general objectives in terms of an eventual Communist world revolution after a victorious outcome of the war against Germany (which was far from certain at the time) and noted the necessity to “carry out whatever type of work [...] to get the United States into the war as soon as possible.” In terms of public activities, the instructions were quoted as follows:

In order to lay the groundwork and prepare the political set-up for organisation of internal revolution, there should be organized, if

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393 *Novedades* (25 Nov 1941), in: *Österreicher im Exil, Mexiko 1938-1947. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Christian Kloyber and Marcus G. Patka (Wien, 2002), pp. 245-6; cf. DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 50616, s. fol.

394 See the dispatch by Arthur Bliss Lane (Costa Rica) to the US Secretary of State (20 Feb 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800M – 800Ref, s. fol.

necessary, movements called “free” movements which will correspond to the countries of Europe [...] These “free” or “freedom” movements shall be the German, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Rumanian, Yugoslavian, Hungarian, Austrian, Dutch, Polish, Portuguese etc. [...] these “free” movements shall be complemented by organisations, leagues, societies, federations etc. of a cultural nature whose goal shall be the “defense of democracies”, the “rights of man” etc.

A rather curious conspiracy was then reported to the effect that as part of the communist strategy the continuing activity of fascist organisations in the western hemisphere would have a destabilising effect on western democracies and would therefore be to the advantage of communist revolutionary ambitions and should be allowed to continue. Finally, “in the case of Mexico it was decided to maintain, at all costs, the prestige and political strength of Vicente Lombardo Toledano” and to “strive continually until diplomatic relations between Mexico and Soviet Russia are renewed.”<sup>395</sup> It appears impossible to assess the veracity of this report as independent references seem to refer back to the same source.<sup>396</sup> Some parts of the report were suspiciously obsessed with an alleged fascist-communist conspiracy against the West and a long-term goal of Soviet policies towards world revolution. It was therefore designed to undermine the reputation of the Soviet Union at a time of its greatest need for international support at the height of the battle for Moscow. Such a clandestine policy would have flatly contradicted Stalin’s national front policy which aimed at the unification of all anti-fascist political forces in order to save the Soviet Union from defeat. In fact, Stalin would sacrifice the Communist International itself in 1943 in exchange for his alliance with the western powers. On the other hand, the reference to the creation of a multitude of “free movements” and their accompanying cultural organisations presented an accurate observation of the actual activities of the European anti-fascist communities in exile at the time and even appeared to offer (since the contents of the report were publicly summarised by *Novedades* already on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 1941) some insight into the intentions of the pro-Soviet Left in Mexico City. It is therefore likely that conservative-monarchist groups of either Spanish or Austrian nationality had used some accurate information (e.g. about plans to create a variety of pro-Soviet political exile organisations and their cultural derivatives) as bait to transport insinuations that would damage the Soviet reputation in the western hemisphere at the most critical moment of the Soviet defensive against the German attack. The main target appears to have been Vicente Lombardo Toledano who used the organization of CTAL and his reputation among the Mexican trade unions to exert significant political influence in support of the European refugees as well as advocating for the resumption of

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395 Special Report of the Spanish Monarchical Group in Mexico, instructions relative to communist action (20 Nov 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800S – 800C General, s. fol., pp. 2-7.

396 See e.g. a short reference in a personal memorandum on Carlos Contreras (30 Sep 1950) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 11, fol. 51rev.



diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The general objective of this attempt at disinformation was therefore to sabotage any approachment between the USSR and the USA in an alliance against the Axis powers. The US-American entry into the war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour just two weeks later and Mexico's declaration of war against the Axis powers the following May rendered such manoeuvres obsolete.

After the attack of Nazi Germany on the USSR in June 1941, the pro-Soviet Left gathered around a Mexican association, the *Sociedad de Amigos de la Unión de las Repúblicas Soviéticas Socialistas* (SAURSS) which campaigned for the re-establishment of diplomatic relationships between Mexico and the USSR.<sup>397</sup> In large public meetings the SAURSS under the temporary leadership of Victor Manuel Villaseñor united with the trade unions of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM), Lombardo Toledano's *Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina* (CTAL), and the Mexican communist party (PCM).<sup>398</sup> The SAURSS maintained close personal links to other left-wing organisations through its second president José Mancisidor who was also the president of FOARE.<sup>399</sup> Just days after Mexico's declaration of war against Nazi Germany, the organisation launched its by-weekly *Boletín* and commemorated the first anniversary of the German attack on the Soviet Union with a three-day congress in the *Teatro de los Electricistas* at calle Artes no. 45 in the *Tabacalera* to campaign for closer ties between the new Allies in the anti-Hitler coalition.<sup>400</sup> Its offices were at first established at calle Ramón Guzmán no. 125 in the district of *San Rafael*, the same building that also housed the non-secretarian *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* (LPC) and was occasionally used by the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM).<sup>401</sup> The building was controlled by Enrique Arreguin, a key figure within the *Federación de Organismos de Ayuda a la República Española* (FOARE) and a patron of the *Amics de Catalunya* who used

397 On the *Sociedad de Amigos de la Unión de las Repúblicas Soviéticas Socialistas* (SAURSS) see the extensive memo (11 Aug 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

398 See "Gran Mitin en pro de la reanudación de las relaciones diplomáticas y comerciales entre México e Inglaterra y la URSS", *España Popular* II/67 (27 Aug 1941), p. 7; "Por la reanudación de relaciones con la URSS e Inglaterra – un gran mitin de masas en México", *España Popular* II/72 (3 Oct 1941), p. 3.

399 See the governing board of the SAURSS in: *Boletín Quincenal de la SAURSS* I/3 (Jul 1942), p. 8; see also the memorandum of "organizations that the Soviet ambassador can manipulate" (2 Nov 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843, p. 4.

400 "Un año de guerra en la URSS", *España Popular* III/94 (7 Jul 1942), p. 6; see also "La Convención de Amigos de la URSS", *Boletín Quincenal de la SAURSS* I/1 (Jun 1942), pp. 2-3; "Nuestra Convención...", *Boletín Quincenal de la SAURSS* I/3 (Jul 1942), pp. 1-2; see also the extensive documentation of this congress at the GARF, fond 5283, opis 14, delo 144, fols. 92-134.

401 On the LPC see the letter by Heinrich Gutmann to Karl Kautsky (New York), dated 11 Nov 1940 at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 18884/5, s. fol.; the report at AGN, DGIPS, caja 205, exp. 6, fol. 1; on the meetings of ARAM see "Informaciones de la »ARAM«", *Austria Libre* I/1 (15 Aug 1942), p. 4; the invitation (Nov 1942) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 3637, s. fol.

the building at calle Ramón Guzmán no. 125 to provide office spaces and venues for events and meetings for a number of left-wing organisations.<sup>402</sup> The wide variety of cultural, political, and social events organised by the SAURSS marked it as an important factor in the political and social culture of exile in the city.<sup>403</sup>

In February 1943, the SAURSS moved to a new domicile at calle Bolívar no. 57 in the historical city centre where a series of lectures and exhibitions of photography were held to promote the cause of solidarity with the USSR.<sup>404</sup> It is at this domicile where the SAURSS came into close contact with one of the regional centres of the Spanish republican community of exile, the *Centro Andaluz*, which had inaugurated its venue at calle Bolívar no. 57 only a few weeks earlier on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 1943.<sup>405</sup> The Andalusian community of republican refugees had first entered the public sphere of Mexico City the previous year on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1942 with a great “Fiesta Andaluza” at a venue located at the Plaza Santos Degollado no. 12 at heart of the Spanish community of republican refugees in the district of *Centro* south of the *Alameda Central*. The *Agrupación Musical “Madrid”* featured among the popular acts alongside a great number of Spanish artists, singers and flamenco dancers, and the feast “provoked extraordinary interest not only among the Spanish colony but also among our friends from Mexico”, as the communist periodical *España Popular* proudly proclaimed.<sup>406</sup> This first public event which was meant to launch the presence and activity of the yet to be constituted *Centro Andaluz* was followed at its permanent location at calle Bolívar no. 57 by a series of lectures on mainly cultural themes, including speakers such as the writer Juan Rejano and the journalists Fernando Vázquez Ocaña and Gabriel Morón. In 1945, the latter would take over the presidency of the *Centro Andaluz* which was first led by the Francisco Zapata, a businessman from the ex-patriate Spanish colony, while prominent political refugees such as the socialist politician Ramón Lamóneda and the poet Pedro Garfias served as officers on the governing board.<sup>407</sup> The fact that the communist periodical *España Popular* closely followed and documented the activities of the *Centro Andaluz*

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402 See the extensive report on Enrique Arreguin and his activities (6 Sep 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

403 See the announcements of numerous events in the *Boletín Quincenal de la SAURSS*, año I, n° 5 (septiembre de 1942), p. 6; año I, n° 6 (septiembre de 1942), pp. 7-8; año I, n° 8 (octubre de 1942), p. 6; año I, n° 9 (noviembre de 1942), p. 3.

404 See the extensive memorandum (11 Aug 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, pp. 7-12; see also “Inauguración de nuestra nueva casa”, *Boletín Quincenal de la SAURSS* II/12 (Feb 1943), p. 7; “Inauguramos nuestra casa”, *Boletín Quincenal de la SAURSS* II/13 (Feb de 1943), p. 2.

405 See “Próxima inauguración del Centro Andaluz”, *España Popular* III/107 (6 Nov 1942), p. 3; “Inauguración del Centro Andaluz”, *España Popular* III/119 (29 Jan 1943), p. 3.

406 “Una gran fiesta para organizar el Centro Andaluz”, *España Popular* III/95 (20 Jul 1942), p. 5.

407 See “Centro Andaluz. Ciclo de Actos Culturales” at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A – 843Free Germans, s. fol.; see also “Asamblea de Unidad y Lucha en el Centro Andaluz”, *España Popular* V/229 (16 Feb 1945), p. 4.

while the association shared its location at calle Bolívar no. 57 with the *Sociedad de Amigos de la Unión de Repúblicas Soviéticas Socialistas* (SAURSS) demonstrated the close relationship that this organisation enjoyed with their neighbours of the pro-Soviet faction of political exile in Mexico.

Meanwhile, the anti-Soviet faction of political exile in Mexico City established its main venue at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50 in the historic city centre, just one block away from the *Centro Andaluz* and the SAURSS with their prominent communist and pro-Soviet orientation at calle Bolívar no. 57. This geographical proximity of the two opposed camps of political exile in Mexico would soon give rise to confrontations that shook the political culture of exile in the city. The *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* had moved from its previous location at the former headquarters of the Spanish *Frente Popular* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 30 to the nearby no. 50 in December of 1939.<sup>408</sup> The building at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50 was owned by the Asturian businessman José Antonio Arias who was described as “rather wealthy” and “known as an anarchist” who subsidised the activities of left-wing groups that were critical of, if not hostile to the communist policies of the SAURSS and other organisations of European political refugees who proclaimed their loyalty to the Soviet Union.<sup>409</sup> On the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 1940, the *Asociación de Inmigrantes Españoles* launched its criticism of the *Comité Técnico de Ayuda a los Refugiados Españoles* (CTARE) on the grounds of mismanagement of aid funds, its failure to provide sufficient support for the Spanish refugees, its intransigence towards accepting the representation of certain political factions among the refugees, and expressed its general adherence to the competing aid organisation of anti-communist socialists and republicans, the *Junta de Ayuda a los Refugiados Españoles* (JARE) directed by Indalecio Prieto. The charge that the *Comité Técnico* would prefer communist refugees for evacuation from France over their political detractors played an important part in their rejection of cooperation with the continuing popular front policies of the CTARE. The *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* thereby served as a topographical platform for the anti-communist dissent among the Spanish community in exile.<sup>410</sup> By May 1942, the anarcho-syndicalist *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT) under the leadership of Progreso Alfarache and Emilio Maldonado had established a symbiotic relationship with the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* when its general meeting approved the “obligatory membership of all comrades in the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano*”.<sup>411</sup> José Viadiu served as director of the anarchist periodical *Solidaridad Obrera* alongside Alfarache as editor and Maldonado as administrator

408 „Nuevo Local para el Centro Cultural“, *Iberia* I/23 (1 Dec 1939), p. 8.

409 See the extensive report compiled by the intelligence unit of the US embassy on the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* (21 Sep 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fols.

410 See the report by Inspector PS-5 (13 Feb 1940) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 10, fols. 59-61.

411 „Nuestra Asamblea“, *Solidaridad Obrera* I/2 (20 May 1942), p. 3.

from the premises of the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano*.<sup>412</sup> During the autumn of 1942, leading figures of the anti-Soviet Left took to the stage as speakers about perspectives of European socialism, such as the French socialist Marceau Pivert (a critic of the Popular Front government of Léon Blum), the Catalan activist of the *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (POUM) Julián Gorkín, the Asturian socialist and trade unionist Belarmino Tomás, and the German anarchist Augustín Souchy.<sup>413</sup> The anarchists at the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* were, however, in conflict with some of their former anarchist comrades who had joined the faction of the *negrinistas* who still expressed their loyalty to the popular front policies of the last Spanish republican prime minister in exile in London, Juan Negrín. Prominent among them was Segundo Blanco, an active supporter of the *Círculo Cultural Jaime Vera* in Mexico City who did not enjoy the sympathies of the anarchists at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano*:

[...] not many weeks ago, there appeared in the national press a letter by Antonio Velao, ex-minister of the Republic, who reiterated that the so-called Negrín government continued to represent our country in exile while affirming that this declaration could count on the support of Segundo Blanco who in the last government represented the CNT. In order to respond to that falsehood, the Delegación [of the CNT] included in *Solidaridad Obrera* a message which denied that Segundo Blanco represents us.<sup>414</sup>

Any attempts at a rapprochement between the alienated factions of exile politics, as they were promoted by the Catalan anarchists José García Caballero and Juan Margalef, were met with clear conditions that circled around the crucial issue of the conflict: “You must break the pact with the communists.”<sup>415</sup> Just about two-hundred meters away from the *Centro Andaluz* and the pro-Soviet activists of the *Sociedad de Amigos a la Unión de las Repúblicas Soviéticas Socialistas*, the ideological outlook of anarchist politics in exile was diametrically opposed to any attempts to reconstitute an anti-fascist national front that would include the communists. Starting in February 1943, the Spanish anarchists at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexico* staged a series of events that featured contributions to a discussion of “Experiences of War and Revolution”, so that every Thursday from February through May 1943 at about 8 pm the anti-Soviet Left of Mexico City would congregate in the building of calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50 for a regular “Thursday of Solidarity” to exchange views on lessons to be learned from the Spanish Civil War and how such lessons might affect the future of the anarchist

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412 See e.g. the impressum of *Solidaridad Obrera* I/16 (15 Dec 1942), p. 1.

413 See “Conferencia de Marceau Pivert” and “La Conferencia de Belarmino Tomás”, *Solidaridad Obrera* I/14 (15 Nov 1942), p. 3; “Los Ciclos del Centro Ibero-Mexicano”, *Solidaridad Obrera* I/15 (28 Nov 1942), p. 2.

414 „Informe de la Delegación General de la CNT“, *Solidaridad Obrera* II/19 (6 Feb 1943), p. 2.

415 „Informe de la Delegación General de la CNT“, *Solidaridad Obrera* II/20 (20 Feb 1943), p. 2.

movement. Speakers included the anarchist leader Progeso Alfarache, the Catalan anarchist José Jiménez, the director of *Solidaridad Obrera* José Viadiu, the future secretary general of the CNT Feliciano Subero, the then secretary of the CNT Miguel Yoldi, Genaro de la Colina, Juan Gallego Crespo, and, again, Augustín Souchy. The intention of these meetings was to foster a process of discussion and learning which openly addressed the controversial legacy of the Spanish Civil War: “The intensity of the struggle and the range of tasks and problems that [the libertarian activists] had to face forced them to pay attention to an infinite number of political, military, administrative etc. aspects to which they had not dedicated themselves before.” A debate of such aspects of the experience of the Civil War would make it possible that “the attitude of the members of the CNT towards future problems may be clearer and more homogenous.”<sup>416</sup> Given the entrenched and bitter conflicts that characterised the relationship between the anarchists and the communists during the Spanish Civil War, the wounds of the long-standing confrontations among the republican forces were evidently still a long way from healing.

The building at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50 was not only home to the Spanish anarchists in exile but also accommodated a whole range of anti-communist organisations and publications from among the European community of exile. The most important among them was the group *Socialismo y Libertad*, a loose association of international socialists centred around the Russian emigré Victor Serge (i.e. Victor Lvovich Kibalchich), and the abovementioned guest speakers of the CNT events at the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano*, the French socialist Marceau Pivert and the Catalan POUM activist Julián Gorkín. Other prominent figures in this circle included the German writer and former communist commissar during the Spanish Civil War Gustav Regler and the Mexican writers Antonio Hidalgo and Francisco Zamora. The US embassy estimated its followers at around 200 individuals.<sup>417</sup> After just three editions of their journal *Análisis* between January and May 1942, the group published a monthly journal under the title *Mundo*, edited by Gustavo de Anda since June 1943. In its first edition, the group *Socialismo y Libertad* published “propositions for a declaration of principles” which evidently had been under discussion for at least three months. In the light of “our tragic experiences of these last twenty-five years” the group proposed “a revision of the thought and the socialist tactics employed so far.” The text (which can be seen as a manifesto by *Socialismo y Libertad*) continued with

416 „Experiencias de la Guerra y la Revolución”, *Solidaridad Obrera* II/19 (6 Feb 1943), p. 4; Souchy remembered his activities in the context of the anarchist community in exile as an inspiration for further initiatives to organise debates among the unions; see Augustín Souchy: *Mexiko - Land der Revolutionen: Mitteilungen von 1942 bis 1976* (Berlin, 2008), pp. 63-4; cf. id.: *Vorsicht, Anarchist! Ein Leben für die Freiheit. Politische Erinnerungen* (Darmstadt, 1977), pp. 133-4.

417 See the extensive memorandum on *Socialismo y Libertad* compiled by the intelligence unit of the US embassy (8 Nov 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.; on Regler’s collaboration with the group cf. the memorandum on “Mexico – subversive activities” (22 Apr 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, s. fol.

the most important principles to be taken forward for future international socialist policies:

1. We regard the Second World War as a complete subversion of the social and international relations, a demonstration of the terminal crisis of the capitalist civilisation the historically progressive outcome of which will be the installation of a new socialist world based on liberty.
2. Socialism is a general concept which aims to resolve the problems and social contradictions which exist today among human beings. Socialism does not represent a domination or dictatorship of one class over another but the realisation of a classless society. [...]
3. Socialism is impossible without liberty. We speak out with dedication against the dictatorships of cast (military or bureaucratic), of party or union, even if it is assumed they act in the name of a class [...]
4. Socialism is the broadest and most complete realisation of democracy. [...]
  - a. Guarantee of individual rights
  - b. Fundamental democratic liberties.
  - c. Union rights which cover, in our understanding, the right to control production in the interest of the collective.
  - d. Rights of local authorities and municipalities.
  - e. National self-determination.
  - f. Wide application of the principles of no re-election and revocability of those serving in representative bodies.
5. Socialism cannot be realised on a local or national level, as the tragic Russian experience demonstrates, but is only possible on an international scale. [...]
6. Socialism can only be realised by revolutionary means. [...]
7. The libertarian direction of socialism does not mean to be weak towards the enemies of socialist transformation. During the transition period between the current society and the new, the socialist movement will oppose the capitalist violence or that of bureaucratic elements by revolutionary violence. [...] We reject the concept of monopolising the revolutionary movement by an ideological orthodoxy or by any party.

The group's intention was no less than to offer its principles as "an ideological Northern Star for those groups and organisations which, in spite of the errors

committed in the past, maintain the goal of a collective emancipation of society.”<sup>418</sup> The libertarian socialism proposed by the group *Socialismo y Libertad* contained clear references to the negative impact of bureaucracy, party, and dictatorship of class and was, thereby, directly opposed to the Soviet project of “socialism in one country”. The group held meetings at irregular intervals in the building at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50 and existed under precarious financial circumstances relying mainly on contributions by their members and the sales revenues of their journal *Mundo*.<sup>419</sup> Close personal ties existed through Julián Gorkín with activists of the *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (POUM), who gathered around the publishing house of *Ediciones Quetzal* (run by Victor Serge and Marceau Pivert) which was located at Pasaje Iturbide no. 18 close to the *Caballito* at the Plaza Reforma at the northern end of Paseo de la Reforma.<sup>420</sup>

The *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* was also an important location for the German-speaking anti-Soviet socialists in exile in Mexico City. From his domicile at the *Edificio Ermita* in Tacubaya, the Austrian socialist Walter Stein had tried to organise the Austrian socialists in Mexico City as early as in March 1941 when the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact still paralysed the communist camp of political refugees. However, these early attempts faced some difficulties caused by personal and ideological differences in connection with communist attempts to infiltrate the non-secretarian *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* but led to the constitution of the *Group of Austrian Socialists in Mexico* under Stein’s direction.<sup>421</sup> After a period of difficult cooperation with the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* and the newly-emerging *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México*<sup>422</sup>, the group transformed in 1943 into the *Union of German and Austrian Socialists* which Stein presented to the international networks of Austrians in exile in January 1944 as an association of socialist unification based on the principals of democratic socialism:

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418 „Proposiciones para una Declaración de Principios“ (dated 25 Mar 1943), *Mundo. Socialismo y Libertad* I/1 (15 Jun 1943), pp. 29-30; more generally on *Socialismo y Libertad*: Claudio Albertani: „Socialismo y Libertad. El exilio antiautoritario de Europa en México y la lucha contra el estalinismo (1940-1950)“, *Fundación Andreu Nin: Políticas de la Memoria* 8/9 (2008/09), pp. 131-9, online resource: <http://www.fundanin.org/albertani7.htm> [8 May 2013]; see also a French translation including a biographical glossary of its members, in Id.: „Le Group Socialimo y Libertad. L'exil anti-autoritaire d'Europe au Mexique et la lutte contre le stalinisme (1940-1950)“, *Agone* 43 (2010), pp. 241-66, online resource: [https://agone.org/libre/ebook\\_2252.pdf](https://agone.org/libre/ebook_2252.pdf) [2 May 2018].

419 See the memorandum on *Socialismo y Libertad* (8 Nov 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, p. 1.

420 See the memorandum on “Mexico – subversive activities” (22 Apr 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, s. fol.

421 See the letter of Walter Stein to Josef Buttinger in New York (27 Mar 1941) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 18884/5, s. fol.

422 See the letters by Walter Stein and Theodor Schwebel to Josef Buttinger (1 May, 2 Jul 1941, and 25 May 1942) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 18884/6, s. fol.

The Union [of German and Austrian Socialists] was founded about a year ago, it is not a political party but a socialist working group. Its members belonged and still belong to a diverse range of political parties and currents, such as e.g. the SAP [Socialist Workers' Party], SPD [Social Democratic Party of Germany], RS [Revolutionary Socialists], and the unions. Its members agree on the most important issues of socialism. They believe that only socialism is capable of solving all the problems which so far have given rise to economic crises and wars. This socialism needs to be anti-totalitarian and will need to resolve the fusion of political democracy with a planned economy. The planned economy as the economic base is being regarded as inevitable, just as is political democracy which will grant the working classes and their allies rights and liberties which will greatly surpass those of bourgeois democracy. [...] The Union [of German and Austrian Socialists] is regarding it as its task to maintain contacts with all German-speaking socialist organisations in order to discuss jointly the fundamental issue of a socialist future.<sup>423</sup>

Since 1945, the *Union of German and Austrian Socialists* used the domicile of the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* as a venue for social gatherings and lectures at about fortnightly intervals.<sup>424</sup> Key figures of the organisation were the Austrian Walter Stein and the German socialist Max Diamant. Some members of the *Union* also shared the same employer, as in the case of Stefan Kalmar, Kalmar's wife, Walter Grün, and Ernst Fink who all had taken up employment with the firm "Mercurio", owned by the Czechoslovakian businessman Eugen Popper at calle 16 de Septiembre no. 10. The small community of Austrian socialists thereby also established specific structures of economic support.<sup>425</sup> Since February of 1945, the *Union of German and Austrian Socialists* edited a journal under the title *Sozialistische Tribüne* from their editorial office at the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* for which Gustavo de Anda, once again, acted as responsible manager. The postal address provided for correspondence was that of Ramón Sales at calle de López 161-13, the same person who also served as contact for the group *Socialismo y Libertad* and their journal *Mundo*.<sup>426</sup> Both groups maintained close contacts through Gustav Regler.<sup>427</sup> In the very same building of calle de López no. 161,

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423 „Union deutscher und Österreichischer Sozialisten in Mexiko“, *Sozialistische Mitteilungen* (London) 58-59 (Jan 1944), p. 23, online resource: [http://library.fes.de/fulltext/sozmit/1944-058.htm#P233\\_62008](http://library.fes.de/fulltext/sozmit/1944-058.htm#P233_62008) [8 Dec 2015].

424 See e.g. the announcements in: *Sozialistische Tribüne* I/1 (Feb 1945), p. 38; *ibid.* I/4 (May 1945), p. 10; *ibid.* I/7-8 (Nov 1945), p. 28.

425 See the report on the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* (21 Sep 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 6.

426 See *Mundo. Socialismo y Libertad* I/2 (15 Jul 1943), p. 32.

427 See the report compiled by the intelligence unit of the US embassy on the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* (21 Sep 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 6.



Julián Gorkín acted as responsible editor of the journal *POUM* of the *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* in his appartement no. 41.<sup>428</sup> The *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* thereby represented a key location for anti-communist European anarchists and socialists who were able to establish their own networks of communication and organisation in the city. A multitude of smaller publications emanated from the building, all of which adhered, in one way or the other, to the general principles of anti-communist socialism, such as the fortnightly periodical *Humanidad*, directed since April 1943 by the Spanish anarchist Miguel Jiménez Igualada, the journal *Tierra y Libertad*, edited since June 1944 by Emeterio de la O. González, the monthly magazine *Inquietudes* which first appeared in November 1944 under the editorial direction of Benjamin Cano Ruiz, Miguel Jiménez Igualada, and Floreal Ocaña, all of whom were also collaborators of the anarchist periodical *Solidaridad Obrera*, Marcos Alcón who, in turn, contributed to *Tierra y Libertad*, and Rodolfo Aguirre. The *Estudios Sociales*, finally, appeared since January 1945 under the directorship of José Viadiu, one of the principle editors of *Solidaridad Obrera*, and presented itself as an open platform without party affiliation contributing “to that which man finds in himself, feeding the internal impulse to develop a just and free world” while attacking those who compromised on their socialist convictions for the benefit of personal advancement.<sup>429</sup> The multiple organisations and publications which found their home in the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50 consisted of a closely interwoven texture of a group of transnational actors who cooperated in a network of anti-Soviet socialism and anarchism in Mexico City.

### **g. Informal sociability: Cafés and Rooftops**

Alongside the institutionalised centres of politicised sociability in the city the European communities of exile established networks of informal sociability.<sup>430</sup> From the surviving memories and written accounts it appears that the European political refugees in Mexico City did not so much mingle with the metropolitan population in their bars and cantinas, but aimed to establish their own social spaces. In the words of Arturo García Igual (which betrayed some degree of irony), the city seemed to offer, at first, few attractive locations for socialising,

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428 See e.g. the impressum of *POUM. Órgano del Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* I/3 (Sep 1945), p. 1.

429 US embassy report on the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* (21 Sep 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), pp. 4-6.

430 For a general overview see Carlos Martínez: *Crónica de una Emigración (la de los republicanos españoles en 1939)* (México, D.F., 1959), pp. 23-37; see also: Patricia W. Fagen: *Transterrados y Ciudadanos* (México D.F., 1975), pp. 79-81; Manuel Andújar: „Exilio y transtierro”, *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 473-74 (1989), pp. 179-80; Juan Carlos Pérez Guerrero: *La Identidad del Exilio republicano en México* (Madrid, 2008), pp. 174-81; Jorge de Hoyos Puente: *La Utopía del Regreso. Proyectos de Estado y sueños de nación en el exilio republicano en México* (México, D.F., 2012), pp. 157-8.

only “[...] *Pulquerías* and *Cantinas* with funny or deceptive names, such as »Recuerdos del Porvenir« [Memories of the Future] or »Mi Oficina« [My Office] ... That dizzying world pushed me towards the tranquility of the »Betis«, the »Campoamor«, the »Do Brasil«, and the »Sorrento«, coffee houses where the Spaniards cultivated the custom of the *tertulia* [regular gathering], with one innovation: the continuous *tertulia* from breakfast to the late-night meal in the early hours of the morning where one talked about politics and the Civil War, in our style, shouting at each other, without listening to one’s interlocutor.”<sup>431</sup> But the cafés were also places of social interaction, economic practice, and political discourse, “it was there where we formed our friendships, where we made our business deals, where we sorted out the political world, right?”, as Jaime Costa recalled four decades later.<sup>432</sup>

In the case of the Spanish community in exile, a number of cafés have become legendary for their function as locations of social and communicative condensators of life in exile in Mexico City. The first chronicler of exiled life in Mexico, Carlos Martínez, already provided a detailed account of these urban spaces of sociability in exile, particularly of the most important of all, the Café “Tupinamba” at calle Bolívar no. 44 in the historic city centre. The location appeared to him as lacking in character in terms of its interior design, but as a spacious place and compensating for its modest charm with the character of the people it attracted, “a great number of followers of bullfighting and football.” He described the crowd as a mixture of “*picadores, peones de brega*, fans, bullfighting critics, modest actors and all the other coffeehouse people that are none of these things.” Particularly during Sunday afternoons, after the *corridos*, the café would turn into a busy and typically Spanish bar in the heart of Mexico City: “The moves are discussed in conversation and with the help of an amplified speaker, using a microphone that goes from table to table to collect opinions about the *corrida* or the game.” And the intense atmosphere of the place permeated into the street: “On the sidewalk, and leaning against the wall, or snooping through the large windows of the *Tupinamba*, there are always aspiring bullfighters who go in search of a journalist or radio announcer to help them in the first steps of their hard career, or simply for the pleasure of feeling close to a place so intensely associated with bullfighting.”<sup>433</sup> Martínez’s account evidently shaped the memory of those who decades later found themselves invited to recall their experience of exile in Mexico City. Manuel González Bastante remembered the Café “Tupinamba” as the regular meeting place of a circle of Spanish republicans centred on the presence of general José Miaja, the legendary defender of Madrid in 1936, but above all (echoing Martínez’s account) as a place of “sportsmen [...]”

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431 Arturo García Igual: *Entre aquella España nuestra... y la peregrina* (Valencia, 2005), p. 116.

432 Interview with Jaime Costa (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Nov 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/067, p. 201.

433 Carlos Martínez: *Crónica de una Emigración (la de los republicanos españoles en 1939)* (México, D.F., 1959), pp. 23-4.

particularly footballers, not so much football players as followers of football: [...] there the tables were filled with gatherings of sport fans, and in the afternoons, after the football matches, microphones were set up and those gatherings, with the opinions of the people who were there, were passed on to the radio transmitters.”<sup>434</sup> And the almost mythical appeal of the Café “Tupinamba” for the Spanish experience of exile in Mexico City proved to persist for decades in the memory of the Spanish republican refugees, without doubt somewhat embellished and reflecting the popular legacy which the location left in its wake since the early days of exile. In her memoirs, Rosa María Seco Mata painted a vivid picture of the social and political interactions which may have marked the Café “Tupinamba” as the primary location for informal sociability among the Spanish republicans – complete with all the strife and conflict which characterised the political culture of Spanish exile in Mexico City:

Every afternoon, controversial debates took place in this café between anarchists and socialists, between communists and republicans, between separatists and centralists, between Catalans and Basques, between Andalusians and Aragonese. The smoke and the stench of tobacco filled the local in such a way that the people passing by in the street believed that, among all the smoke and the shouting, some tragedy was occurring. And, in a way, it was a daily drama in that the people involved left the place shouting: “Fuck you! Kiss my arse! You bloody separatist!” Luckily, the need that we had for one another meant that after just a few days all were reconciled; actually in order to start again this lamentable ritual in which expressed itself, from one side as well as from the other, the frustration of those who had lost everything.<sup>435</sup>

The general atmosphere of politicisation could also give rise to a comical, if not sarcastic narrative of politics in exile which referred to the isolation and irrelevance of those debates and arguments which were of little consequence in the real world but kept the participants preoccupied amidst their political impotence. Ramón Esturau Calvo recalled a joke that made the round in the urban spaces of informal sociability during those days which captured the general mood as well as the fictitiousness of political discourse in the cafés of Mexico City: “This was very clearly expressed by Soto, the artist, *el gordo* [he referred to Luis Soto Fernández], when he asked this question: »Well, what are the Spanish republicans doing in Mexico?«, and he said: »They are all sitting in the Café

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434 Interview with Manuel González Bastante (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, Dec 1987 / Jan 1988), at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/095, p. 585.

435 Rosa María Seco Mata: *El Recetario de mi Vida* (México D.F., 2008), pp. 69-70; see also the recollections of Ramón Esturau Calvo (interview conducted by Dolores Plá, Nov 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/061, p. 148, who, in his memory, extended the social context of the Café “Tupinamba” beyond the limits of the Spanish republican community.

Tupinamba, governing Spain by remote control.« (laughs)”<sup>436</sup> This culture of constant political debate and lament is also the subject of a surrealist short story by the Spanish republican writer in exile May Aub who visits the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City in the fictitious Café “Español” in Avenida 5 de Mayo (possibly a thinly-veiled reference to the Café “París” at Avenida 5 de Mayo no. 8):<sup>437</sup> The Mexican owner Ignacio “Nacho” Jurado Martínez is forced to witness the arrival of great numbers of Spanish refugees in his café with their never-ending loud and foul-mouthed debates on the Spanish Civil War, the question of responsibility for the republican defeat, and alternative ideas about how to govern Spain if the dictatorship of Franco could be removed. After listening in agony to these endless debates and reaching the end of his patience, Nacho decides to travel to Spain, succeeds in assassinating the Spanish dictator, and manages to return to his café in the Mexican capital full of hope that the republican refugees will henceforth leave his establishment in peace – only to find the tables of his café now occupied by Spanish fascists exiled from the newly-established Third Spanish Republic who begin to debate and lament their fate in much the same way as did the republican refugees before them. Nacho’s final thoughts reflect the futility of his efforts as much as his resignation to historical circumstances and human nature:

I very much would have liked to talk. That’s why I was a waiter; if I did not talk, at least I was listening. But to hear for twenty years always the same, the same, the same with those “Cs”. While I am very supportive. It has cost me much to realise that the world is not well constructed. People, at best, fall into idiots, awkward types, the naïve, pot heads, fools, pinheads, oafs, and creeps. It’s a question of nuances, like the *café con leche*. Or do you think the *café con leche* has turned humanity into idiots?<sup>438</sup>

When outside agencies, such as the intelligence unit of the US embassy, were observing the meeting places of Spanish republicans, however, their movements across the city and its politicised urban spaces were duly noted, taken seriously, and formed part of an assessment of political loyalties and of suspicions about their activities in the Mexican capital. In June 1945 the intelligence agents of the US embassy compiled a memorandum on the Asturian communist José Montaraz García. They not only researched his domicile, political affiliation, and employment, but also diligently recorded his visits to the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50 (interestingly, a location otherwise known for its anti-communist credentials) and the Café “Tupinamba”, “which is frequented principally by Spanish refugees.”<sup>439</sup> When, a few weeks later, the agents of the US intelligence service tried to track down a suspected network of

436 Interview with Ramón Esturau Calvo (conducted by Dolores Plá, Nov 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/061, p. 152.

437 Max Aub: „La verdadera historia de la muerte de Francisco Franco”, in: Id.: *Escritos sobre el Exilio* (Valencia, 2008), pp. 85-112.

secret communication among the Spanish communists, they equally not only noted the political activities of Juan Naves Ruiz, secretary of the *Asociación de Militares Profesionales Leales a la República Española*, an active communist who appeared to channel funds through US-American contacts into Mexico, but also identified him as a “frequent visitor at the downtown cafés, especially »Café Paris«, »Café Madrid« and the »Tupinamba«.”<sup>440</sup> In the case of the Spanish communist Vicente Judez Bailón, the fact that he “continues to spend much of his time in the café Tupinamba, Papagayo, and Betis, which are gathering places for Spanish refugees in Mexico City” became a recurring theme of the US-American surveillance reports, apparently corroborating his suspicious political affiliation.<sup>441</sup> Clearly, the informal sociability of Spanish republicans in exile not only fostered an atmosphere of internal politicisation but was also taken as a politicisation of urban space by outside observers. Among the actual political activities connected with the Café “Tupinamba” was a collection of financial contributions toward the acquisition of a field ambulance for the Red Army in autumn 1941 which yielded 70 pesos among the regulars of the café.<sup>442</sup> The location also became known as the meeting place of the *Alianza Nacional Galega*, a nationalist organisation of Galicians with close links to the Communist Party of Galicia under the leadership of the ex-governor of León and former Spanish republican diplomat Salvador Echeverría Brañas as president and the Galician socialist and one-time president of the *Círculo “Jaime Vera”* Edmundo Lorenzo Santiago as secretary general. The latter had also served as secretary general on the *Comité Español Pro-Ambulancia para la URSS* which organised the fundraising campaign in 1941.<sup>443</sup> Even if the mere fact that individuals visited the Café “Tupinamba” may have marked them as members of a communist conspiracy only in the minds of the agents of US-American intelligence in the city, the location still maintained substantial links to pro-Soviet left-wing politics in exile and can be seen as a hub for the otherwise

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438 Ibid., p. 112.

439 See the memorandum on José Montaraz García (1 Jun 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

440 Memorandum on Antonio Collantes Terán, Luis Suárez López, Antonio Pacheco Gutiérrez, and Juan Naves Ruiz compiled by the intelligence unit of the US embassy in Mexico (22 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 3.

441 Memorandum on Vicente Judez Bailón (9 Oct 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; see also the previous memorandum on Judez Bailón (29 May 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol., identifying him as a “frequent visitor in the Café Chufas and Café Papagayo” and quoting another source that Judez Bailón “spends a large part of his time in the Cafés Papagayo, Betis, Chufas, and Tupinamba”.

442 “La ayuda de los emigrados españoles a la URSS. Entusiasmo para adquirir la ambulancia con destino al Ejército Rojo”, *España Popular* II/77 (7 Nov 1941), p. 7.

443 See the extensive memorandum on Spanish political organisations in Mexico (19 Apr 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, p. 8; on Echeverría Brañas see the personal memorandum (30 Nov 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; on Lorenzo’s activities cf. “La Fiesta del Jaime Vera”, *El Socialista* II/15 (Jun 1943), p. 4; “Se constituye el Comité Español pro Ambulancia para la URSS”, *España Popular* II/72 (3 Oct 1941), p. 5.

defunct popular front policies of Spanish anti-fascism associated with the last republican government of Juan Negrín.

Alongside the Café “Tupinamba”, among the first locations of informal sociability in 1939 was the café “La Parroquia”, first located at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 17 in the *Centro Histórico* and relocated later to calle de López no. 34 in the adjacent district of *Centro*. It was the first café to be established by the Spanish republican refugees themselves, specifically designed to meet the expectations of its *clientèle*. Martínez recalled the location thus:

In this café some of the earliest projects were outlined, people who had not seen each other since their departure from Spain or since the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War exchanged their experiences, and commented on the first stages of the Second World War. The smell of *paella* and *fabada* which filled the café – which also served as a restaurant – made the refugees who frequented it feel in touch with their home country, if only by those intense and exciting culinary vapours.

Still, the “Parroquia” also appears to have been a distinctly politicised site of sociability which reflected the deep political divides and frictions among the anti-fascist politics of exile as well as the fortunes of European politics during the Second World War. The “Parroquia” was “in uproar by the German-Soviet pact”, it quickly “became quieter during the triumphal march of the *Reichswehr* across the roads of France” and was “saddened by the fall of Paris. But all those failures did not for one bit reduce the unshakeable faith in final victory, a victory which did come in the end but, unfortunately, did not bring what one expected.”<sup>444</sup> Around the same time, the second important location of informal sociability was the café “El Papagayo” at Avenida Juárez no. 56 adjacent to the Alameda Central. Its character was remembered as somewhat different from the “Tupinamba” or the “Parroquia” which also may have been due to its layout – Martínez brought the location to life in his account of Spanish life in exile twenty years later:

Very small, elongated, sparingly decorated; it was a joyful place, inviting to enter and stay. It had a row of tables and a bench which ran right from the entrance to the back; the bench and the tables were aligned along the right side from the entrance, the left side was mostly taken up by the counter, and it also had some tables in a small mezzanine. The Papagayo was always full. The configuration of the local meant that, in practice, there would not be separate gatherings of groups but a single one which sometimes dealt with the same topics [of conversation] if they were truly interesting. A comment would fade away as it passed from one sector of the connected gathering to the

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<sup>444</sup> Carlos Martínez: *Crónica de una Emigración (la de los republicanos españoles en 1939)* (México, D.F., 1959), p. 24.

next. The replies and counter-replies bounced along the crowd. In the Papagayo there was ingenuity, good manners, not too much shouting, and an atmosphere of humor and irony that avoided the pedantry of violence and general craziness. The Papagayo did not seem, in truth, like a Spanish café.<sup>445</sup>

The “Papagayo” belonged to the places of sociability that were immortalised by Spanish writers in exile in Mexico City, above all in the pages of Simón Otaola’s semi-fictional novel *La Librería de Arana* which added an aire of amicable conviviality and presented literary portraits of its regular visitors which shaped the legend of the “Papagayo” for posterity.<sup>446</sup> From the earliest days of exile, the “Papagayo” also functioned as a place of employment for some Spanish refugees, as in the case of José Gellida Coscollano and José Pastor Bertomeu who were listed by the *Comité Técnico de Ayuda a los Refugiados Españoles* as the managers in charge of the “Papagayo” in 1939/40.<sup>447</sup> Both, however, stated to the CTARE that their income was insufficient to meet subsistence level.<sup>448</sup> Before its disappearance when its location was taken over up by the expansion of an adjacent business in Avenida Juárez, the “Papagayo” very much like the “Tupinamba” and other places of Spanish republican sociability was subjected to the watchful eye of US-American intelligence which inevitably linked the “Papagayo” to the social network of Spanish communists in the city. The steps of Antonio Collantes Terán, secretary and later president of the *Centro Andaluz* and employee of the Mexican FOARE, were traced by the US-American agents to the “Papagayo”<sup>449</sup>, as were those of the Spanish communist Jesús Hernández who “can be seen daily at the Café Papagayo, Juárez #56, between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.”<sup>450</sup> Among the individuals which the Mexican *Secretaría de Gobernación*

445 Ibid., p. 25.

446 See Simón Otaola: *La Librería de Arana. Historia y Fantasía* (Madrid, 1999), pp. 101-7.

447 See their records in the “relación de colocados en el Distrito Federal” at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 117, no. 6367, fols. 5 & 7.

448 Ibid., fol. 11.

449 See the memorandum on Antonio Collantes Terán (21 Oct 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.; on his role at the *Centro Andaluz* cf. the telegramme by the *Junta Directiva* of the *Centro Andaluz* to the US embassy (Feb 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800R-Ref, s. fol.; cf. also “La emigración republicana apoya en masa y con entusiasmo la Convención de Solidaridad”, *España Popular* VII/313 (27 Sep 1946), pp. 1 & 2.

450 Memorandum on Jesús Hernández Tomás (2 Nov 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.; by the time of this report, however, Hernández (who had arrived in Mexico from the USSR in December 1943) had already been expelled from the PCE, cf. “Jesús Hernández y Francisco Antón llegan a México”, *España Popular* IV/167 (17 Dec 1943), p. 1; “Jesús Hernández, separado del Comité Central del P. Comunista de España”, *España Popular* V/184 (7 Apr 1944), p. 1; “Comunicado de la Delegación del C.C. del Partido Comunista de España de México”, *España Popular* V/185 (14 Apr 1944), p. 1; personal memorandum on Jesús Hernández Tomás (12 Sep 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.; the following year, Hernández was also observed to frequent the Café “Chufas” at calle de López no. 6, see the surveillance report (5 Jun 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson),

regarded as secret agents of the Soviet embassy was the US-American communist George Mink who was likewise observed “on several occasions in the Café Papagayo in Avenida Juárez of this capital city.”<sup>451</sup> Internal US government information had it that Mink’s presence in Mexico “may be most significant as it is a known fact that Mink is often present when trouble is started.”<sup>452</sup> In the perspective of US-American and Mexican surveillance, the “Papagayo” belonged to a network of potentially hostile locations in the city which were marked as spaces fostering communist subversion. Other such places included the Café “Chufas” or the Café “Gallo de Oro” at the corner of calle Venustiano Carrana and Bolívar, both in the historical city centre, where Celestino Blanco del Barrio, suspected of collaborating with the secret service of the Soviet embassy in 1945, could be seen in the evenings “talking to friends, most of whom are believed to have been Spanish refugees.”<sup>453</sup> The informal gatherings of Spanish refugees in the cafés of the city centre were generally considered to be of vital importance to the left-wing political networks of the Spanish republican refugees in the Mexican capital and often associated with clandestine communist networks. In this perspective, the informal sociability of exile in Mexico City centred around the cafés became intertwined with the politics of exile and their transnational dimension.

Of equal importance for the informal sociability of the Spanish republican community in exile in Mexico City was the Café “Betis” at calle 16 de Septiembre no. 13-A in the historical city centre. In Martínez’s words, the “Betis” was “spacious, with modern installations, subdivided into compartments with room for four or five tables, if not completely isolated, still enough for grouped gatherings the formation of which was influenced by regional affiliation, political tendencies, or simply acquaintance or friendship.”<sup>454</sup> Unsurprisingly, active Spanish communists such as Antonio Pacheco Gutiérrez had their daily routine followed by agents of the US-American intelligence to the Café “Betis”, too.<sup>455</sup> Serafín Arcas Echeverría, a Basque communist who was believed to have been the chief of the Foreign Section of the Spanish republican Military Intelligence Service

s. fol.

451 Report on the Soviet embassy and its networks in Mexico City by inspectors Juan Sánchez de Tagle and José R. Gracián to the director of *Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales* (9 Sep 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

452 Dispatch by US Department of State to the US ambassador in Mexico (10 Apr 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800S – 800C General, s. fol.; on the career of George Mink see: Vernon L. Pedersen: „George Mink, the Marine Workers Industrial Union, and the Comintern in America”, *Labor History* 41/3 (2000), pp. 307-20.

453 See the personal memorandum (18 Sep 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 2.

454 Carlos Martínez: *Crónica de una Emigración (la de los republicanos españoles en 1939)* (México, D.F., 1959), p. 26.

455 Cf. the personal memorandum on Antonio Collantes Terán, Luis Suárez López, and Antonio Pacheco Gutiérrez (21 Oct 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.



(SIM), was “constantly seen in the Café Betis”.<sup>456</sup> For Manuel González Bastante, the Café “Betis” was the most similar to the *Parroquia* in Veracruz which had been frequented by most of the European refugees during their very first days after their arrival in Mexico, “the most similar – in terms of the human environment, not in terms of its decoration.”<sup>457</sup> To him, the memory of sociability in the Café “Betis” appeared fresh even after almost half a century:

During the week we refugees went [there], we talked about politics, bull fighting, about football, finally, about all those things, about all those topics, but on Saturdays and Sundays the women went [there] [...] and while the women talked about their issues, the men talked about politics, and the little boys [...] ran around the Café, pushing over chairs, toppling vases, uh, running up the stairs which were there in the centre [of the café], hitting their heads [...] that was a symbol of a Mexico where one felt at home. I lived, say, as if asleep for five or six years, asleep in the sense that I forgot about Spain so that I felt the presence of that Mexico.<sup>458</sup>

The most important function of sociability in the cafés of Mexico City consisted of the maintenance of stable social circles of friends and compatriots who would meet regularly at the gatherings (*tertulias*) in the cafés of the city centre. These groups were inscribed in the social topography of the city around the cafés and were invariably linked to specific locations. “In the Betis, for example, one of our fellow regulars – I do not speak of a group of regulars, because there were six or seven groups of regulars – was José Mancisidor who was a writer, a revolutionary writer.”<sup>459</sup> Mancisidor was president of the *Federación de Organismos de Ayuda a los Refugiados Españoles* (FOARE) as well as the *Sociedad de Amigos de la Unión de las Repúblicas Soviéticas Socialistas* (SAURSS) and therefore one of the most important key figures among the anti-fascist and pro-Soviet Left in Mexico City. Another group of regulars in the “Betis” consisted of the military, political and administrative former elite of the Spanish Republic:

There went, uh, general [Leopoldo] Menéndez went there, general [Francisco] Llano de la Encomienda went there, general [Juan] Hernández Sarabia went there, Luis, I think, was there, [Luis] Fernández Clérigo who was a republican member of parliament for Sevilla who had been vice president of the Cortes.<sup>460</sup>

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456 Memorandum on Serafín Arcas Echeverría (8 Oct 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

457 Interview with Manuel González Bastante (conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón Dec 1987 / Jan 1988) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/095, p. 579.

458 Ibid., pp. 579-80.

459 Ibid., pp. 580-1.

460 Ibid., p. 581.

Another circle of regulars united Spanish socialists in exile, “one of the regulars of that circle was Enrique de Francisco who had been president of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* [PSOE], had been the closest collaborator of Francisco Largo Caballero, and he was in Mexico, say, the representative of exactly the more or less radical tendency of socialism represented by Largo Caballero.” Among the other members of this circle whom González Bastante remembered were the activist of agriculturalists in the UGT José Cañizares, the former navy commissioner and socialist Member of Parliament Bruno Alonso, and the UGT activist from Alicante and member of the *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”* in Mexico Luis Delltel.<sup>461</sup>

In this way, the informal sociability of exile also served the function of differentiation of professional, political, and regional affiliations among the refugees. Already in 1941, Eulalio Ferrer Rodríguez had made a first attempt at a systematic overview of the different locations and their social function among the communities in exile:

In the »Tupinamba« the patriarchal figure of general José Miaja stands out. [...] Around him there are lots of aficionados of football and bullfighting. The politicians, on the other hand, frequent the »El Papagayo«. The poets, under the leadership of León Felipe and a *flamenco santanderino* [the musicologist] José Domingo Samperio, alternate between the »El Sorrento« [adjacent to the Alameda Central] and the »El Campoamor« [at calle Bolívar no. 38]. Other poets, such as Pedro Garfias and Juan Rejano, prefer »El Puerto de Cadiz«, on one side of the *Alameda Central* where Mexican writers are drinking beer and tequila. In the »La Parroquia« the Cantabrians dominate: Enrique and José Vega Trápaga, Juan José Lastra, Gregorio Villarias, Roque Alonso, Jesús Revaque, Arturo Canencia, Wenceslao Solinís, Mateo Toca, my father... and an Asturian poet who is not in exile, but still close to democracy with an anarchist flavor, Alfonso Camín.<sup>462</sup>

The list of informal meeting places of the Spanish community in exile can be completed with the names of the Café “Do Brasil” at calle Bolívar no. 49 and the “Fornos” at no. 20 of the same street, the Café “Latino” at calle de López no. 39-B and the *Horchatería Valenciana* “Chufas” at no. 6 of the same street, the Café “Madrid” at calle Artículo 123 no. 17-A, the restaurant “El Hórreo” at calle Dr. Mora no. 11 overlooking the western end of the *Alameda Central*, and the Café “Tacuba” at calle Tacuba no. 28 in the *Centro Histórico*. In this way the city centre of the Mexican capital “was converted, we could say, into a *Casa de la Troya*”, as Ramón Esturau Calvo described it.<sup>463</sup> His reference to Alejandro Pérez

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461 Ibid., pp. 582-3.

462 Eulalio Ferrer Rodríguez: *Páginas del Exilio* (México, D.F., 1999), p. 116 (3 Feb 1941).

463 Interview with Ramón Esturau Calvo (conducted by Dolores Plá, Nov 1979) at BNOB,

Lugín's novel *La Casa de la Troya* (1915) is telling in that it evokes one of the most widely read novels among the Spanish academic youth during the 1920s: the story of Gerardo Roquer, a young man from Madrid who after a career of trouble in the Spanish capital is sent by his father to Santiago de Compostela to study Law, faces difficulties adapting to the provincial environment but soon begins to form friendships among his fellow students and, in spite of a chronic lack of money, lives through happy days as a student and finally encounters the love of his life.<sup>464</sup> The parallel drawn by Esturau Calvo between the popular story of student days in provincial Galicia and his own experience of exile in Mexico City suggests an almost juvenile exuberance associated with the informal sociability of exile in the city, certainly an ex-post romanticisation of sentimental memories when he recalled his experiences four decades later.

Rather than memories of happy days in exile, the informal sociability of the cafés and restaurants could also generate conflicts and demarcate the limits of political tolerance extended to the political refugees by the Mexican authorities. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1943 the periodical *El Universal* reported an incident at the restaurant "Cantabrico", also known as the Café "Asturias", owned by Spanish republican refugees at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 32 in the city centre. Five Mexicans had been arrested and later released on charges of "fifth-columnism", the public or clandestine promotion of Fascism. This story prompted the intelligence unit of the US embassy to investigate the incident: It emerged that a Spanish political refugee had overheard "favourable remarks concerning Franco" and "*Vivas!* to José Antonio Primo de Rivera, to the *Falange* and to Franco." The police was called in and the five Mexicans as well as the Spanish refugee taken for questioning to the nearest police precinct. After the incident had been explained to the investigating officer, he reportedly turned to the Spanish republican refugee with the following words:

"But don't you know that this is a free country, that anyone can talk as he pleases, as long as he does not make favourable talks concerning those countries at war with us, or disfavourable talks concerning our Allies? Don't you know that we are not at war with Spain, that these individuals are free to shout "Vivas" to Franco? Haven't we given you Spanish refugees hospitality? This does not mean at all that you are here to accuse Mexicans of being Franco sympathisers."

The report continues that the Spanish refugee had been fined one hundred pesos, while three of the five Mexicans who were accused of sympathies with Spanish fascism allegedly "produced credentials at the »Delegación« which showed that

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Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/061, p. 148.

464 Cf. Alejandro Pérez Lugín: *La Casa de la Troya* (Madrid, 1915), transl. as *The House of Troy* (Boston, 1922).

they are employees of the Secretaría de Gobernación.”<sup>465</sup> Whether or not this report presents an accurate account of the events of that night, it remains worth noting that spaces of informal sociability in Mexico City not only facilitated localised practices of political and regional belonging among the communities of exile but also contained the potential for conflicts and was open to outside influences by clandestine actors who observed, even actively interfered with these spaces of politicised social practice.

Other nationalities in exile do not seem to have maintained such a strong and vibrant culture of sociability across the city. The Austrian anti-fascist community in exile was known to socialise around the Parque México in the district of *Hipódromo*, either in the Café “Parque” at Avenida México no. 71, or the bar of the Hotel “Hipódromo” further north at Insurgentes no. 287, and finally opened up their own coffee house in the form of the Café “Victoria” at Plaza Popocatepetl, just north of the Parque México.<sup>466</sup> The Café “París” at Avenida 5 de Mayo no. 8 was not only the birthplace of the *Casa Regional Valenciana* but also a regular meeting place for the small Hungarian community in exile.<sup>467</sup> The non-sectarian German *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* would, during the last phase of its existence, occasionally meet at the restaurant *Conti* at calle Dolores no. 11, owned by the German socialist in exile Max Diamant.<sup>468</sup>

Practices of informal sociability also included a specific element of appropriating urban space that involved the rooftops of Mexico City. The *azoteas* (roof terraces), at first, came to the attention of the refugees as opportunities for affordable accommodation, especially for those living alone with little financial means at their disposal. Many Mexican apartment buildings in Mexico City were designed with small extra rooms built on the flat rooftops, just large enough to contain a bed, a table, and a chair with shared sanitary facilities. Originally, their purpose had been to house the domestic servants of the families living in the apartments below, but for many refugees, they presented opportunities for cheap accommodation during the first phase of their stay in the capital city.<sup>469</sup> When Walter Janka arrived in Mexico City in December 1941, he used such a servant’s

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465 See the report on the investigation by the intelligence unit of the US embassy (17 Jun 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, s. fol.

466 See the memorandum on activities of European communities in exile by Inspector PS-53 (10 Dec 1941) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 87, exp. 1, fol. 113; cf. „Klub der Oesterreicher in Mexiko“, *Austria Libre* III/6-7 (Jun-Jul 1944), p. 8; see also *Alemania Libre*. I/12 (12 Oct 1942), p. 39.

467 See the memorandum on activities of European communities in exile by Inspector PS-53 (10 Dec 1941) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 87, exp. 1, fol. 113.

468 See the surveillance report by Inspector PS-34 (11 Jan 1942) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 93, exp. 13, fol. 1.

469 These small cabins on the *azoteas* of Mexico City also attracted some literary attention, e.g. when Max Aub let his protagonist “Nacho” take up such lodgings in the historic city centre upon his arrival in the Mexican capital, see: Max Aub: „La verdadera historia de la muerte de Francisco Franco”, in: Id.: *Escritos sobre el Exilio* (Valencia, 2008), p. 86.

cabin on the rooftop of a modern building at Parque Melchor Ocampo no. 38 in the district of *Cuauhtémoc* which Ralph Roeder let him use during his early days of exile in Mexico.<sup>470</sup> The Czech writer Lenka Reinerová found such an accommodation in the district of *Condesa* with the help of her friend Dragutin “Duschko” Fodor (better known under his German *nom-de-plume* Theodor Balk, and later Reinerová’s husband):

Duschko found for me a small room under the flat roof of a big, modern building in the beautiful Avenida Nuevo León. My neighbours are a Catalan poet and his wife, on the other side of the roof Hilda [Maddalena] and another woman from Rieucros [a French interment camp] set up home. Originally these rooms were meant for the domestic servants of the inhabitants. The European immigrants, however, soon found out that one could live here cheaply, and the property owners did not object to the fact that the capital return of their houses still increased somewhat in this way.<sup>471</sup>

While many refugees only used such accommodation very temporarily during the first days of their stay in the city<sup>472</sup>, Reinerová turned her first improvised and cramped accommodation into an opportunity to explore the city from a vertical perspective:

My room is so small that I am struggling to fit in a bed, a table, a chair and a shelf for books and crockery. Someone lent me a trunk to use as a cupboard. But the window in the wall is wide and opens the view on the beautiful, unknown city. [...] Below my window four rows of big palmtrees block the view onto the lively street. Day and night luxury cars are gliding along fast and without a sound. Between them some indios are squeezing through, who are chasing their modest subsistence in a hundred different ways. [...] It could be a happy country this beautiful Mexico, if only luxury and misery, the wealthy and the beggars would not exist together everywhere.<sup>473</sup>

The poet Joan Gil-Albert Simón from Valencia had found accommodation in the district of *Roma Norte*, close to the bullfighting ring between Avenida Oaxaca and calle Durango where he experienced the rooftops of Mexico City in a somewhat different way, directing his gaze upwards into the sky:

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470 Walter Janka: *Spuren eines Lebens* (Berlin, 1991), p. 187.

471 Lenka Reiner[ová]: *Grenze geschlossen* (Berlin, 1958), p. 282.

472 See e.g. the interviews with José María Muría (conducted by Dolores Plá, Aug 1979) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/040, p. 282, and with Ramón Costa-Jou (conducted by Concepción Ruiz-Funes, Sep/Oct 1987) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/084, p. 110.

473 Lenka Reiner[ová]: *Grenze geschlossen* (Berlin, 1958), p. 282; cf. the interview with Lenka Reinerová in the the TV documentary „*Flucht nach Mexiko. Deutsche im Exil*“, directed by Gerlinde Böhm (SFB / Goethe-Institut, 1994), Min. 33:57 – 34:50.

We were on the top floor, in the open, what must have been servants' lodgings, you know?, with showers on the opposite side [...] these open spaces faced the courtyard, and we went up to the roof of the building and there we would enjoy the sun of México while the beautiful clouds were passing by, right?, and those skies [...] they are often represented in my poems. And sometimes we would even cook meals there [...].<sup>474</sup>

Beyond private spaces of accommodation, the rooftops also took on social and political functions which contributed to the political culture of exile in Mexico City. Alexander Abusch recalled the sociability of the German communists in exile as a practice of gatherings th the private homes of Egon Erwin Kisch, André Simone, Steffi Spira-Ruschin, and “the apartment of Bodo Uhse which was connected to a small roof garden.”<sup>475</sup> More important were public events which served to advertise and raise money for the activities of the nascent exile movement *Alemania Libre* in December 1941. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of December the core group of German communists managed to stage a fund-raising event aimed at US-American tourists in the city on the roof garden of the prestigious Hotel “Reforma”. Just days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and the German declaration of war against the United States, Ludwig Renn spoke about “Why Hitler attacked the Americas”. The event was organised by the US-American writer Ralph Roeder, advertised by posters in the major hotels of the city, and held in English. The occasion culminated, as Paul Merker (the leader of the German communist group in Mexico) recalled, in a collection of donations from the tourists “towards the material support of the anti-fascist struggle. The result was always favourable.”<sup>476</sup> Such approaches towards the US-American colony in Mexico City were documented by the US embassy who were suspicious of Renn's political loyalties:

He speaks English awkwardly and stutters, but his statements were most valuable, and interesting, and he ended his speech with the wish expressed to keep a united sentiment for the effort made so far by the United States to keep this hemisphere on the side of the defenders of Democracy.

The intelligence report did not fail to mention the detail that “Renn appeared with two bodyguards, one a Cuban negro.”<sup>477</sup> The use of the rooftops of Mexico City was no invention of the European refugees who arrived in the city since 1939, but

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474 Interview with Juan Gil-Albert Simón (conducted by Elena Aub, May 1980, Dec 1981) at BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra, PHO/10/ESP23, p. 69.

475 Alexander Abusch: *Mit offenem Visier. Memoiren* (Berlin, 1986), p. 35.

476 Paul Merker: *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika* (1965) at BAL, NY4102/6, Nachlaß Paul Merker, fols. 466-7.

477 Memorandum on Ludwig Renn (7 Dec 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

reflected an established practice by parts of the post-revolutionary *avant-garde* of Mexico. Since the early days of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the wealthier parts of the Mexican middle classes began to leave the city centre for more spacious domiciles in the newly-developed districts further west, the rooftops had become a convenient and inspiring environment for the experimental creativity of intellectuals and artists, such as the writer Alfonso Reyes, the painter Gerardo Murillo (known as Dr. Atl), his model, herself a painter, Carmen Mondragón (known as Nahui Olín), the photographers Edward Weston and Tina Modotti, or the writer Salvador Novo.<sup>478</sup> Their exploits high above the rest of the city often included a degree of sexual libertinage, including the open practice of homosexuality that challenged the received norms and sensitivities of the post-revolutionary Mexican bourgeoisie. Some European political refugees who arrived around 1940 picked up on these avantgardistic practices. The spaces of informal sociability in exile in Mexico City thus provided a diverse spectrum of topographical nodes that could foster sociability and the integration of sub-groups as well as differentiate and institutionalise the fragmentation and occasional animosity between such groups. The cafés of the Spanish community in exile appear to have belonged to a mode of sociability that operated on the premise of the “*transtierro*” rather than “*destierro*” of exile in Mexico City, the idea that the Spanish republicans had not lost their homeland but rather had brought it with them to Mexico where they re-established familiar rituals and social practices that suggested a continuity of republican social and political practice. The rooftops, on the other hand, had been a reflection of an established physical context of *avant-garde* sociability and politics which was adopted by a small, but significant part of the European community of exile in the city.

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478 See Valeria Luiselli: „Trespassers on the rooftops: a secret history of Mexico City's cultural revolutionaries”, *The Guardian* (6 Nov 2015), online resource: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/nov/06/trespassers-on-the-rooftops-secret-history-mexico-city-cultural-revolutionaries>





Part III

Political Practice in exile in Mexico City



### a. Consolidation of Exile (1939 – 1941)

The first step in consolidating the politics of exile in Mexico had been the inauguration of the *Centro Republicano Español* on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1939 in the former building of the Spanish consulate at Calle Balderas no. 37. While the first major evacuation transport of Spanish refugees had yet to arrive in the harbour of Veracruz, the occasion united the most prominent members of the Spanish intellectual community in Mexico City and was designed to lay claim to some form of diplomatic presence of the Spanish Republic in Mexico: The location was the former Spanish republican consulate in Mexico City, and among the Spanish republicans attending the inauguration were general José Miaja, the republican commander responsible for the defence of Madrid, the left-wing socialist Julio Álvarez del Vayo<sup>1</sup>, former foreign secretary of the Spanish Republic, the former Spanish-republican ambassador to Mexico Félix Gordón Ordaz, the first president of the *Centro Republicano Español* Enrique Díez-Canedo, the medical doctor and former under-secretary of the Spanish republican ministry of public health Manuel Martínez Báez, the poet León Felipe, the Mexican writers and diplomats Alfonso Reyes and Rubén Romero, and the former *Chargé d’Affairs* of the Spanish-republican embassy in Mexico, José Loredó Aparicio, who served as the first secretary of the *Centro Republicano*. The pro-republican faction from among the Spanish ex-patriate community in the city celebrated the occasion until late at night. After the dinner, so noticed the right-wing oppositional newspaper *Excelsior* with noticeable indignation, “the entanglement that exists between the intellectuals and representatives of the Mexican government and the leading members of the *Centro Español* became evident.”<sup>2</sup>

Of equal interest are two leading members of the Spanish republican community who failed to attend the occasion: three days earlier, the last prime minister of the Spanish Republic, Juan Negrín López, had arrived in Mexico City by plane from New York and was received together with his former foreign secretary Julio Álvarez del Vayo by Vicente Lombardo Toledano, the leader of the corporatist Mexican trade union *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM). After making the way from the airport to the city centre in a special motorcade with a motorcycle escort, Negrín spoke to the assembled crowd from the balcony of the union headquarters at Avenida Madero no. 74 in the historic city centre:

For the time being, the struggle on the battle fields is over, and I hope that it will not re-start on the battle fields, but in other respects, the struggle continues, and in those, in peace, we need to achieve a triumph, and we, the Spaniards – forgive me if I am now talking exclusively of the Spaniards – we will achieve the unity of Spain; we

1 On Álvarez del Vayo see: Abdón Mateos: *Julio Álvarez del Vayo y México*, online resource: [https://www.academia.edu/19689954/Julio\\_Alvarez\\_del\\_Vayo\\_y\\_México](https://www.academia.edu/19689954/Julio_Alvarez_del_Vayo_y_México) [4 May 2018].

2 „Se inauguró el Centro Español. Asistieron los Sres. Miaja y Del Vayo; pero no fué Indalecio Prieto”, *Excelsior* (11 Jun 1939).

will achieve a national reconciliation which had been the government's programme during the last years of struggle. And may this be an example for all nations and all democracies [...]

And Álvarez del Vayo added: "The Spanish Republic is not dead, it is alive and will be, sooner than many imagine it, the democratic and free Spain, the Spain of the Spanish people."<sup>3</sup> Among the Mexican officials and leaders of the Spanish republican community in Mexico City who had welcomed Negrín and Álvarez del Vayo at the airport had been representatives of the Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas, the Mexican foreign ministry, the *Secretaría de Gobernación*, the former Spanish republican government, the FOARE, and the Spanish Communist Party, but more noteworthy was the absence of the former Spanish republican ambassador to Mexico, Félix Gordón Ordaz, of general José Miaja (who in Madrid had led a military revolt against Negrín's government only in March), and the leading Spanish socialist Indalecio Prieto who had taken control of the so-called treasure of the yacht "Vita" that had transferred the remaining assets of the Spanish Republic to Mexico.<sup>4</sup> Instead of the head of the CTARE, José Puche Álvarez, who had been entrusted by Negrín with the treasure of the "Vita" to finance the aid and relieve activities of CTARE, it was now Prieto who controlled the funds (and would later use them to finance his own aid organisation, the JARE). Three days later, Prieto (like Negrín) was also absent from the inauguration of the *Centro Republicano Español* in the former Spanish consulate in Calle Balderas no. 37. During the three weeks of Negrín's visit in the city, the two adversaries Negrín and Prieto would not meet, as the latter avoided all invitations by Negrín, and the correspondence between the two leaders of the Spanish socialists in exile during the second half of the month betrays not only political differences, but also a deep and bitter personal rift between them which fuelled the animosity between their respective camps of followers of Spanish republicans in exile.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that both assumed the other to be present at the inauguration of the *Centro Republicano Español* and, thus, avoided the occasion. Meanwhile, general José Miaja would not greet Negrín at the airport and, the following day, instead accepted a banquet given in his honour by the Mexican military leadership including the Mexican defence minister Jesús Agustín Castro in the *Club France* at calle Río Nazas no. 43 in the district of *Cuauhtémoc* – an event which, in turn, Negrín did not attend, and to which he may not even have been invited.<sup>6</sup> Such public displays of disunity did not improve the critical

3 „Un ejemplo para todas las democracias será el futuro triunfo de los republicanos”, *Excélsior* (8 Jun 1939), p. 9.

4 Ibid.

5 See the letters exchanged between Juan Negrín, Francisco Méndez Aspe, and Indalecio Prieto at the Special Collections & Archives, University of California San Diego, online resource: [https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb4576135c/\\_1.pdf](https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb4576135c/_1.pdf) [12 Apr 2018]; on the disintegration of the relationship between Negrín and Prieto in May/June 1939 see also Jose Antonio Matesanz: *Las Raíces del Exilio. México ante la guerra civil española* (México D.F., 1999), pp. 435-44.

6 „Representantes del Ejército dieron un banquete al Señor general José Miaja”, *Excélsior* (9 Jun

perception of the Spanish community in exile to which it was subjected by the Mexican right-wing opposition which had not approved of the offer of asylum to the Spanish republicans by the Cárdenas administration.

While, during the first months of exile in Mexico, the immediate priorities included the support and aid for the newly-arrived groups of political refugees, the provision of housing, food, opportunities for employment, and (in the Spanish case) the establishment of schools for the children, public manifestations of political activity outside the established centres of the ex-patriate communities or the *Centro Republicano* remained relatively rare. The unexpected news of the Molotov-Ribbentrop-Agreement of August 1939 caused a fundamental disruption of the anti-fascist political spectrum in the city. The simultaneous crisis of the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) demonstrated the weakness of the popular front policies which the party had promoted throughout the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas. While the cooperation with Cardenas' ruling government party PRM had led to a spectacular rise in membership and considerable achievements for the social-revolutionary policies of *Cardenismo*, the PCM under the leadership of Hernán Laborde and Valentín Campa had also encountered serious problems of alleged corruption and the disorganisation of membership and finances. When the Comintern sent the Argentinian communist leader Vittorio Codovilla as an "adviser" to intervene in the crisis of the Mexican communists, other issues such as the unwillingness of Laborde and Campa to support and implement the anti-Trotsky campaign added to the crisis which culminated in March 1940 in an extraordinary party conference which expelled Laborde and Campa, replaced them with the provincial communist functionary Dionisio Encina, and brought the PCM under the strict control of the Soviet leadership.<sup>7</sup> International affairs such as the Soviet attack on Finland in December 1939 had also a negative impact on the politics of communism in exile, as the right-wing oppositional press eagerly traced any sign of public unrest that could be attributed to foreign communists. By the end of 1939, the political climate in the city was tense when the periodical *Excélsior* accused communist refugees of causing a disturbance at a meeting that was held at calle Isabel la Católica no. 2 in the historic city centre on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December. The paper reported shouting matches among those present which provoked responses of "Viva Finlandia!" on the part of the anti-communists.<sup>8</sup> Already in June 1939, on the day of the inauguration of the *Centro Republicano Español*, the paper had emphasised its stance of qualified hospitality to the Spanish republican refugees. While welcoming the refugees was acknowledged as a humanitarian duty, political reservations remained strong:

1939), p. 3.

7 See Barry Carr: *Marxism and Communism in twentieth-century Mexico* (London, 1992), pp. 50-75; cf. Olivia Gall: *Trotsky en México y la vida política en tiempos de Lázaro Cárdenas, 1937-1940* (México, D.F., 1991); cf. *¡Fuera el imperialismo y sus agentes! ¡Unidos para hacer avanzar la revolución! Informe rendido por el camarada Dionisio Encina en el primer Congreso extraordinario del Partido Comunista de México* (México D.F., 1940).

8 „Provocan varios refugiados comunistas un tumulto“, *Excélsior* (30 Dec 1939), pp. 1 & 6.

An attitude of this nature by the Mexicans must oblige all and every one of our guests to reciprocity; it must oblige them to it, since while they are being received warmly and left in peace, the minimum one can ask from them is that they comport themselves in the same way, that is to say, that they abstain from interfering in our affairs and dedicate themselves only to cooperating in the common effort of increasing [the prosperity of] the nation which, temporarily or indefinitely, regards them as their own.<sup>9</sup>

Such warning needed to be taken seriously and had an impact on the public statements by the communities of exile in Mexico, such as the first “Manifiesto” of the *Juventud Republicana Española*, a youth organisation associated with the political centre-ground of Spanish republicanism organised in the *Centro Republicano*. Signed in March 1940 by, among other Spanish refugees from across the American continent, the youth organisers Juan Bautista Climent, Tomás Ballesta, Francisco Varea, Jesús Bernárdez, the chemist and teacher at the *Instituto Hispano-Mexicano "Ruiz de Alarcón"* Francisco Giral, and José Miaja Isaac (the son of the famous general of Madrid), the manifesto made the cautious position of the Spanish youth in exile unmistakably clear:

Against any interference in the politics of Mexico

As a question of fundamental principle, we consider it necessary to declare that while we regard it as natural and a duty that the Spanish refugees in Mexico uphold their political feelings which constitute their *raison-d'être* as Spaniards and emigrants, it would, without doubt, be an attack against the respect that we owe to the Mexican people and generally harmful for the Spanish emigration, if we engaged in political activities that would impact on the domestic regime of the country that received us.<sup>10</sup>

However, the Spanish youth organisation made it clear that certain issues of international politics could not be left uncommented as the anti-communist Spanish republicans declared their “firmest condemnation of the methods of terror and barbarism by totalitarian nations which, in their ongoing policy of aggression against the smaller nations have imposed a regime of brute force as the only international norm [...]” Their own experiences and the fate of the Spanish Republic thereby served as markers of their opposition to both fascist and communist actions in Europe:

[...] with the authority awarded by having defended our national independence through three years of war together with the principle of

9 Ignacio Morelos Zaragoza: „Los Refugiados Españoles”, *Excelsior* (10 Jun 1939), p. 5.

10 „Manifiesto de la Juventud Republicana Española” (10 Mar 1940) at AEM, caja 44, exp. 424, fol. 186.

independence of all people, we document our repulsion by the aggression to which the Finnish people have been subjected, whose peaceful life and exemplary diligence invalidates any attempt to justify the invasion by the USSR, and places at its side our universal sympathy with that of all free men.<sup>11</sup>

This brand of republican anti-totalitarianism also inspired one of the first Spanish organisations in exile that aimed at uniting the fractured political landscape of Spanish republicanism in exile. During the summer of 1940, the *Acción Republicana Española* (ARE) under the presidency of Álvaro Pascual Leone united Spanish republicans of the *Izquierda Republicana*, the *Unión Democrática*, and the *Partido Republicano Federal*. Among the board of directors figured key members of the former political and military elite of the Spanish Republic, such as the former president of the Spanish *Cortes* Diego Martínez Barrio, the former cabinet ministers Álvaro de Albornoz, Ángel Ossorio Gallardo, Carlos Esplá, Augusto Barcia, Amós Salvador Carreras, and Bernardo Giner de los Ríos, the former generals José Miaja, José Asensio, and Sebastián Pozas, the scientist Cándido Bolívar Pieltain, and the ex-diplomats Félix Gordón Ordaz and Mariano Ruiz Funes.<sup>12</sup> An address to “All Spaniards” reiterated and emphasised the loyalty to the Spanish Republic, even though it did not possess an internationally recognised voice: “If one could have anticipated the European war, today there would exist, even if in exile, a Spanish republican government, as have Belgium, Holland, Norway, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Free France... But no one may ignore that there exists a republican spirit, a republican people, a republican representation, ready to examine formulas of international and democratic cooperation.” But such cooperation would have a clear limit when it came to the question of collaboration with communism. The confrontation of the two major totalitarian European powers during the Spanish Civil War had given way to a new, united threat to liberal democracy to which the ARE adhered explicitly:

The collaboration of German nazism with Russian communism results in a tragic farce for the Falangists who believed to fight against communism and for the communists who believed to fight against the Falange. The two totalitarian myths have united as brothers. We say to all our fellow emigrants that they may not tolerate communist infiltration, motivated by a false sense of solidarity which could be fostered disingenuously by a sentimental exacerbation which the situation of exile may bring with it. We only feel truly united with liberal forces of good will from the clean currents of conservatism to the most progressive who are ready to work towards the reconstruction of their country, who receive neither orders nor instructions from foreign powers.<sup>13</sup>

11 Ibid., fol. 187.

12 Cf. the leadership of the *Acción Republicana Española* at AEM, caja 43, exp. 414, fol. 22.

The climate of domestic politics in Mexico started to reach its climax of polarisation and political violence during the run-up to the presidential elections of the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 1940. For many European refugees, their firm commitment to the anti-fascist cause and their loyalty to the Cárdenas administration meant they were being perceived by the right-wing opposition as potential sources of political unrest and affiliates in an attempt by the governing party PRM to consolidate their grip on political power by promoting the centrist candidate Manuel Ávila Camacho to the presidency against his right-wing opponent Juan Andreu Almazán. The increasingly tumultuous nature of Mexican politics did not escape the attention of the refugees, such as the German communist writer Bodo Uhse who had arrived in Mexico City from the United States on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March. Almost immediately, he had been asked to read from his work at a meeting of the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana*, an evening that infused him with the tense political atmosphere in the city:

The day before yesterday I was reading at the Liga Pro-Cultura. First from the “Sons” and then from the “Attack on Wyst”. Half-way through the reading tumultuous noise breaks out in the street. Unclear whether a demonstration by the Almazanistas or by the CTM. Unrest and nervousness, sleepless night. The dogs are barking, the roosters are crowing. In the distance, bengal flares are being shot [in the air]. The trains are howling.<sup>14</sup>

Shortly after, Uhse attended a meeting of communists in exile who tried to absorb the results of the extraordinary party conference of the PCM and its implications for the upcoming presidential elections in Mexico:

Discussion of the party congress among the friends [i.e. the communists]. Alfred [Miller]’s terrible presentation. I even had to ask which the slogans were now. [...] The party does not have a slogan for the elections. More precisely, it does have a slogan against Almazán, but not a word for Camacho. »But think of our experiences in France.« – But the elections are an important event. Even if not the elections (»Camacho surely will not get the numbers wrong.«), then still the election campaign and the preparation for repelling a fascist *coup d’état*.<sup>15</sup>

Evidently, the communist community in exile was deeply involved in the critical developments of Mexican politics, even if they were prevented from interfering openly in the campaign. When Uhse did take to the streets of Mexico City in order

13 „A los Españoles“ (1940/41) at AEM, caja 43, exp. 414, fol. 23-6, quote on fol. 23.

14 Diary of Bodo Uhse at AdK, Nachlaß Bodo Uhse, Tagebuchaufzeichnungen (late March 1940), fol. 97.

15 Diary of Bodo Uhse at AdK, Nachlaß Bodo Uhse, Tagebuchaufzeichnungen (3 Apr 1940), fol. 97.



to demonstrate his support for the Cárdenas administration, he did so as part of groups of veterans of the Spanish Civil War who mingled with the crowds in the *Zócalo*:

In the morning demonstration against the US-American oil demands. Marched with the Spanish veterans, Ludwig [Renn], [Pedro Martínez] Cartón, Carlos [Contreras]. The song of the Spaniards: »Todos los caminos me mandan a volver«. Cárdenas on the balcony of the Palacio Nacional. In the evening, Hannes Meyer says that the demonstration on the whole had left a feeble impression. [Ignacio Hidalgo de] Cisneros talks about rumours of a *coup d'état*. Above all, the air force would be unreliable.<sup>16</sup>

In this way, the communist veterans of the Spanish Civil War did become involved directly in the domestic politics of their host country by displaying their loyalty to the regime of the PRM. This relationship with the institutional power centres of post-revolutionary Mexico proved useful when the refugees wanted to make their voices heard and promoted the cause of European anti-fascism without entering the public sphere in their own right in order to avoid the suspicion of the right-wing opposition and the *Secretaría de Gobernación*. During this phase of republican exile in Mexico, access to public spaces to promote the anti-fascist cause of the political refugees was usually organised and provided by Mexican organisations and institutions, among them the *Confederación de Trabajadores de México* (CTM). Historical and political anniversaries played a major role in the Spanish republican calendar of events, such as the anniversary of the establishment of the Spanish Republic on the 14<sup>th</sup> April. In 1940, the ninth anniversary was celebrated by the refugees for the first time in Mexico, and the venue chosen for a public meeting was the *Teatro "Hidalgo"* in calle Regina no. 52 in the south of the *Centro Histórico*. The public event was opened by Leandro Carro, a leading member of the Basque Communist Party, who denounced the atrocities of the Franco regime in Spain and laid out the task ahead for the anti-fascist opposition in exile. The aim, in his view, would have to be a struggle for a "popular republic, but without those who by their incompetence or their treason have made possible the uprising [of the nationalist military] and without those who today play the game of the reaction," His words met, as was duly noted by the communist periodical *España Popular*, with "great ovations". The second speaker José Mancisidor, president of the Mexican FOARE, warned of the "imperialist Yankee threat" to Mexico and addressed the Spanish republican refugees: "As far as Spain is concerned, you are the ones called upon to give orders; we are ready to obey." The cultural secretary of the CTM, David Vilchis, added that "the defeat which the republic suffered is transitory and that the whole Mexican proletariat has absolute faith in its eventual triumph." He specifically referred to the Soviet Union as the "defender of peace" and emphasised the "most

<sup>16</sup> Diary of Bodo Uhse at AdK, Nachlaß Bodo Uhse, Tagebuchaufzeichnungen (11 Apr 1940), fol. 98.

important role it plays in the world.”<sup>17</sup> The CTM, thus, provided the public venue and the institutional support for the pro-Soviet current of Spanish republican politics in exile.

The Spanish socialists, for their part, reacted to this public presence of the Spanish communists and their allies in the city by re-organising the faction of the anti-communist followers of Indalecio Prieto in the form of the *Círculo Cultural “Pablo Iglesias”*, a political sub-group of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE), named after its founder. Just one week after the public meeting at the *Teatro “Hidalgo”*, the *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”* constituted itself on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 1940 at calle Morelos no. 57-1 in the district of *Centro*. The event was closely watched by the functionaries of CTARE who belonged to the rival faction of *negrinistas* within the PSOE. The occasion featured Indalecio Prieto himself addressing his socialist followers who had, so the observers of the CATRE noted, “returned for this reason to the capital from which he had been absent a number of days which gave rise to a number of rumours.”<sup>18</sup> The event was presided over by the first president of the *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”*, Víctor Salazar Herrero, and among the most prominent socialists in attendance were the club’s vice president Alejandro Otero Fernández, the secretary Pedro Longueira Patino, as well as Jacinto Lozano, Manuel Albar, and Lucio Martínez Gil.<sup>19</sup> With great pathos, Salazar opened the proceedings by invoking the memory of Pablo Iglesias “because we consider ourselves spiritual and moral heirs of that venerable and magnificent man who did not know moments of weakness during the struggle and whose memory rests in all socialist hearts, surrounded by a halo of glory.” The *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”*, in his words, united the “Spanish socialists located, by accident, in the Mexican capital.” He reminded his audience that whenever socialists unite, “it is in order to work”, and he laid out the objectives of the new socialist organisation: first of all, to raise the socialist party back up from its downfall while “giving it back such vigour which has made it fearsome in other days.” For this purpose, the party needed to adopt “rigid norms, as rigid as our work requires”, and he continued, “we will not allow a repeat of the shame that pretentious young and inexperienced young charlatans turn themselves into preceptors and rulers! Neither that some old people, damaged by idiocy, arrogance, and senile vanity, believe that the party must by a docile disk which revolves around the whims of their insanity!” Salazar invoked the resistance within Spain as well as world historical examples to encourage the republican cause, before introducing Prieto as the main speaker: “Within us lives the

17 “14 de Abril en México. Gran mitin en el Teatro Hidalgo”, *España Popular* I/10 (18 Apr 1940), p. 6.

18 See the “confidential information” on the event (22 Apr 1940) at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 140, exp. 6579, s. fol.; on Prieto’s activities in Mexico at that time see: Abdón Mateos: „La »embajada oficiosa« de Indalecio Prieto en México durante la presidencia de Lázaro Cárdenas, 1939-1940”, *Revista de Indias* 63/228 (2003), pp. 541-60.

19 See the “confidential information” on the event (22 Apr 1940) at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 140, exp. 6579, s. fol.

powerful will to fight. Fortunately, we can rely on teachers who will show us the best way forward. Listen to the most eminent of all, comrade Indalecio Prieto speaks to you.”<sup>20</sup>

Prieto, in his own address, celebrated the contribution of the socialist party and the socialist trade union *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT) to the republican cause, before immediately warning against the “communist infection” which during the Spanish Civil War had led, in his account, to the alienation from the Western powers of France and Britain while splitting the socialist party and attracting whole sections such as the socialist youth and the socialist party of Catalonia into the “orbit of the Third International”.<sup>21</sup> Prieto identified a political “vice of smugness” among republican socialism and recapitulated a number of strategic mistakes of the socialist party while deploring that his own attempts to rectify the mistakes of Negrín’s popular front government had gone unheeded. His main conclusion for the socialist republican in exile was simple:

If someone deems it possible, whatever form the decomposition of Francoism may take, to restore the democratic institutions of Spain on the basis of communist predominance, he must be mad. Communism repels the whole of Spain; it repels our incarcerated fighters; it would repel, if they could speak, our dead, those murdered from behind... (The applause makes it impossible to hear the rest of the paragraph.)<sup>22</sup>

The ideological consequences which Prieto drew from his staunch anti-communism consisted in republican nationalism which he offered as an antidote to the threat of communist internationalism: “[...] without breaking the brotherly bonds with the rest of the world proletariat, we remain socialists, because our experience teaches us that, but Spanish!, Spanish! Spanish!”<sup>23</sup> Prieto closed his remarks with his concern that Spain could be drawn into the world war, “my fear to see Spain once again converted into fields of desolation and death is an anxiousness which distresses me most”<sup>24</sup>, and turned sharply against any tendencies of Basque separatism.<sup>25</sup> His poetic words were an appeal to republican solidarity and socialist tradition no more than to the national nostalgia of Spanishness in exile:

At this event which we are celebrating today, instead of spilling our emotion over the soil which covers our dead, let us remember, while

20 *Inauguración del Círculo “Pablo Iglesias” de México. Discurso de Indalecio Prieto. 21 de abril de 1940* (México D.F., 1940), pp. 3-7.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 28.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 31-3.

turning emotion into virility, the hundreds of thousands who are enduring torture in the Spanish prisons. If those who could serve to illuminate the path we need to take are not with us, then the memory of Pablo Iglesias may guide us whose effigy stands before us; of “grandpa”, who was a socialist, but very Spanish.<sup>26</sup>

The *Centro Cultural “Pablo Iglesias”* therefore represented a forum for the celebration of Spanishness as much as for socialist anti-communism. When Salazar applied to the *Secretaría de Gobernación* for the permit of operation for the organisation, the investigating officer took a closer look at the premises at calle Morelos no. 57:

The venue of the *Círculo* in the department 1 of the house no. 57 in Avenida Morelos consists of three rooms of which one is used for games such as Domino, Chess, Checkers etc., another occupied by the library with few volumes, periodicals, and journals, and the third which is used as the secretary’s office, and it also contains a small kitchen and shelves with bottles of liquor for the bar service.<sup>27</sup>

Salazar explained to the inspector of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* that the objectives of the *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”* were cultural and educational, and that beyond this the meetings of the *Círculo* would relate to domestic political problems of Spain. The inspector recommended that the *Círculo* be classified as a *Casino* while authorising public regulation to prevent illegal gambling. The investigating inspector reminded Salazar that any interference in Mexican politics by foreigners was strictly prohibited – probably not least since Mexico, at this moment in time, entered the last few weeks of heated campaigning during the bitterly contested presidential elections of 1940 which happened to coincide with the rapid German offensive in Western Europe that inspired far-right political movements with the supposed superiority of fascism over western democracy.

The Mexican presidential elections of 1940 turned out to be accompanied by widespread outbreaks of political violence across the country which claimed dozens of lives in the capital city alone. Robert Capa resided in the Hotel “Montejo” on Avenida de la Reforma no. 240 while he covered the election for the US-American *Life Magazine*.<sup>28</sup> The German writer Bodo Uhse had also contact to Alejandro Carrillo, the director of the periodical *El Popular* of the CTM, loyal to the PRM candidate Ávila Camacho, and was able to gather more detailed information about the events which appeared to lead the country to the brink of civil war:

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>27</sup> Report by Inspector PS-19 (24 May 1940) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 116, exp. 70, fol. 4.

<sup>28</sup> See his photographic report in *Life Magazine*: „Mexicans hold a »free« election for president at a cost of 100 killed“, *Life Magazine* (22 Jul 1940), pp. 20-1.

The first major clashes occurred in front of the *Popular* building [calle Basilio Badillo no. 9] where the fascists committed a powerful provocation. They say it took eight lives. [...] the streets were blocked by the military. The door barricaded with packages of newspapers. The people in the building sleep-deprived and nervous. Carrillo had been abandoned in his voting district by the PRM almost alone in a house full of Almazanistas. He called the PRM for help. But instead of voters they sent two pistoleros with machine guns! Other clashes occurred in front of the transmitter of the PRM, in the Alameda, and in Cinco de Mayo [street]. Capa reported this and that the police fired on the crowd when they approached the Zócalo – he was quite taken in by the scene and completely forgot in the process about the outrages committed by Almazán’s pistoleros.

Still, Bodo Uhse concluded with some detachment which may also have reflected his experiences as a member of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War: “At the end of the day, one is astonished how quietly the elections have passed, after all – given the tension and the prevailing conditions.”<sup>29</sup>

While the socialist followers of Indalecio Prieto met in the relative seclusion of their social centre at calle Morelos no. 57 and usually held their larger meetings at the *Centro Republicano Español*, the public stages of the Mexican capital city were regularly occupied by the competing current of left-wing politics of the *negrinistas* who enjoyed favourable connections with and support by the elite of Mexican politics and trade unions. The 18<sup>th</sup> of July marked the second important date in the republican calendar, the anniversary of the nationalist military revolt against the second Spanish Republic in 1936, and in 1940 this day was once again marked in the *Teatro “Hidalgo”* at calle Regina no. 52 with an event organised by the Mexican FOARE for the 20<sup>th</sup> of July.<sup>30</sup> Less than two weeks after the contested election victory of Manuel Ávila Camacho as the new president of Mexico (and while his opponent Juan Andreu Almazán had left the country), the organisers felt confident enough to enter the Mexican public with a message of international anti-fascist solidarity. They placed the mother of a Mexican cadet, Roberto Vega González who was imprisoned in Spain by the Franco regime, in the presiding chair in order to emphasise the connection between post-revolutionary Mexican politics and the cause of Spanish republicanism. Among the speakers featured representatives of the Spanish community in exile, such as Fernando Miranda, Leandro Carro, and Edmundo Domínguez, the vice president of the UGT, alongside Mexican officials, such as Estela Jiménez Esponda for the women’s section of the ruling state party PRM, Heliodoro Guirrón from the national executive of the PRM, and David Vilchis

29 Diary of Bodo Uhse at BAL, Nachlaß Bodo Uhse, Tagebuchaufzeichnungen (8 Jul 1940), fol. 102.

30 See the announcement „Mitin de solidaridad en el Teatro Hidalgo“, *España Popular* 1/21 (18 Jul 1940), p. 6.

who spoke in the name of the Mexican trade union CTM. The feeling of solidarity with the republican cause, so the communist periodical *España Popular* reported, pervaded all speeches, especially with regard to the great number of Spanish republicans stranded in North Africa where they remained in constant danger of being extradited to Spain. The paper reported that “absolute faith in the eventual triumph of the Spanish people and unconditional solidarity with its struggle were the two fundamental aspects of this transcendental mass event which was staged by the organisations representing the working people of Mexico.”<sup>31</sup>

Other public events to celebrate the Spanish republican cause were cultural in character, such as the celebration of Catalonia in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* ten days later on 28<sup>th</sup> of July 1940. The celebration of one regional identity of republican Spain was thereby meant to celebrate all regional groups, as was demonstrated by the presence of Prof. Luis Soto Fernández for Galicia, colonel Cristóbal Herrandorena for the Basque country, the communist Margarita Nelken for Spain, Jordi Benejam for Catalonia who were joined by Aurelio Manrique, director of the National Library.<sup>32</sup> The event featured “a collection of artists” and a “numerous group of Spanish teachers” who contributed “with art and skill several musical pieces, among them »Els Segadors« and the »Santa Espina« which the audience listened to standing up and filled with emotion.” Meanwhile, the celebration of culture also carried with it a political message which called for unity which, under the political circumstances of 1940, contained a veiled threat toward the anti-communist groups in exile:

[...] all the speakers who participated in this celebration with good reason harshly criticised the traitors of Catalonia, those who fight against the unity of the Catalan people serving interests which are totally alien to the cause of its liberation which is the cause of all the peoples of Spain.<sup>33</sup>

Among those who the communists deemed guilty of acts of treason (e.g. in Catalonia during the May Events of 1937) were the followers of the *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (POUM), commonly regarded as trotskyst. The communist campaign against Trotsky had reached its climax. When less than four weeks later in August 1940, the news of the assassination of Leon Trotsky in *Coyoacán* shook the public of the Mexican capital, the Spanish communist paper *España Popular* commented with personal scorn and cynicism:

That supreme traitor who was called Trotsky, that sworn enemy of the USSR and the international working class has died by the hands of

31 “Un Mitin de FOARE”, *España Popular* I/23 (1 Aug 1940), p. 3.

32 See the invitation for the 28th of July 1940 at Orfeo Català de Mèxic, Biblioteca, Activitats de L’Orfeo Català de Mèxic 1940-1959, s. fol.

33 “¡Unidos los Pueblos de España, por la Liberación común! Un homenaje al pueblo Catalán”, *España Popular* II/23 (1 Aug 1940), p. 3.

one of those adventurers of his gang. Among the gangsters die the gangsters. About the dirty counter-revolutionary role that Trotsky played speaks to us the noise made in these days by those who lost a loyal servant: the reactionaries, the exploiting classes, the imperialists of the whole world.<sup>34</sup>

Even though the true identity of Trotsky's assassin, the Spanish communist Ramón Mercader (himself a political refugee in Mexico), was not revealed until the 1950s, almost immediately there could have been little doubt as to the identity of the actual masterminds of the assassination.<sup>35</sup> When assessing the relationship of sociability and political practice in Mexico City during the early phase of European exile, it needs to be remembered that the public denunciation of "traitors" at a cultural event of Catalan song and dance could imply very serious, if not deadly implications for anyone who did not share pro-Soviet political loyalties or was not prepared to subject to the communist party's strategic line under the impact of the events on the European battlefields which, during the spring months of 1940, had seen the triumph of Nazi-Germany's forces in Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium, and France. For the political refugees, there did not exist any clear distinction between the social, cultural, and political spheres in exile in Mexico City.

During the weeks following the departure of Juan Andreu Almazán into his US-American exile in July 1940, Mexico experienced a period of extreme political uncertainty over whether the right-wing opposition would accept the defeat of 7<sup>th</sup> of July. During the transition of presidential power from Lázaro Cárdenas to president-elect Ávila Camacho, the national and metropolitan press was full of rumours of conspiracies of an imminent military uprising against the regime of the PRM.<sup>36</sup> Militant supporters of either side of the contested elections carried out raids against their opponents' offices and other gathering places in the city. Against this backdrop of a tense political crisis, it is all the more significant that the radio station XEW, located at calle Ayuntamiento no. 52 in the district of

34 „Entre Gangsters caen los Gangsters. Quien era Trotski y lo que es el Trotskismo“, *España Popular* 1/27 (29 Aug 1940), p. 3.

35 Trotsky himself had laid the blame for the first attempt on his life on the 24 May at the doorstep of the Mexican Communist Party and the GPU, see: León Trotsky: „The Comintern and the GPU. The attempted Assassination of May 24 and the Communist Party of Mexico“, *Fourth International* 1/6 (1940), pp. 148-63; very soon after his assassination, his allegations were publicly proved correct, cf. Albert Goldman: *Quién está detrás del asesinato de Leon Trotsky: los hechos y los argumentos que prueban la culpabilidad de Stalin* (Mexico D.F., c. 1941); the Catalan leader of the POUM, Julián Gorkín, later published his own accounts of the crime: Julián Gorkín: *Como asesinó Stalin a Trotsky* (Buenos Aires, 1965).; Id.: *El asesinato de Trotsky* (Barcelona, 1971).; cf. also: Bertrand M. Patenaude: *Stalin's Nemesis. The Exile and Murder of Leon Trotsky* (London, 2009).

36 The Comintern bureau of Dolores Ibarruri in Moscow followed the reports from Mexico with great attention, see the file at RGASPI, fond 495 (Comintern), opis 17 (secretariat D. Ibarruri), delo 244: "candidature Almazán", fol.s 15-38.

*Centro* and controlled by the governing party PRM, offered to Indalecio Prieto, the anti-communist leader of the Spanish socialists in exile, the opportunity to speak directly to the Mexican public. He did so on no other date than on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 1940, Mexico's national Day of Independence which lent Prieto's discourse even greater significance since the right-wing opposition had warned of a "red *conquista*" by the Spanish republican refugees only the previous year. During the first part of his lecture, Prieto outlined the legacy of Spanish colonialism in the new world – not without mentioning the mixed legacy of the Catholic Church which had terrorised the population, but had also, in his words, "left an irrecusable testimony of the human spirit which bore a Spanish mark. Which is that testimony? The millions of Indians who still populate the Mexican territory. Spain did not exterminate them, but respected their life."<sup>37</sup> After this rather generous summary of the legacy of Spanish colonialism (which undoubtedly was intended to please a right-wing oppositional audience), Prieto turned to the subject of "Mexico before the present moment":

Let us speak of Mexico in relation to the tremendous global drama of the present hour. I give you one assurance: the Spanish refugees who we have come here, the defeated republicans whom the hurricane of tragedy has thrown onto these shores, we do not bring, we cannot bring [with us] any other desire than to contribute to your increased welfare. Discard the suspicion, as superficial as it is unjust, that we all, or a majority of us, or a considerable part of us, hold ideals, maintain beliefs, and harbour convictions which could be damaging, or even interfere with the democratic institutions of Mexico. Discard it and also discard the worry which may exist among some of you with regard to a desire of domination by the Spaniards. We – I declare it solemnly – do not have any [such desire]. If anyone can sincerely wish for the improvement of Mexico – after you, the Mexicans – then this someone are we, the Spaniards, for all sorts of motives.<sup>38</sup>

On the national Day of Independence, Prieto offered clear advice to the polarised Mexican public which he derived from the experience of Spain, and warned against any suggestion of civil war, since it meant "plunder, disaster, hunger; a civil war, listen carefully, debilitates a country's powers to the point of converting it into an easy prey for the foreigner who wishes to dominate it."<sup>39</sup> He thus asked the question whether the political circumstances "which prevailed in Spain before the uprising of the 19<sup>th</sup> of July 1936 were equal, analogue, parallel to those of Mexico today? I do not know. [...] If there exist analogy, equivalency, parallels,

37 Indalecio Prieto: *Los Españoles en México. Conferencia pronunciada en la estación radiodifusora del Partido de la Revolución Mexicana, 16 de Septiembre 1940* (México D.F., 1940), p. 11.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 14.



so it must be you who need to tell. Not me.”<sup>40</sup> His explication of the contributing factors to the Spanish Civil War, thus, acquired a quality of political comment on the critical domestic situation of Mexico in 1940 while avoiding to interfere directly in the national political discourse. His radio address ended with a rather general and poetic affirmation of the shared Hispanic heritage and culture of Mexico and Spain and the willingness to enter a new pan-Hispanic union:

We wish to hear you speak our language, we wish to unite our thoughts with yours, we wish to merge with you, merge as did our forefathers. And we wish that the breeze of peace may ward off the sounds of war and dissipate all clouds of disturbance. We want all this because we are your brothers.<sup>41</sup>

In this way, Prieto utilised his republican notion of Spanishness to offer a pan-Hispanic message to his Mexican audience which was clearly designed to call for unity behind the president-elect Ávila Camacho in order to avoid any suggestion of civil war. This political message which the PRM allowed him to convey to the Mexican public on the national Day of Independence served the governing party as much as it may have improved the public image of the Spanish republican community in exile. Three weeks later, the more openly political events of the *Círculo Cultural “Pablo Iglesias”* took place in the privacy of its social centre at calle Morelos no. 57, as on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 1940 when a commemorative event was held on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of the strike movement in the Asturias and Catalonia of 1934 which had united the left-wing opposition against the inclusion of CEDA ministers in the government of Alejandro Lerroux. On this occasion, Belarmino Tomás represented as speaker the socialist trade union UGT while Manuel Albar spoke for the PSOE.<sup>42</sup> It is striking how this commemoration of the *Movimiento del Octubre de 1934* six years later in Mexico excluded precisely those former allies on the left (the anarchists as well as the Spanish communists and their Catalan equivalent, the PSUC) who had once formed a united movement of left-wing republicanism. The commemoration of that unity, thus, had turned into a commemoration of the subsequent dissolution of that alliance. Above all, a certain tactical aspect pervaded the practice of the politics of exile in Mexico City depending on the precise communicative circumstances of, on the one hand, a radio address to the Mexican public and, on the other hand, the internal reckoning with the history and legacy of the Spanish Republic.

40 Ibid., p. 15.

41 Ibid., p. 19; on the motive of the not unproblematic use of *hispanismo* among the Spanish republican refugees in Mexico, see: Sebastiaan Faber: „Contradictions of left-wing hispanismo. The case of Spanish republicans in exile”, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 3/2 (2002), pp. 165-85; Id.: *Exile and Cultural Hegemony. Spanish Intellectuals in Mexico, 1939-1975* (Nashville, 2002), pp. 135-8; Javier Krauel: „Equívoco hispanismo: notas sobre el exilio republicano y pensamiento reaccionario en el México de los años 1940”, *Res Publica* 13-14 (2004), pp. 209-18.

42 See the invitation at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 140, exp. 6579, s. fol.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 1940, the grandiose venue of the *Palacio de Bella Artes* was the location of a public meeting against the oppressive measures taken by the Franco regime in Spain, organised by the pro-Soviet *Agrupación de Amigos de Cataluña* which in 1943 would become the nucleus for the *Casal Català*. The meeting was motivated by the news of the execution of Lluís Companys i Jover, former president of Catalonia and leading member of the *Ezquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, in Barcelona two weeks earlier. The president of the *Amigos de Cataluña*, José Muní Sala, denounced the “barbarism committed by the Franco regime in Spain which in these days finds its brutal expression in the murder of Luis Companys and further thousands of Spanish republicans.” Muní accused the Franco regime of acting on behalf of its international allies and of “satisfying the ambition of the Spanish bourgeoisie to bring Spain into the war.” In spite of the repressive regime in Spain, however, “the people will root out the Franco regime for which it will need the solidarity in the struggle of all nations on earth, first of all of America.”<sup>43</sup> Muní was accompanied on stage by four Mexican representatives: José Mancisidor, president of FOARE, accused the Vichy regime of unoccupied France of violating international agreements if it extradited the Spanish republican refugees to Spain. Dionisio Encina, the secretary general of the Mexican Communist Party (PCM), could not resist to use the commemoration of Companys for a bitter indictment of the foreign policy of Britain and France during the Spanish Civil War, since “the communists are separated by deep differences from Companys”:

He had the confidence that the reactionary regime of Daladier and Blum and of the British imperialists would save Catalonia and Spain from the Franco dictatorship. He paid dearly for his error, since the successors of that policy in France have extradited him to Franco so that he may be murdered.<sup>44</sup>

Antonio Ocampo spoke in the name of the Mexican government party PRM denouncing the political violence under the Franco regime as a negation of a shared Hispanic cultural heritage and assured the audience that Mexico would “continue its tradition of hospitality to receive the Spanish republicans and protect those who are in such a difficult situation in France, and it is necessary that this solidarity is strengthened in order to help the Spanish people recover anew its liberty and culture.”<sup>45</sup> Finally, the most prominent speaker of the event, union leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano who spoke for the *Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos* (CTM), pointed out that part of the programme of the Spanish *Falange* was the domination of Hispano-America and that the Spanish *Falange* was, therefore, cooperating in Mexico with “reactionary elements and the Almazanistas” to destabilise Mexico, “directed by the Nazi movement and

43 „El Pueblo Mexicano se moviliza contra el Terror Franquista. El gran mitin del día 30 de octubre en el teatro de Bellas Artes“, *España Popular* 1/36 (2 Nov 1940), p. 3.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

benefiting its imperialist interests.” The CTM would oppose any provocations and ensure that the progressive policies of the outgoing Cárdenas administration would not be reversed by “elements of ambush who now, once defeated, try to infiltrate the revolutionary ranks in order to derail the orientation of the Mexican revolution.”<sup>46</sup> In this way, one of the leading representatives of Mexican post-revolutionary politics adopted the cause of Spanish republican anti-fascism for his own political purposes and associated the continuing dominance of the PRM in Mexico with the Spanish republican cause. Furthermore, it is significant that the main centre of Catalans in the city, the *Orfeó Català*, had staged its own commemoration of Companys in the same building in the *Sala de Conferencias* of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*, only three days earlier. This seems to indicate that such public events could no longer be organised across the political divide of the post-war Catalanian community.<sup>47</sup>

Only a few days later, the same stage of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* was the venue of another public event that was dominated by the pro-Soviet faction of Mexican politics and the Spanish republican community of exile in the capital city. The occasion was the commemoration of the 7<sup>th</sup> of November which combined the calendars of both the communist and Spanish republican commemorations as it was commonly dedicated to the memory of both the October Revolution of 1917 and the decisive defensive battle of Madrid against the nationalist offensive in 1936. The event was organised by the *Amigos de la URSS* and was opened by the president of FOARE, José Mancisidor, who pointed out the twofold anniversary of the October Revolution and the Defence of Madrid, emphasised the role of intellectuals during the October Revolution, and “presented the current situation of peace and happiness of the USSR and ended in warm tributes and praise for the great leader of the USSR and all peoples, comrade Stalin.” Víctor Manuel Villaseñor of the *Amigos de la URSS* added an analysis of the international situation and its “revolutionary solution”.<sup>48</sup> This public celebration was followed two days later by a “lunch of fraternisation” in commemoration of the twin anniversary of the October Revolution and the Defence of Madrid in the *Casa del Artista Revolucionario*, the home of the Mexican *Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios* (LEAR) which consisted of the leading modernist writers and artists of post-revolutionary Mexico who adhered to the Communist International. The list of speakers on this occasion united the complete leadership of Mexican and Spanish communism and their socialist allies: Pedro Checa in the name of the Central Committee of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), Federico Melchor for the Spanish youth organisation

46 Ibid.

47 See the invitation (23 Oct 1940) at the Orfeó Català de Mèxic, Biblioteca, Activitats de L'Orfeó Català de Mèxic, 1940-1959, s. fol.; a different date, the 6<sup>th</sup> of November, is recorded for this event some years later in the “Actuacions de l'Orfeó Català de Mèxic d'encà de la seva reorganització l'any 1940” (1949), *ibid.*, s. fol.

48 „La conmemoración del 7 de Noviembre en México“, *España Popular* 1/38 (16 Nov 1940), p. 3.

*Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas* (JSU), Wenceslao Colomer for the Catalanian JSU, Luis Soto for the Galician communists, Leandro Carro for the Basque communists, Carlos Contreras (i.e. the Italian Vittorio Vidali, former commander of the Fifth Regiment during the Spanish Civil War), Edmundo Domínguez as vice-president of the socialist *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT), lieutenant colonel Pedro Martínez Cartón, the former commander of the Spanish republican air force Ignacio Hidalgo de Cisneros, Amaro del Rosal as assistant secretary of the UGT, José Ignacio Mantecón representing the *Izquierda Republicana*, a representative of the veterans of the International Brigades of the Spanish Civil War named Salgado, the former member of the Spanish *Cortes* for the PCE Margarita Nelken, Dionisio Encina for the Mexican Communist Party (PCM), Juan Comorera as secretary general of the *Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña* (PSUC), and Antonio Mije for the Central Committee of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE). All speakers, so reported the communist paper *España Popular*, paid tribute to “the greatness of the saga which our people has written with its valour and its blood during almost three years of a revolutionary national war.” The occasion was thus characterised by the “firm will to continue the struggle until final victory.”<sup>49</sup> The same identification of the Russian October Revolution with the Defence of Madrid was the message of a manifesto of Spanish intellectuals signed, among others, by the dean of medicine of the University of Madrid Manuel Márquez, the writer and publisher José Bergamín, the composer Rodolfo Halffter, the former director of the *Escuela Normal de Madrid* Emilia Elías, the painter Josep Renau, and Margarita Nelken.<sup>50</sup>

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1940, the Mexican president-elect Manuel Ávila Camacho was to take his oath of office, so on the eve of that occasion, the Spanish republican community in exile, once again, filled the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*, this time to pay tribute and show their gratitude to outgoing president Lázaro Cárdenas del Río. The president of FOARE José Mancisidor, recalled the fact that only two international governments, those of the Soviet Union and of Mexico, had actively supported the Spanish Republic during the Civil War, how the Mexican government had made extensive efforts to save Spanish refugees in France, and that he hoped for the administration of Ávila Camacho to continue these policies. José Ignacio Mantecón then spoke in the name of the Spanish republican community in exile and emphasised the importance of international solidarity during the Spanish Civil War and warned, in the light of the ongoing refugee crisis in France and North Africa, against a tendency among the Spanish refugees to “turn themselves into *gachupines*”, shrewd businessmen who would soon lose their political commitment to the republican cause. The event closed with the recital of poetry by Pedro Garfias in celebration of Cárdenas and Mexico.<sup>51</sup>

49 Ibid., „Lunch de Confraternización“.

50 „La conmemoración del 7 de Noviembre en México. Manifiesto de Intelectuales“, *España Popular* I/39 (23 Nov 1940), p. 5.

51 „Un homenaje de los republicanos españoles al Gral. Cárdenas“, *España Popular* I/41 (7 Dec 1940), p. 6.

At times, the stages of the Mexican capital city also displayed the deep ideological divisions among the Spanish and international Left since the Molotov-Ribbentrop Agreement of 1939. The *Teatro "Hidalgo"* at calle Regina no. 52 had already seen a number of events dedicated to the Spanish republican cause, mostly from among the international communist community in the city, when on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 1941 an audience of about 300 persons gathered to attend a meeting "against the bourgeoisie and imperialism", an event that was organised by the Catalan leader of the *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (POUM) Julián Gorkín, the Mexican journalists Elvira Vargas and Gustavo de Anda, and an official of the Mexican Department for Defence, José Muñoz Cota.<sup>52</sup> Already at the entrance, some political activists evidently opposed to the event had distributed leaflets which attacked the organisers in strong terms: "[...] the gang of spies and trotskyist provocateurs intend to raise their head again and to throw dirt, insults, and slander at the trade unionist and popular movement." The leaflet went on to accuse by name Julián Gorkín and Gustavo de Anda of "espionage, provocation, and treason" of the revolutionary cause and stated: "The workers of the whole world have no need for the trotskyist dogs to fight against fascism, war, and imperialism." The text ended with a commitment to "unity, our anti-imperialist struggle and the defence of our conquests fighting against this gang of trotskyists allied with [former Mexican president] Abelardo Rodríguez and all the enemies of the Mexican Revolution." The leaflet was signed by the Mexican Communist Party (PCM). At nine o'clock, instead of the speakers that had been announced, the stage was taken by one of the protesters, Carlos Hidalgo, who turned the event into a manifestation against the organisers (who had evidently fled the scene) using strong language and revealing insults:

disqualified people, such as Gorkín who worked under orders of the most criminal person who ever existed, León Trotsky, who was the greatest schemer in the service of international fascism [...]; Elvira Vargas who is a writer who used to work for the periodical *El Nacional*, using the columns of that daily paper to attack the revolutionary movement of Mexico and president Cárdenas; [...] Muñoz Cota who was expelled from the ranks of the *Partido de la Revolución Mexicana* [...] that Muñoz Cota went to side with the Almazanistas. You see how it is the trash and manure which the trotskyists are bringing us.[...] Señor de Anda; the man of the painted fingernails, who paints the fingernails like a fagot, distinguished as the most violent enemy of the Statute Book while the Workers of Public Services are fighting with warmth, with virility, with energy, with enthusiasm, and decisiveness so that none of the fundamentals conquests which the servants of the state have made may be taken away, so that the work of general Cárdenas may not be destroyed. (Applaus for Cárdenas) [...] the workers of Mexico know them well

<sup>52</sup> See the report „Mitin en el Teatro Hidalgo. La noche del 20 de febrero de 1941“ at AGN, fondo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1190, exp. 710.1/101-51, s. fol.

and will not allow them to open their mouths in any location because we are prepared to shut them up. The real victims of fascism are now here to talk.<sup>53</sup>

Hidalgo explicitly referred to the venue, the *Teatro "Hidalgo"*, which called for direct action to prevent the planned meeting from going ahead: "You must see that it takes quite some cynicism such as that of those prevaricators and Trotskyists to use a public hall which belongs to the workers, as does this Teatro Hidalgo, to come and spout out slime here."<sup>54</sup> He then introduced representatives of the Union of Truck Drivers who were in strike action over better pay and working conditions, in Hidalgo's words "the real problems of the Mexicans which at this moment are of vital interest."<sup>55</sup> After one of the union speakers, Ambrosio González, had laid out their reasons for strike, their demands, and asked for a donation towards the union action, a second speaker of the Railway Workers' Union by the name of Bernal closed the protest by leading the audience in singing the Mexican national anthem and the International.<sup>56</sup> In this way, the Mexican trade union movement loyal to the communist party managed to disrupt a meeting of the transnational Left in the city centre and renewed their efforts to persecute and silence any voices which would be critical of the strategic and ideological priorities set out by the communist leadership in Moscow.

When only three days later the *Agrupación de Españoles Residentes en México* (AERM, an organisation of pro-Soviet Spanish republicans in Mexico set up the previous year<sup>57</sup>) staged a celebratory banquet at its venue at Avenida Madero no. 54 in the historic city centre to commemorate the election victory of the Spanish *Frente Popular* five years earlier, the self-congratulatory tone of the veterans of the popular front rang somewhat hollow against the increasing ideological disunity and, at times, physical confrontation across the city. Edmundo Domínguez, vice-president of the UGT, opened the after-dinner addresses by welcoming those who still felt loyal to the politics of the popular front: "Although we are the most modest among the emigration, we are the strongest." Ramón Lamonedá Fernández, secretary general of the PSOE, encouraged the audience not to regard themselves as without a fatherland since president Lázaro Cárdenas had offered a new home to the Spanish republicans: "Rise up, you defeated, there remains for you a second fatherland!" The president of FOARE, José Mancisidor, warned of "turncoats" who had forgotten the struggle of the Spanish people and whose actions now damaged the position of the "legitimate Spanish republicans" and those who suffered in the "concentration camps" of France and North Africa.

53 Ibid., pp. 2-3.

54 Ibid., p. 2.

55 Ibid., p. 3.

56 Ibid., pp. 4-6.

57 See: „Se inauguró el local de la Agrupación de Españoles“, *España Popular* 1/8 (4 Apr 1940), p. 3.

José Marlés represented the Catalan *Partido Socialista Unificado* (PSUC) and declared the willingness of the Catalan people to liberate all of Spain and to “cooperate in the organisation of the People's Republic.” Víctor Manuel Villaseñor of the *Amigos de la URSS* expressed his hope that the current war would produce the historical conditions for a social transformation and that the 16<sup>th</sup> of February (the anniversary of the popular front victory of 1936) would soon be celebrated in Madrid again. Amaro del Rosal Díaz, a leading activist of the UGT, reiterated the calls for unity among the labour movement across the world since the defence of democracy would not focus on Paris or London but had to originate from the working class and the people. He did not fail to mention “some people who got involved in the proletariat and the popular front who betrayed it and continue to betray it. In future, the vigilance among our ranks and the blood of our dead will revive our victory.” Almost comically, the secretary general of the PCM, Dionisio Encina, praised the Spanish republican struggle as an example of unity for the Mexican comrades as the occasion of that evening demonstrated that the Spanish people knew how to maintain its unity. Finally, the Spanish communist member of the *Cortes*, Pedro Martínez Cartón, summarised that the unity among the popular front would be the precondition of any future republican victory.<sup>58</sup>

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the second Spanish Republic of 1931, the major organisations of the Mexican political Left and the Mexican trade union movement held a public convention to demonstrate their solidarity with the Spanish republican cause on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 1941. The chosen venue for this *Convención de Solidaridad hacia el Pueblo Español* was, once again, the *Teatro “Hidalgo”*. In a resolution passed by the meeting and directed to the president of the United States the representatives of the post-revolutionary Mexican Left expressed their “profound sympathy with the Spanish people which defended its democratic achievements against the forces of barbarism that invade and oppress the nations and people desirous of justice, progress, and peace.” This sympathy had grown towards the Spanish people “because the Spanish people expresses its tragedy and its noble desires in a language which we speak.” Mexico, so the resolution continued, had accepted thousands of Spanish republican refugees and would be prepared to welcome thousands more. Among the signatories of the resolution were the president of FOARE, José Mancisidor, Juan Ignacio Ibañez for the governing party PRM, Norberto Aguirre representing the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC), Elías F. Hurtado for the corporatist trade union CTM, Carlos Sánchez Cárdenas for the PCM, and Consuelo Aguirre for the women's organisation of the PRM. Their main request from the US-American president was of a logistical nature:

58 „En la Agrupación de Españoles Residentes en México se celebró un importante acto“, *España Popular* II/50 (11 Mar 1941), p. 6.

During the public demonstration of sympathy and aid to the Spanish people which we observe today in the Teatro Hidalgo of this city we are renewing our feelings of friendship towards the Spanish republicans, but we feel a great anxiousness over the hardships which prevail in France and Spain where two millions suffer in captivity. We believe that the situation of the Spaniards can be alleviated and we ask of you as a plea to bring to bear your great influence so that a part of the food which this country sends by means of the Red Cross to France and Spain reaches the refugees and prisoners, not without the expression of a feeling of humanity while on the other hand it is clear that this aid which we request for the children of the Spanish people who suffer for having defended liberty [should not] under any circumstances [be] for the nazi-fascist regime which has been established in Spain which contradicts the will of the Spanish people and the friendship of that nation with the nations of this continent.<sup>59</sup>

A certain degree of coordination of the activities to commemorate the anniversary of the Spanish Republic can be deduced from the fact that steps were taken to avoid any overlaps in scheduling a range of events. The *Orfeó Català* observed the 14<sup>th</sup> of April as the anniversary of the Catalan (not the Spanish) Republic of 1931, but in 1941 chose to stage its commemorative events on the 13<sup>th</sup> of April: a diverse programme of Catalan music and dance over lunch was offered at the restaurant “Molino” at calle 16 de Septiembre no. 47 in the *Centro Histórico* from 2 pm, before a celebratory banquet was held the same evening from 10 pm in the *Frontón México*, a large sports venue that also hosted social and political events at the *Plaza de la República* in the shadow of the *Monumento a la Revolución* in the district of *Tabacalera*.<sup>60</sup> The following day, the *Agrupación de Españoles Residentes en México* gathered in a restaurant to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Spanish Republic with another celebratory dinner. The president of the *Agrupación*, José Ignacio Mantecón, maintained that the Spanish Republic had roots in the soul of the Spanish people against which the nationalist forces had fought a cruel campaign of war during three years. He led the guests of the dinner with a “Viva!” to the republic.<sup>61</sup> Among the speakers who followed him was the editor-in-chief of the communist periodical *España Popular*, Jesús Izcaray, who reminded his audience that the coalition of republicans and socialists had disappointed the expectations of the Spanish people which had longed for land reform and better living standard for the workers: “In practice, it enacted a policy in the interest of the great bourgeoisie and the land-owners”, and he pointed out

59 Resolution by the „Convención de Solidaridad hacía el Pueblo Español“ (11 Apr 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800M – 800R, s. fol.

60 See the menu of the lunch at the restaurant „Molino“ and the programme of the Catalan activities during the 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1941 at Orfeó Català, Biblioteca, Activitats de L’Orfeó Català de Mèxic, 1940-1959, s. fol.

61 „La conmemoración del 14 de abril. Un acto de la agrupación de españoles residentes en México“, *España Popular* II/54 (1 May 1941), p. 2.



that “today the same great capitalists and landowners which the people wanted to get rid off on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April exercise their terrorist dictatorship.” Only the working class itself would be able to resolve this problem of the Spanish revolution, and he called for the renewal of a popular front of “all those who stay loyal to the people”. His ideas were echoed by the socialist and former member of the *Cortes* Edmundo Lorenzo, while Amaro del Rosal blamed some governors of the Spanish Republic for their inability and unwillingness to defend the republic and who, therefore, were to be held responsible for the terrible conditions under which the Spanish people currently lived. Finally, Vicente Sáenz, a writer from Costa Rica, reminded the audience of the true meaning of Hispanic identity which was embodied by the struggle of the Spanish people, “comrade and brother of the peoples of America”, while a number of Latin American governments would, in fact, follow the policies of Franco. It can be assumed that the *Centro Republicano Español* observed the occasion with its own ceremony, though no records of such an event seem to have survived.

During the following weeks, a coordinated campaign of public events aimed at raising awareness for the fate of Spanish republican prisoners in France and in the colonial North African territories under the control of the Vichy regime of Philippe Pétain. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 1941, the Mexican FOARE staged a meeting at the theatre of the Mexican *Sindicato de Trabajadores Cinematografistas* at calle Orozco y Berra no. 15 in the district of *Guerrero* presided over by the treasurer of FOARE Fernando H. Carmona. The speakers from the Mexican trade union movement called for an orchestrated campaign of protests and petitions directed at the diplomatic representatives of the Vichy government in Mexico.<sup>62</sup> One week later, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, the Mexican *Unión de Artes Gráficas* organised a similar meeting at the *Teatro “Hidalgo”* with the objective “that the voice of the Mexican people may rise up against the crime which represents sending the Spanish refugees into the Sahara.”<sup>63</sup> Two days later, the *Agrupación de Españoles Residentes en México* continued these efforts with yet another public meeting in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* where the UGT leader Amaro del Rosal and the director of the *Instituto “Luis Vives”* Ruben Landa spoke alongside representatives of the Mexican trade union movement in protest against the treatment of Spanish prisoners in France and North Africa and demanded the evacuation of the Spanish refugees to the American hemisphere.<sup>64</sup> The impression of a close union of political action between the Spanish republican refugees and the Mexican trade unions emerged on the stages of the Mexican capital city which was clearly associated with the camp of the *negrinistas* of the former Spanish popular front. Simultaneously, the Spanish ex-patriate business community of the *Casino Español* tried to consolidate its position by staging a lavish banquet in honour of Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho which celebrated the

62 „Actividades en México en ayuda de los refugiados“, *España Popular* II/58 (3 Jun 1941), p. 5.

63 „Un Mitin en México“, *España Popular* II/58 (3 Jun 1941), p. 5.

64 „¡Que no los lleven a morir al desierto! La Asamblea de la Agrupación de Españoles“, *España Popular* II/59 (14 Jun 1941), p. 5.

nationalist-conservative vision of the shared “*hispanidad*” on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>65</sup> In this way, the Spanish business elite tried to capitalise on its connections within the political leadership of the state as much as the Spanish and other European political refugees developed their networks within the Mexican trade union movement.

That all was not at all well among the community of Spanish republican refugees in the Mexico City became clear in the evening of the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1941 when Luis Guillén Guardiola, a manager of the *Financiera Industrial Agrícola S.A.* (FIASA), the central financial institution of the business network and investment by the CTARE, was killed during a meeting of the executive board of FIASA at its offices on the corner of calle Balderas and Independencia in the district of *Centro*. General Francisco Llano de la Encomienda and Silvano Eguía Flores were wounded in the attack.<sup>66</sup> The murder of Luis Guillén Guardiola shook the Spanish community in the city and produced a wide spectrum of accusations. Two weeks after the assassination, Amaro del Rosal reported to José Serrano Romero in Morocco that he “had been trying to straighten out errors and laxity among the many companies controlled by said organization [FIASA]” and the executive committee of FIASA “knows very well the plot behind this crime”. The message continued that “things are disagreeable – what happened to Guillén is enough to give an idea.” Del Rosal noted attempts by members of the Spanish anarchist union CNT to frame a “comrade Campo” for currency infraction, while another letter enclosed by someone named “Leonardo” stated that “the responsibility for the murder is to be found among the nucleus of »miserables« of which the JARE is formed, and especially its mentor and orientator” – a veiled reference to Indalecio Prieto.<sup>67</sup> The communists, for their part, suspected the *Falange* may have had a hand in the murder of Guillén.<sup>68</sup> The US embassy in Mexico City followed up the various theories of responsibility for the attack on Guillén. The US diplomats had allowed Guillén to make a brief business trip to New York in April 1940 but had rejected a subsequent visa application by him “on the ground that he was affiliated with the Communist party.” His murder was seen

65 See the luxurious documentation of the occasion: *La Colonia Española ante el Presidente de Méjico* (México D.F., 1941).

66 Memorandum by the US-American consulate general in Mexico City (26 Jun 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2984, 800S – 800C General, s. fol.; cf. also Carlos Martínez: *Crónica de una Emigración (la de los republicanos españoles en 1939)* (México, D.F., 1959), p. 48.

67 Intercepted letter of Amar del Rosal to José Serrano Romero (Morocco) (8 Jul 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2894, 800M – 800R , s. fol.; the ongoing financial and administrative difficulties of CTARE during the period 1940/41 may be traced in the papers of Amaro del Rosal at the Fundación Pablo Iglesias, Archivos Particulares, AARD-296-21 and AARD-296-25; on the situation of FIASA and Guillén Guardiola's attempts to stabilise its operations cf. Aurelio Velázquez Hernández: *La Otra Cara del Exilio: Los organismos de ayuda a los republicanos españoles en México (1939-1949)*, tesis doctoral, Universidad de Salamanca, Facultad de Geografía e Historia (2012), pp. 197-209.

68 „El vil asesinato del gerente de la FIASA. Tras de los asesinos asoma la mano de Falange“, *España Popular* II/61 (4 Jul 1941), p. 5.

in the context of internal conflicts within the Spanish community in the city: “The current version of the assault on the office of the FIASA is that it was the work of disgruntled Spanish refugees; but it has also been hinted that it was instigated by agents of the Falange with a view to discrediting Spanish loyalist elements in Mexico.”<sup>69</sup> Some months later the prevailing theory was that the assassination of Guillén was “undoubtedly the work of anarchists and that the purpose was robbery”, as Paulino Romero Almaraz put it towards the US-American consul Luis F. Blanchard in October.<sup>70</sup> Romero was a Spanish socialist affiliated to the *Círculo Cultural “Pablo Iglesias”* and an employee of the JARE who during 1941 regularly provided information about the internal developments of the Spanish community of republican refugees to US officials in Mexico City.<sup>71</sup> When Blanchard asked him whether he would not fear any attacks from anarchists himself since the acquisition of the funds of the yacht “Vita” by Indalecio Prieto had been contested and left deep animosity among the Spanish republicans in the city, Romero replied that “he had had much experience with the anarchists in Barcelona during the Spanish War and that acting on a knowledge of their methods, he had sent word to their group in Mexico that if ever the JARE suffered any attack at their hands he would see to it that their leaders were found dead the next morning. He is confident that this threat, occasionally renewed, will hold them at bay.”<sup>72</sup> It is difficult to imagine a darker and more cynical statement about the deeply divided and acrimonious relationship between the different ideological camps among the Spanish republican refugees in Mexico City. In 1959, Carlos Martínez recorded the murder of Guillén Guardiola without identifying the culprits for the crime that “was attributed to the refugees”.<sup>73</sup> The responsibility of Spanish anarchists for the murder of Guillén has meanwhile been accepted in the historiography of exile.<sup>74</sup>

69 Memorandum by the US-American consulate general in Mexico City (26 Jun 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2984, 800S – 800C General, s. fol.

70 Memorandum on „Communist affiliations of La Vulcano S.A.“ (9 Oct 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800S – 800C General, s. fol.

71 See for example the memoranda of 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1941 (Romero pointing out individual Spanish refugees „looking over the Ward Line passenger lists in Mr. McGregor's office today“), of 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1941 on the imminent arrival of José Moix, of 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1941 on communist efforts to create a national front against fascism (which the socialists rejected), or of 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1941 on suspicious Spanish republicans about to arrive in Mexico at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800S – 800C General, s. fols., and of 7<sup>th</sup> of February 1941 on the *Vita* funds at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800C General – 800.2, s. fol.

72 Memorandum on „Communist affiliations of La Vulcano S.A.“ (9 Oct 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800S – 800C General, s. fol.

73 Carlos Martínez: *Crónica de una Emigración (la de los republicanos españoles en 1939)* (México, D.F., 1959), p. 48.

74 See the biographical entry on Luis Guillén Guardiola at (online resource): <https://exiliadosmexico.blogspot.de/2012/09/guillen-guardiola-luis.html> [24 Apr 2018]; cf. also Aurelio Velázquez Hernández: *La Otra Cara del Exilio: Los organismos de ayuda a los republicanos españoles en México (1939-1949)*, tesis doctoral, Universidad de Salamanca, Facultad de Geografía e Historia (2012), p. 111 (fn 253), following the *Diccionario Biográfico*

### **b. Mobilisation (Jun 1941-May 1942)**

The event that immediately preceded Guillén's assassination and profoundly changed the external conditions as well as the internal ideological balance among the European community of exile in Mexico City was the attack by Nazi Germany on the Soviet Union on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1941. During the two years since the Molotov-Ribbentrop Agreement and the subsequent outbreak of the European war in 1939 the policy of neutrality by the international communist movement had presented a major obstacle to any inclusive political platform of politics in exile. Furthermore, the brewing conflict among the exiled Left in Mexico had all but paralysed the political activities of the non-Spanish national sub-communities which had faced bitter internal conflicts, as in the case of the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* (LPC) which, during 1938/39 had been exceptionally successful in rallying the anti-fascist protest against the Nazi regime in Germany with the notable support of the Mexican political elite and the leadership of the Mexican labour movement.<sup>75</sup> Since September 1939, however, the organisation had been virtually invisible in the Mexican public and did not, for example, succeed in repeating its prominent presence of its lecture series neither on the stage of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* nor on Mexican national radio.

Just three days after the German attack on the Soviet Union, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 1941, the national stage of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* was occupied by an international meeting of exile organisations from all nationalities in Mexico, put together by a new transnational association of antifascist foreigners in Mexico, the *Acción Democrática Internacional*. The occasion had been planned for some time and took place with the intention to pay homage to the Mexican republic and its democracy and to demonstrate publicly the gratitude and loyalty which of the community of exile felt for their host nation and its political leadership. By 9 pm, "the great hall of the palace was filled to overflowing [...] and each box was decorated with the flag of some country oppressed by the Nazi-Fascist boot. In each box there were representatives of these countries."<sup>76</sup> The presiding panel united general José Miaja, known as the "defender of Madrid", the former government minister and Spanish republican diplomat Álvaro de Albornoz, the French writer Pedro Gringoire, the president of the *Acción Democrática Internacional*, the Costa Rican professor for languages and literature Raúl Cordero Amador<sup>77</sup>, the Italian socialist Francesco Frola, and two representatives of the Mexican governing party PRM, its president Antonio Villalobos and its secretary general Florencio Padilla. Cordero Amador opened the meeting and

*del Socialismo Español*, ed. by Aurelio Martín Nájera (Madrid, 2010).

75 Cf. Fritz Pohle: *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 105-12.

76 Memorandum on the *Acción Democrática Internacional* (13 Sep 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol., p. 1.

77 Cf. the memorandum on Raúl Cordero Amador (27 Aug 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

“referred to the present war and then stated that as a representative of his group he dedicated the night's meeting to Mexican democracy, for in Mexico one can still think and speak as one chooses, there was no censorship and the government still operates as a democratic organ.” He stated the goals of the ADI as to “further unite Mexican democracies [sic] and fight for the ultimate victory of the democracies.” Cordero re-emphasised this commitment by stating that “the ADI would not cease its efforts until totalitarianism had been forever banished from the globe.”<sup>78</sup> His speech was followed by short statements by the representatives of all nationalities in Mexico City: Theo Schwartz for the Czech community, Severyn Zytromberg for the Polish community, H. Ph. de Kanter appeared for the Dutch community, Ola Apenes for the Norwegian community, and Maurice Chilain for the Belgian community. In the name of the German antifascist community in Mexico, the 74-year-old tailor and socialist Paul Elle (according to one observer, a “popular and respected” member of the anti-fascist faction of the German expatriate community<sup>79</sup>) denounced the subjugation of Europe by the Nazi regime and that “even though he was a German and loved his country, he hated all tyrants and dictators and would not rest until those in his country would be beaten.” His appearance was followed by that of the Austrian dentist Mauricio Luft who emphasised the commitment to the restoration of an independent Austria, a Greek representative by the name of Francoso, Jacques Soustelle who spoke as a representative of Charles de Gaulle in the name of the French resistance, and Monte J. Turner who represented the British community and declared that “England’s fight was for all humanity and individual freedom.” Finally, Antonio Villalobos, president of the Mexican governing party PRM, pointed out that “Mexico was willing and ready to take her place alongside her sister republics of this continent and fight for the preservation of the liberty won for them by their ancestors. He stated that when the time came for action Mexico would take her place among those of her brothers who would fight for the preservation of the world they have erected for themselves.”<sup>80</sup> Given the critical date of the event, it is striking how vaguely and in rather general terms the speakers referred to the current war and the objectives the ADI would aim to achieve. As far as the proceedings of the evening can be reconstructed, the Soviet Union as the latest victim of Nazi-Germany’s aggression was not even mentioned during the meeting, no representative was present to speak on behalf of the Soviet Union, and Cordero Amador explicitly called for “totalitarianism” to be “banished from the globe”. Mexico, for the time being, still did not maintain diplomatic relations with the USSR. The meeting was evidently designed to dispel any notion of communist sympathies with the USSR and this tactical distance was echoed by the fact that the Spanish communist periodical *España Popular*, which otherwise meticulously

78 Memorandum on the *Acción Democrática Internacional* (13 Sep 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol, p. 1.

79 Letter by Michael Grübel to „comrade Richter“ (i.e. J. Buttinger, New York) (5 Aug 1941) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 18884/3 (Sammlung Buttinger), p. 6.

80 Memorandum on the *Acción Democrática Internacional* (13 Sep 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol, p. 1-2

documented any event that could be regarded as friendly towards the communist party line, did not mention the ADI meeting. Another obstacle to a closer approach between the communists and the ADI may have constituted the fact that the ADI's secretary general, Severin Ferandel, was a prominent French anarchist.<sup>81</sup> It seems that in the interest of a broad appeal among the transnational anti-fascist public in Mexico City and in order not to provoke any hostility from the fervently anti-communist right-wing opposition in Mexico, the ADI avoided, at first, any specific ideological commitment other than its praise for Mexican democracy, and the representatives of the PRM placed Mexico's position firmly at the side of its US-American neighbour.

One detail connected to the ADI meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 1941 concerns the situation of the small Austrian contingent of political refugees in Mexico City and sheds light on the deep political divisions that ran through its ranks: Two organisations had attempted to represent the Austrian community in exile, the so-called *Frei-Österreicher* (or Free Austrians, represented in Mexico by Silvio Pizarello von Helmsburg) who adhered to Otto von Habsburg (himself exiled in the United States) and campaigned for the restoration of an independent Austria and the Habsburg monarchy, and the republican Austrian Action, for the time being directed from New York, which would soon constitute itself in Mexico as the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM). The republican Austrians arrived at the meeting first and took up the places reserved for the Austria delegation and Mauricio Luft spoke in their name, while the Free Austrians had arrived later, were not included in the proceedings and protested against their exclusion and were barely satisfied by assurances on part of the ADI that they would be included in future events if any scandal would be avoided at the present occasion. Michael Grübel, cousin of Joseph Roth and German-Jewish exile in Mexico City, reported the consequences of this confrontation at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*:

The following day, members of both groups ended up in a brawl in one of the biggest coffee houses in the city centre which very soon became common knowledge. Besides, either group accuses the other of various crimes, such as espionage for Germany, working as informer for the Gestapo, accessory to the murder of political refugees etc., etc. Denunciations in this regard have already been submitted to the presidency of the republic, the police, and the Inter-Allied Committee.<sup>82</sup>

81 On Ferandel see: *Le Maitron. Dictionnaire Biographique Mouvement Ouvrier Mouvement Social*, online resource: <http://maitron-en-ligne.univ-paris1.fr/spip.php?article154433> [26 Apr 2018].

82 Letter by Michael Grübel to „comrade Richter“ (i.e. J. Buttinger, New York) (5 Aug 1941) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 18884/3 (Sammlung Buttinger), p. 5.

But the Austrian community was not the only group which experienced fundamental conflicts during this decisive period of exile in Mexico. Grüber's report to Joseph Buttinger in New York follows and retells the events and conflicts during those first weeks of summer in Mexico City closely. One week after the ADI meeting in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 1941, the German *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* held a "poorly frequented" meeting where a manifesto was discussed and passed which admitted that since 1939 the activities of the *Liga* had been suspended because of internal political conflicts, but that Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union had now removed all doubts over the correct political orientation. "But then", so Grüber continued, "it speaks of some »ambiguities over the Allied war aims«" and ended with "nationalistic patriotic phrases". The manifesto was passed against two votes, "one of them being mine", as Grüber dryly remarked, but the *Liga* was unable to bring any Mexican newspaper to publish it until certain passages were changed "so that it could finally be regarded as pro-Allied" and be published in the journal of the *Comité Inter-Aliado*, a weekly periodical by the title *Candil. Semanario contra los nazifascistas*, in Grüber's words "an otherwise little-known paper".<sup>83</sup>

But the problems to find common ground among the international Left in response to the new anti-Hitler-coalition that had been created by the German attack on the Soviet Union extended into the Mexican domestic sphere, too. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) organised a public meeting in cooperation with the *Liga de Acción Política*, a left-wing pressure group headed by Narciso Bassols, the former education minister during the early 1930s, who had spear-headed the programme of *educación socialista*, the radical secularisation and modernisation of the Mexican state education system.<sup>84</sup> Alongside representatives of the Socialist Student Union of *Campesinos*, the women's section of the PRM, and René Marchand, a French veteran of the Red Army of the Russian Civil War, spoke Dionisio Encina, the secretary general of the *Partido Comunista de México* (PCM). He characterised the war of the Soviet Union against the German invasion as a "revolutionary war in defence of socialism and of those nations which have been subjugated by the German fascists." He called the war a war in defence of democracy because "it defends the most perfect of all democracies, the Soviet democracy, guaranteed by the Stalinist constitution which secures for the Soviet people liberty, the right to work, to health, and culture." And he then went on to formulate qualifications for a newly-formed anti-Hitler alliance that echoed the anti-capitalist slogans from the period of the Molotov-Ribbentrop-Pact:

83 Ibid., p. 4; on the *Comité Inter-Aliado*, a pro-Allied propaganda organisation which was once regarded by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* as a spy ring directed against the nationalised Mexican oil company *Pemex*, see: memorandum by Inspector PS-15 on the *Comité Inter-Aliado* (22 Feb 1940) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 124, exp. 45, fol. 1.

84 Cf. Victoria Lerner: *La Educación Socialista, Historia de la Revolución Mexicana*, publ. by the Colegio de México, vol. 17 (Mexico, D.F., 1979); Gilberto Guevara Niebla: *La educación socialista en México* (1934-1945) (México D.F., 1985).

Although the governments of Britain and the United States have made promises to help the USSR, we must not forget that in the heart of those countries reactionary groups continue to operate that seek an understanding with the German fascists. Only the action of the people will be able to guarantee this defence.<sup>85</sup>

Narciso Bassols emphasised in his speech that the solidarity with the Soviet Union should neither be the result of merely sentimental instincts nor try to mobilise an army “which, in reality, does not exist” but should consist in a “continuous and increasing mobilisation of the people by all types of events and demonstrations which would, by developing the struggle and through the achievements of the Mexican Revolution, neutralise the reaction and its influence.”<sup>86</sup> Michael Grübel observed that Bassols had developed in his journal *Combate*, edited by the *Liga de Acción Política*, the theory that two wars needed to be differentiated: an imperialistic war waged by Britain and the United States against Germany, which needed to be opposed, and a defensive war by the Soviet Union against German aggression, which deserved unconditional support and solidarity. Grübel summarised the effect of such ideological acrobatics:

To many, the reasons for Bassols to cause confusion and confrontations within the CTM are inexplicable, even now when the Soviet Union without any doubt must be interested in unity in the struggle against Hitler.<sup>87</sup>

The response from within the Mexican trade union movement was swift and unmistakable. Five days later, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 1941, the CTM held its own public meeting and used the former leader of the CTM, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, renowned for his charisma and rhetorical skill, as the main speaker. Lombardo Toledano had advanced to the leadership of the continental labour federation *Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina* (CTAL) and left Grübel with a sustained impression:

The speech by Toledano, a rhetorical masterpiece, served the purpose of regaining the communists for the CTM and thereby to isolate Bassols. But it is also an excellent analysis of the situation and represents with necessary clarity the standpoint of the Mexican proletariat. [...] At no other meeting that I have attended so far, prevailed such an enthusiastic mood which Toledano was able to incite with his speech.<sup>88</sup>

85 „México: un gran mitin de solidaridad“, *España Popular* II/63 (18 Jul 1941), p. 11.

86 Ibid.

87 Letter by Michael Grübel to „comrade Richter“ (i.e. J. Buttinger, New York) (5 Aug 1941) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 18884/3 (Sammlung Buttinger), pp. 3-4.

88 Ibid., p. 4.



Lombardo Toledano's key arguments for the anti-Hitler alliance can be gathered from an appeal by the CTAL which the communist paper *España Popular* printed on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July:

Confronted with a great change in human history as the war represents by its consequences of every kind, there is no place for either subterfuge or reservations to justify an attitude of sympathy for the cause championed by the barbaric and bloodthirsty regime of Hitler. Anyone who does not fight it openly, with all powers, is a fascist in disguise. [...] The attitude of those who in the countries of bourgeois democracy refute the words of Churchill would be monstrously grotesque – who declared that the struggle of Russia to defend her honour and homeland is the cause of free people and of the free nations in all the world.<sup>89</sup>

In this way, Lombardo Toledano succeeded in outlining the basis for the alliance of communists and Western democrats by associating anyone doubting such an alliance on ideological grounds with the extreme right which was unwilling to support the defence of the Soviet Union. Fidel Velázquez, leader of the CTM as Lombardo Toledano's successor, responded in this sense with the demand for a united anti-fascist national front.<sup>90</sup>

But the divisions and confrontations the Mexican Left had not been put to rest. Grübel reported that on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July he had witnessed “a truly peculiar example for the will towards a united anti-fascist front.” On the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nationalist military uprising against the Spanish Republic in 1936, two public meetings had been scheduled, one by the communists and another by the non-communists. The latter meeting featured general Miaja as the main speaker, “however, before the proceedings could even be opened, it was invaded and ended by people of Bassols.” The other meeting in the *Teatro “Hidalgo”* united the communists and their long-standing political allies, such as, for example, the *Amics de Catalunya*. The president of FOARE, José Mancisidor, opened the meeting and introduced speeches by Miguel Ángel Velasco who represented the Mexican governing party PRM, the publisher José Bergamín, and Víctor Manuel Villaseñor who spoke in the name of Bassols' *Liga de Acción Política*. A number of resolutions were passed which called for the US government to include Spanish republican refugees as beneficiaries of shipments of aid to European refugees, demanded an international financial boycott of the Franco regime, protested against the treatment of Spanish refugees in France and North Africa, and finally demanded the release of the communist leaders Luis Carlos Prestes (in Brazil) and Earl Browder (USA).<sup>91</sup> It is this list of resolutions which may have given rise to

89 „Mensajes de la CTAL para la lucha contra el nazismo“, *España Popular* II/63 (18 Jul 1941), p. 11.

90 „De la C.T.M.“, *ibid.*

91 „Un mitin de la FOARE. Intervinieron Miguel A. Velasco, José Bergamín y Mancisidor“,

Michael Grübel's impression that the presence of Villaseñor for the *Liga de Acción Política* had led to a comprehensive rejection of the idea of a united anti-fascist front as Lombardo Toledano and Fidel Velázquez had envisioned it:

There emerged a list of conditions that the governments of Britain and the USA would have to satisfy, before anti-fascist unity was even conceivable. In this context a number of accusations were raised, such as that the British government was purposefully sabotaging the evacuation of Spanish refugees from France to Latin America etc.<sup>92</sup>

Clearly, Grübel was unimpressed by the communist attitude towards the idea of anti-fascist unity and suspected the Mexican communists and the *Liga de Acción Política* around Narciso Bassols of still adhering to the ideological principles of the period of the Molotov-Ribbentrop-Pact when the communists had employed a radical rhetoric against the Western powers.

It was, however, the Spanish communists in exile in Mexico who launched the first initiative that would include a broader range of anti-fascist political groups of Spanish refugees in Mexico. In the name of the PCE, its secretary general José Díaz called for a national union of all anti-Fascist Spaniards in a special edition of the party's periodical paper *España Popular* on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1941.<sup>93</sup> The programme associated with this call for a national front appeared moderate enough: among other things, the appeal called for solidarity with and support for the British and Soviet defensive campaigns, the collective fight against fascism and the Franco regime, freedom and indemnity for the victims of repression under Franco, the restitution of the Spanish Republic and its provisions for regional autonomy. Additionally, the document called for the re-constitution of a Spanish government in exile under its former leader Juan Negrín. This offer of national union, however, came with a list of groups and individuals attached who would not be welcome in the national front as proposed by the Spanish communists: the circle around general Miaja, the Trotskyists for their alleged services to the Gestapo, and Indalecio Prieto for having stolen the treasure of the yacht "Vita" in 1939.<sup>94</sup> The response from among the non-communist political currents of the Spanish community in exile in Mexico was swift and clear: the followers of Prieto within the PSOE issued a statement on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August "rejecting the invitation and denouncing the Communist Party for its dire participation in the Civil War." The US-American consul Morris N. Hughes, who transmitted this statement to the US State Department in Washington, added that

*España Popular* II/64 (31 Jul 1941), p. 4.

92 Letter by Michael Grübel to „comrade Richter“ (i.e. J. Buttinger, New York) (5 Aug 1941) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 18884/3 (Sammlung Buttinger), p. 4.

93 „Llamamiento del Partido Comunista de España a la Unión Nacional de todos los españoles contra Franco, invasores germano-italianos y los traidores“, *España Popular* II/65 (special edition, 1 Aug 1941), pp. 1-2.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

he had obtained the PSOE's reply from "an employee of JARE who has for some time maintained contact with this office on Spanish refugee matters."<sup>95</sup> That employee of JARE was Paulino Romero who a few days earlier had discussed the communists' offer of unity and the socialists' rejection.

[Romero] said that in his opinion his group would never consent to work hand in hand with communists again, attributing to its divisionist influence in large measure the loss of the war. His feeling against them is so bitter (and he gave me the impression that it was shared by his associates in the JARE) that he said he would prefer to suffer indignities under Fascism rather than have any communion with »the mad dogs who betrayed us during the war«. Concerning Negrín, he said that no honest Spaniard would ever consent to be governed by any organization of which he was head. [...] it appears that while the struggle against fascism would be continued by the groups with which Mr. Romero is identified, this would necessarily have to be without collaboration with communists since the offenses suffered at the hands of these could not so easily be forgiven under stress of what is at present a common cause.<sup>96</sup>

This rejection of cooperation with the communists was equally supported by the *prietista* wing of the UGT, by the parliamentary party of the PSOE, and the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"* in Mexico.<sup>97</sup>

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1941, the left-liberal *Acción Republicana Española* (ARE) had issued a statement in response to the communist appeal for anti-fascist unity which employed similar terms. Signed by Spanish republican ex-minister of the *Izquierda Republicana* Álvaro de Albornoz, generals José Miaja and Sebastián Pozas, the former Spanish republican ambassador to Mexico Félix Gordón Ordaz, ex-minister for the *Izquierda Republicana* Carlos Esplá, the former member of parliament and criminal lawyer Mariano Ruiz Funes, and the ex-ministers of the Spanish Republic José Franchy Roca and Bernardo Giner de los Ríos, the statement rejected any cooperation with anti-liberal forces which had brought the Spanish Republic to its knees in 1938 and reminded the Spanish community of exile of the failure of the Popular Front caused by an incompatibility of its constituent member organisations. The ARE took particular exception to the communists' proposal of excluding certain individuals from the proposed national union and vowed only to cooperate with political forces "of essentially democratic

95 Memorandum by the US-American consul Morris N. Hughes to the US State Department (13 Aug 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800S – 800C General, s. fol.

96 Confidential memorandum on the „Invitation of Spanish Communist Party to all Enemies of Franco Regime to Join in a World Front in Aid of the Struggle Against Fascism“ (9 Aug 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800S – 800C General, s. fol.

97 Ibid.

character, independent of any foreign discipline or obedience.”<sup>98</sup> While the socialists of the *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”* and the *Acción Republicana Española*, thus, rejected any suggestion of cooperation with the communists, they immediately embraced the statement of principles and war aims by Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt which was issued a few days later on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 1941 and came to be known as the Atlantic Charter. Virtually the same group of socialists that on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August had rejected the communist proposal of a national front of republican anti-fascists stated their adherence to the Charter, “the possible base for a just and durable peace.” Among the signatories were Alejandro Otero, Indalecio Prieto, Manuel Albar, Lucio Martínez and Juan Simeón Vidarte for the executive board of the PSOE, Amador Fernández and Crescenciano Bilbao for the socialist parliamentary party, Anastasio de Gracia and Pedro Longueira as president and secretary of the *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”*, and Belarmino Tomás and Rafael Mira for the *prietistas* of the UGT.<sup>99</sup> The aim of their declaration was to include Spain in the list of those countries that “wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them”, as the Charter stated in its third article. Evidently, the fear of the Spanish socialists was that the official policy of neutrality by the Franco regime would isolate the Spanish republicans in exile from the Western powers and the anti-Hitler coalition: “[...] to exclude Spain from the index of the oppressed nations would reduce the moral force to condemn, and even to disregard, the political regimes that the same tyranny [i.e. Nazi Germany] has erected in other countries [...]”.<sup>100</sup> A declaration issued the following day by the aforementioned representatives of the *Acción Republicana Española* referred to the same article of the Atlantic Charter and announced that the ARE urged its followers across the American continent to declare the adhesion to the Charter and to renew publicly their intention to restore Spain to its liberty and sovereignty, and that such action would aim at the restoration of the Constitution of the Spanish Republic of 1931.<sup>101</sup>

Meanwhile, the Spanish communists responded to the rejection of their proposal of a Spanish national front with accusations that the attitude of the Spanish socialists around Indalecio Prieto could amount, in strategic terms, to supporting fascism in Spain: “We have too much respect for the socialist workers and the Spanish people to limit ourselves to rebuking the infamous attitude which [the socialists’ response] assumes, without simultaneously pointing out the inconsistency, the falsehood, and the willful attitude into which those people

98 Circular no. 28 by the *Acción Republicana Española* (9 Aug 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800S – 800C General, s. fol.

99 „Los Socialistas Españoles ante la Alianza entre Inglaterra y los Estados Unidos“, *Universal* (15 Aug 1941).

100 Ibid.

101 „Acción Republicana Española“ (15 Aug 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800M – 800R, s. fol.

fall.”<sup>102</sup> In terms of their public presence, the communists together with their political allies and the Mexican FOARE continued to use the *Teatro “Hidalgo”* to demonstrate their republican credentials and foster closer ties with the Mexican Left, as on the 15<sup>th</sup> August 1941, when the FOARE held a public meeting of welcome for Roberto Vega González, the Mexican cadet and veteran of the Spanish republican forces of the Civil War recently freed from a Spanish prisoner camp. Among the speakers of that evening were the president of FOARE José Mancisidor, Antonio Mije for the PCE, Mariano Moreno Mateo for the pressure group *Patronato Pro-Presos de Franco*, the Mexican youth organiser Ángel Varaza, and Miguel Ángel Velasco for the PRM.<sup>103</sup> The resolutions passed that evening repeated some of those of the 9<sup>th</sup> of August and made no mention of the Atlantic Charter which had been issued the previous day and immediately embraced by the socialists and the ARE. The first two months after the German attack of the Soviet Union had, thus, demonstrated that the deep ideological divisions and confrontational lines within the Spanish republican camp persisted, while the communists were able to maintain and increase their public presence by monopolising the use of the *Teatro “Hidalgo”*, a public space in Mexico City which they were prepared to defend jealously against all competing claims to the public stage.

Since the German attack on the Soviet Union, the German-speaking community of exile slowly reappeared in the public eye of the Mexican capital, first staging a literary evening in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* under the title “German Writers look at the War” on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1941. The event was remarkable in the sense that it was (mainly) held in English and attracted an audience of US-American tourists “who appeared to be of Jewish extraction”, as the US-American consul Morris N. Hughes observed.<sup>104</sup> He was among the audience of 500 on this evening, when Ludwig Renn spoke about military matters and espoused his conviction that the German tactics of motorised *blitzkrieg* would not be successful during the campaign against the Soviet Union. “Though he made some mention of British and American help, it was apparent that he based his hopes of a German defeat on the superiority of Russian numbers and material”, as Hughes noted. Egon Erwin Kisch added a jocular element to the evening by telling anecdotes and ridiculing the Nazi regime, before the German writer Anna Seghers, who had only recently arrived in Mexico, praised the work of the Committee to Aid Exiled Writers. The evening concluded with an appeal for donations to the Committee which yielded 700 pesos. Hughes concluded:

102 „Carta abierta del Secretariado del Partido Comunista de España al Partido Obrero Español“, *España Popular* II/67 (27 Aug 1941), extra fol.

103 „Homenaje popular al luchador anti-fascista Roberto Vega González“, *El Popular* (16 Aug 1941); „Nuestro Saludo a un Héroe“, *España Popular* II/67 (27 Aug 1941), p. 5; cf. the transcript of the meeting at AGN, fondo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1190, 710.1/101-55, s. fols.

104 See the memorandum by Morris N. Hughes on „Lecture Sponsored by Committee to Aid Exiled Writers“ (18 Aug 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800S – 800C General, s. fol.

The impression was gained, though this is more conjecture, that the Committee and its guest lecturers are interested not so much in defending democracy as in fighting Fascism. The collection of funds constitutes the principal part of this activity, judging by the prominence given to it at last night's meeting.<sup>105</sup>

This first public appearance of the German-speaking communist intellectuals in exile in Mexico City immediately prompted communications by several anonymous sources to the US-embassy denouncing Renn, Kisch, and Seghers, together with the Swiss architect Hannes Meyer and the Czechoslovakian journalist Otto Katz (alias André Simone) as suspicious and dangerous GPU agents. On Meyer, one source claimed that "the sensational affairs of SIQUEIROS and JACKSON are his work", thus holding him responsible for the two attacks on Trotsky during the previous year, the unsuccessful one by Siqueiros in May and the eventual assassination of Trotsky by Ramón Mercader who, by that time, was still only known by his cover names of "Frank Jackson" or "Jacques Mornard".<sup>106</sup> The small German group of political refugees evidently attracted disproportionate attention. The public lectures for US-American tourists would continue with some regularity in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*, for example two weeks later on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1941 (the second anniversary of the German attack on Poland) with the writer Bodo Uhse and the French journalist Simone Téry speaking on "Is revolt brewing in Hitler's Europe?".<sup>107</sup>

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1941, the Chilean consul general in Mexico City, Pablo Neruda, hosted a tribute of welcome to Anna Seghers at his residence, and the newspaper of the CTM, *El Popular*, reported at length and included photographs.<sup>108</sup> The paper pointed out the significance of the event:

Perhaps unintentionally, and it may be solely because of the opportunity this offered, this act, which took place in the home of Pablo Neruda, acquired in the course of its progress a deep and symbolic significance since it was the meeting place, for the purpose of greeting the celebrated representative of true German culture, of writers, journalists, and oppositional figures from many countries of Europe and America who comprise the elite of emigrants residing in our country.

105 Ibid., p. 2.

106 Memorandum „Information concerning Ludwig Renn, Egon Erwin Kisch, and Anna Seghers“ (22 Aug 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800S – 800C General, s. fol.

107 See the invitation flyer at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800S – 800C General, s. fol.

108 „Homenaje a la ilustre escritora alemana antifascista Ana Seghers“, *El Popular* (26 Aug 1941).

The guest list of the event was, indeed, impressive as the paper listed about forty prominent people in attendance, among them its own director Alejandro Carrillo, the Italian veteran commander of the Fifth Brigade of the Spanish Civil War Vittorio Vidali (who used the pseudonym Carlos Contreras), the Spanish writer Constanca de la Mora, the Czech writer Egon Erwin Kisch, the president of the anti-fascist association of the Spanish colony in Mexico José Ignacio Mantecón, the Swiss architect Hannes Meyer, the Italian communist Mario Montagnana, the Spanish writer Juan Rejano, the Catalan painter Josep Renau, the Spanish communist professor of law Wenceslao Roces, the Costa Rican journalist Vicente Sáenz, the Czech Journalist André Simone (i.e. Otto Katz), the French communist journalist Simone Téry, the German writer Bodo Uhse, and his Yugoslavian colleague Theodor Balk (i.e. Dragutin Fodor). The most illustrious guest, however, was the leader of the *Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina* (CTAL) Vicente Lobardo Toledano who addressed Anna Seghers as well as, by extension, the other political refugees in the audience:

We feel very proud of your presence. By your presence, with your help, with the example of your culture and your struggle, our people, which is a people that loves culture and which has always struggled to overcome its predicament of economic, social, and cultural backwardness, will be able to march more quickly on the path of progress. We are a poor and small people; but one which possesses the ambition of its odious past.<sup>109</sup>

Lombardo Toledano ended with a statement of solidarity in the name of CTAL towards the Soviet trade unions, before Anna Seghers responded in German (her words were translated into Spanish by Wenceslao Roces):

The name of your country, the name of your people, the name of Mexico, is a name which is pronounced with great affection in concentration camps, in illegal meetings in Europe, in all places in the world where oppression is endured and where persecution fans hope.<sup>110</sup>

The event ended, “by unanimous petition”, with Neruda reciting his *Canto a Bolívar*, and “the representatives of many peoples”, as *El Popular* described the scene, “all, Germans, Italians, Spaniards, Czechs, Frenchmen, Argentines, Mexicans, Cubans, etc., sang popular songs of their respective countries.”<sup>111</sup> This gathering of European intellectuals of exile also marked a reunion of several participants of the Second International Congress of Writers in Defence of Culture

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid.; cf. on Neruda's activities as consul general of Chile in Mexico and his role within the transnational community of anti-fascists: Wilberto Cantón: „Pablo Neruda en México”, *Anales de la Universidad de Chile* 157-60 (1971), pp. 263-9.

which had taken place four years earlier in Spain, such as Anna Seghers, Bodo Uhse, Theodor Balk, Pablo Neruda, Vicente Sáenz, and Egon Erwin Kisch.<sup>112</sup> One month later, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September, Seghers, in turn, was among the 200 guests of a banquet organised in honour of Pablo Neruda at the restaurant of the *Centro Asturiano* in the historic city centre, alongside the Chilean ambassador Hidalgo Plaza, the poet and president of the Mexican PEN club Enrique González Martínez, the Mexican muralist painter José Clemente Orozco, the former rector of the University of Madrid Manuel Márquez, the Catalan poet Josep Carner, and the Mexican poet and director of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* Carlos Pellicer. Neruda offered a poetic reference to the drama of the world war and the defensive war of the Soviet Union in particular:

I look at the gates of Leningrad as I looked at the gates of Madrid, the pond of blood from where originated the new salvation of the earth, profoundly upset by so much pain of humanity, and inspired by the hopes which rise from the blood of the great patriotic and heroic nation, defended from the barbaric invaders by millions of red hearts, forgive me those of you who you do not believe, those without faith, which a man, hopeful and hopeless, now and always brings to every meeting, to every place where one listens to his testament, his grief, his hope.<sup>113</sup>

Such gatherings, full of high political rhetoric and pathos, transported an abstract vision of transnational anti-fascist solidarity into the intellectual circles of political exile in Mexico City which characterised the atmosphere in all political camps across the ideological divisions among the community of political refugees in the city. A number of guests in attendance also signed a petition to the Mexican president Ávila Camacho asking for the rescue of Spanish republican refugees in France and North Africa, among them José Puche, the president of CTARE, and the former rector of the University of Madrid Manuel Márquez.<sup>114</sup>

Since August of 1941 the international pro-Soviet Left in Mexico City initiated a campaign in support of the resumption of diplomatic relations with the USSR. The main proponents of this policy, CTAL leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano, CTM leader Fidel Velázquez, Víctor Manuel Villaseñor for the Society of Friends of the Soviet Union, Dionisio Encina for the Mexican communists, and

112 Cf. Teresa Cañadas García: „Participación alemana en los congresos internacionales para la defensa de la cultura de 1935 y 1937“, *Cuadernos de Filología Alemana*, Anejo III (2010), pp. 43-55.

113 „Se celebró el homenaje al gran poeta Pablo Neruda“, *España Popular* II/72 (3 Oct 1941), p. 5. By this time, the *Centro Asturiano* had become the venue of pro-republican meetings of the left-wing community of exile in Mexico City, cf. the transcript of a meeting organised by the union of the metal works „Vulcano“ on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 1942 at AGN, fondo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1190, 710.1/101-55, s. fols.

114 Petition to the President of the *Estados Unidos Mexicanos* (25 Sep 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800M – 800R, s. fol.



other representatives from the Mexican youth organisations, the women's section of the PRM, and additional trade union representatives spoke at a meeting in order to mobilise the Mexican public in favour of the recognition of and solidarity with the Soviet war effort. The degree of mobilisation may be gathered from the fact that this meeting was no longer held in the communists' preferred *Teatro "Hidalgo"* but in the *Arena México*, a large sports venue which provided space for an audience of thousands at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 94 in the district of *Hidalgo* south of the city centre.<sup>115</sup> The issue of solidarity with the USSR was thereby purposefully blended with the campaign in support of the protection for Spanish republican refugees, as the date of the 29<sup>th</sup> of August was also declared a day of "continental solidarity" which was meant to raise awareness for those still held captive in internment camps in France by means of a pan-American diplomatic effort.<sup>116</sup> Two days later, a demonstration dedicated to the "democratic ideal of the Mexican people" also raised the issue of diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union.<sup>117</sup> The newly-established *Sociedad de Amigos de la Unión de Repúblicas Soviéticas Socialistas* (SAURSS) mobilised support in collaboration with Narciso Bassols at another meeting at the *Arena México* on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1941.<sup>118</sup> Two weeks later, the *Arena México* served once again for a mass meeting against fascism which linked the question of diplomatic relations with the USSR with a warning against the activities of clandestine groups of a fascist underground in the Western hemisphere, above all in Mexico. Vicente Lombardo was the main speaker, warned of the global ambitions of the fascist movements in Europe and denounced the radical right-wing movements in Mexico, above all the syndicalists, for emulating the policies of Mussolini and Hitler. He identified anti-communism as the most powerful ideological tool of the pro-fascist campaigners in Mexico and called for "national unity against the Axis":

We are ready to unite with all, without any exception. With the national bourgeoisie. Hear well, listen closely. It is Lombardo Toledano who speaks. With the national bourgeoisie. We are ready to unite with the Mexican peasants; with the workers, of course; with the middle class, naturally; with the army of the Republic and with government officials, with as many Mexicans as agree with us on some point. But simply because several ideas and wills coincide, we do not necessarily have national unity. There is another, an indispensable factor: the thing agreed on must be of deep interest to the nation. What passion stirs the world today? What cries the loudest to the conscience of all men? It is the titanic struggle of which I have

115 „Gran Mitin. En pro de la reanudación de las relaciones diplomáticas y comerciales entre México e Inglaterra y la URSS“, *España Popular* II/67 (27 Aug 1941), p. 5.

116 „Día de Solidaridad Continental para los Republicanos Iberos“, *El Popular* (26 Aug 1941).

117 „Una próxima manifestación en México“, *España Popular* II/67 (27 Aug 1941), p. 5.

118 „Por la reanudación de relaciones con la URSS e Inglaterra. Un gran mitin de masas en México“, *España Popular* II/72 (3 Oct 1941), p. 3.

spoken. This drama, this gigantic drama, this great tragedy without equal in history – the struggle for democracy, for freedom – the struggle against tyranny and fascism.<sup>119</sup>

Lombardo Toledano not only appeared as a speaker in public to lead the campaign for a united national front against fascism, he also actively offered support for similar events and initiatives from among the community of political refugees in Mexico. The *Teatro de las Artes*, situated at calle Héroes Ferrocarrileros de la Revolución no. 38 north of the *Monumento a la Revolución*, belonged to the *Universidad Obrera*, an initiative of higher education for workers which had been founded by Lombardo Toledano.<sup>120</sup> At this theatre, the community of Spanish refugees in Mexico City celebrated their own version of “national unity” under the title of a *Unión Democrática Española* (UDE) on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 1941. The speakers included the socialists Edmundo Lorenzo and Ramón Lamonedá Fernández, who only a few days earlier had assisted at the foundation of the *Círculo Cultural “Jaime Vera”* of the *negrinista* Spanish socialists in exile, Antonio Velao and Adolfo Vázquez Humasqué for the *Izquierda Republicana*, the communist Antonio Mije, and a worker from the *Vulcano* works named Caballero supposedly representing the anarcho-sindicalist CNT.<sup>121</sup> The chief editor of *España Popular*, Jesús Izcaray, commented with some pathos:

At the event of 30<sup>th</sup> of December, for the first time since we stepped on foreign soil, the emigrants were together. I had a good view of that hall of the Teatro de las Artes and stopped at the faces of friends. They were the same as I had seen in the trenches, on the barricades of the cities, lining up in France, in the concentration camps, on that ship without stop that brought me here. There were the communists for whom the unity of the people is the essence of politics, the old activists of Spanish socialism, brothers on our path, the republicans who carry the republic in their soul, the workers of the CNT, emigrants with no other affiliation than their eagerness to reconquer [Spain], old Spanish residents for whom the fatherland is something more than a memory, Mexican friends, all sorts of people united by equal feelings.<sup>122</sup>

119 Vicente Lombardo Toledano: *5th Column in Mexico*, Council for Pan-American Democracy (1942), pp. 18-9. This publication of his speech of the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 1941 also contains an extensive catalogue of institutions and individuals (complete with postal addresses in Mexico) from the German ex-patriate community in Mexico which were considered to be supportive of National Socialism and provided an infrastructure for clandestine activities by the Gestapo; cf. „Un gran mitin en México contra el fascismo y en favor de la democracias“, *España Popular* II/75 (24 Oct 1941), p. 3.

120 The *Universidad Obrera* also hosted lectures by political exiles in Mexico, see e.g. one of the programmes (1942) at BAL, SAPMO, NY 4246/19 Nachlaß Georg Stibi.

121 „El pueblo español debe estar presente en el pacto de las ventiséis naciones igual que lo está en el combate mundial anti-hitleriano“, *España Popular* III/83 (17 Jan 1942), p. 1.

The meeting served a double purpose, “to express our Spanish gratitude to the Soviet Union and to demonstrate absolutely and decidedly our will to unite.”<sup>123</sup> In this way, the case for Spanish republicanism and the support for the Soviet Union were meant to become indistinguishable. Since November, a broad range of exile organisations across diverse nationalities had sprung up which served a similar purpose: the “free movements” of European nationalities in exile in Mexico City, such as the Italian *Alianza Internacional “Giuseppe Garibaldi”*, the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM), the *Movimiento Alemania Libre (Freies Deutschland)* with its associated cultural association *Heinrich-Heine-Club*, and the smaller groups of Hungarian, Czech, and Yugoslavian refugees. Alongside the Spanish socialist *Círculo “Jaime Vera”*, these organisations aimed at the broadest possible union in the form of national front movements against fascism and were able to attract public attention far beyond their modest size in terms of membership. Since June of the previous year, the umbrella organisation of the *Acción Democrática Internacional* (ADI) aimed at integrating and coordinating transnational anti-fascist politics in the city, and by the time of its first public congress in Mexico City, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 7<sup>th</sup> of December 1941 and the German declaration of war against the USA had changed the political atmosphere. The communists now tried more than ever to present themselves as allies of the Western democracies, and the ADI became the arena for global politics among the communities of exile in Mexico City.

On 30<sup>th</sup> of January 1942, the ninth anniversary of the National Socialist regime in Germany, the *Acción Democrática Internacional* inaugurated its *Congreso Anti-Fascista* in the theatre of the *Sindicato de los Electricistas* at calle Artes no. 45 in the *Tabacalera*. From the beginning, the ADI aimed at the greatest possible impact of its congress on the international political public sphere in the city by inviting the members of the international diplomatic corps. The invitation to the US-American ambassador George Messersmith emphasised “the importance of this congress in these times through which the world is living and the imperative necessity for all diplomatic representatives of the countries that fight for liberty to attend this congress to the greatest possible extent”.<sup>124</sup> The US embassy reacted with extreme reserve, stating that “this Congress and the names of those persons who are scheduled to speak before it, should enable it to accomplish a desirable purpose if indeed the objective of the Congress itself is the strengthening of those forces in the cultural and social life of the Americas which it is the aim of the totalitarian to destroy.”<sup>125</sup> The reference to “totalitarianism” clearly transported the embassy’s suspicion that the term of “anti-fascism”

122 „El acto del 30 de Diciembre. La unidad emprende el camino“, *España Popular* III/83 (17 Jan 1942), p. 1.

123 Ibid., p. 4.

124 Invitation to the US-American ambassador George Messersmith (26 Jan 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A – 843C, s. fol.

125 Letter by US-embassy *Chargé d’Affairs* ad interim J.F. McGurk to *Acción Democrática Internacional* (31 Jan 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A – 843C, s. fol.

transported considerable communist influence over the work of the ADI, and the US diplomats had no desire to be associated with the event. But the embassy did obtain a complete 138-page verbatim transcript of the proceedings of the congress which makes the ADI congress one of the best-documented events of transnational anti-fascist politics in Mexico City. The *Congreso Anti-Fascista* was dedicated to an analysis of the political phenomenon of fascism and possible measures of opposing it. The Italian socialist Francesco Frola who in November 1941 had initiated the foundation of the *Alianza Internacional "Giuseppe Garibaldi"* spoke on the "origins and the development of Nazifascism", the former director of the National School for Economics Mario Souza dedicated his contribution to the "economy in the totalitarian state", the writer Camilio Carranca y Trujillo talked about "nazifascism in our America", Alejandro Carrillo, director of the CTM's periodical *El Popular* spoke about "nazifascism and the working class", the journalist Jacobo Delavuelta treated the topic of "journalism and nazifascism", the professor Eulalia Guzmán, president of the *Comité de Ayuda a los Víctimas de la Guerra* talked about "the woman in nazifascism", and the president of ADI Raúl Cordero Amador concluded with his lecture on "How to fight nazifascism in Mexico".<sup>126</sup> Internal ideological conflicts, though, did not spare the *Acción Democrática Internacional* as one of the scheduled speakers, the Spanish republican ex-minister of the *Izquierda Republicana* Álvaro de Albornoz (who in June 1941 had represented the Spanish community of political refugees in exile at the ADI's "Homage to Mexican Democracy") refused to participate as scheduled with a lecture on the "political and moral content of nazifascism" because he objected to a growing communist influence over the organisation.<sup>127</sup> Instead, Margarita Nelken, the only communist speaker at the event, addressed the congress with an analysis about the "problem of the Jews", as ADI secretary Severin Ferandel put it on the third day of the congress.<sup>128</sup>

In his opening address Raúl Cordero Amador welcomed delegations for the Czechoslovakian, Polish, Belgian, Italian, German, Hungarian, Norwegian, French, Chinese, and British communities in Mexico City, "the new Britain, the

126 Programme of the *Congreso Anti-Nazifascista* (Jan 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A – 843C, s. fol.; cf. also at Fundación Pablo Iglesias, Archivos Particulares, Archivo de Ramón Lamonedá, ARLF-171-5, fol. 9. In January, Eulalia Guzmán had already denounced the activities of pro-Fascist activists in the city in an article for the journal *Freies Deutschland*, edited by the *Movimiento Alemania Libre*: "Just a few months ago, the streets of the city were swamped with wildly anti-semitic posters, and this well-organised and -financed campaign was complemented by speeches through loudspeakers to which the passers-by in Calle de [República de ] Chile were forced to listen when they passed the offices of a nazi-fascist organisation which calls itself »national«, "Die fünfte Kolonne in Mexiko", *Freies Deutschland* I/3 (Jan 1942), pp. 16-7.

127 „Special report on organization and background of Anti-Fascist Congress held in Mexico City, January 30th – February 1st, 1942“ (6 Feb 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A – 843C, s. fol.; cf. the transcript of proceedings of the *Congreso Anti-Nazifascista* in Mexico City (30 Jan – 1 Feb 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A – 843C, p. 104-6.

128 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

Britain of Churchill”, as he emphasised. Special applause was reserved for representatives of “the [Soviet] people and the valiant Red Army” and greetings to the “people that has no fatherland, which walks the earth weeping over its misfortune and which was the first victim in Germany itself [...] of the diabolical Hitler, greetings to the Israelites.” It is noteworthy that no Austrian delegation was mentioned after half a year earlier two competing organisations, the monarchist Free Austrians and the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM) had fought over representation in the ADI to the extent of an open brawl in a coffee house in the city centre.<sup>129</sup> The ARAM, though, sent a telegramme saluting the congress *in absentia*.<sup>130</sup> After representations of the governing party PRM and the Mexican trade unions, a “representative of Alemania Libre”, its president Ludwig Renn, addressed the congress: “I salute this congress, especially our Czechoslovakian friends, the Poles, and the free French and all those who want to liberate themselves from the brutal Nazi boot.” He continued:

We are very much aware of our responsibility as Germans to share in the pain and suffering of all Europe. Already everywhere grows a movement around our periodical Alemania Libre, and not only in Mexico grows the unity of the free Germans. A few days ago, we heard the voice of (foreign name), a famous German writer, from New York, who said: I am certain that the German people does not forget its democratic feelings, I promise before this noble society and the human and generous hard work that we Free Germans shall not rest before Hitler and his Fifth Column are exterminated; that we shall not rest before having converted our country into a free Germany, before having seen Europe being converted into a free Europe. Nazism must die so that the world can live. (applause)<sup>131</sup>

These words (except for interventions during discussion by Paul Elle) were the only contribution of German political refugees to an event which, after all, commemorated the National Socialists' rise to power in Germany nine years earlier and sought to mobilise public opinion against Nazi-fascism. Alongside the professional routine of a political congress, the *Congreso Anti-Fascista* also displayed certain political tensions between different camps of transnational anti-fascism, such as the heated exchange of words between the economist Mario Souza and the president of the Spanish UGT and PSOE Ramón González Peña, when the latter complained that Souza had laid responsibility for the rise of fascism at the door of the emergence of “a third socialist party of the middle classes”:

129 Ibid., p. 3. The proceedings were also published by the ADI in a booklet of 160 pages as: *El Primer Congreso Antifascista, México, enero-febrero 1942, memoria-resumen* (México D.F., 1942).

130 Transcript of proceedings of the *Congreso Anti-Fascista* in Mexico City, 30 Jan – 1 Feb 1942 at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A – 843C, p. 33.

131 Ibid., p. 29.

GONZÁLEZ PEÑA: (interrupts) This is an antifascist congress and I do not allow that my party is being attacked.

SOUZA: I am also a socialist and fighter against fascism just as you are.

GONZÁLEZ PEÑA: I ask the president that, if this congress is meant to continue, he does not allow that we are being attacked, otherwise we shall leave.

SOUZA: I have the right to present and defend my point of view. If that is not possible, I shall ask you that you permit me to retire and to retract my contribution.

THE PRESIDENT: The assembly will tell whether Lic. Souza shall continue (voices: Yes! He shall continue!)<sup>132</sup>

Even though González Peña apologised the following day for his “lack of sense of humour” that he had shown<sup>133</sup>, such incidents during the discussions did not go unnoticed by observers, such as H. J. Corson who reported on the event to the US embassy and concluded: “The recent Congress reflected the internal divisions of the ADI. Communists, including the writer Margarita Nelken, assumed control of the Congress. [...] Possibly because of the ADI’s preoccupation with internal fighting, the Congress itself attracted only a moderate amount of attention.”<sup>134</sup> The congress did, indeed, attract some attention in the Mexican press which covered quite faithfully the contents of the main lectures during the event.<sup>135</sup> Remarkably, the congress received little coverage in the Spanish republican press in Mexico City, only a brief mention by the *Círculo “Jaime Vera”* in its periodical *El Socialista* which noted the “heartfelt spirit of unity” and published a picture of their delegation, but never printed the reports and comments it promised for the next edition.<sup>136</sup> Neither the periodical *Adelante* of the *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”* nor *España Popular* of the Spanish communist party mentioned the event at all. The greatest resonance can be found in the periodicals of the smaller nationalities in exile in Mexico City: The Italian *Alianza Internacional “Giuseppe Garibaldi”* in their news bulletin proudly celebrated the event “which, if we are not mistaken, was the first of its kind that has taken place on the American continent.” The report noted “203 representatives of 92 political, trade union, and cultural organisations, Mexican, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Hungarian, Polish, Israelite etc., directed by democrats, socialists, communists, and anarchists.” The paper concluded that the most important message of the congress was

132 Ibid., p. 52.

133 Ibid., p. 77.

134 „Special report on organization and background of Anti-Fascist Congress held in Mexico City, January 30th – February 1st, 1942“ (6 Feb 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A – 843C, s. fol.

135 See e.g.: „Segunda Sesión de Antifascistas“, *Excelsior* (1 Feb 1943).

136 „El P.S.O. en el Congreso Antifascista“, *El Socialista* I/2 (1 Feb 1942), p. 6, with a picture of the delegation of the *Círculo „Jaime Vera”* on page 5.

“represented by the fact that, as doctor Frola said assuringly, this congress »translated into the venue of the *Teatro de los Electricistas* (where the congress undertook its work) the unity which was sealed on the battlefields by a baptism of blood.«”<sup>137</sup> Hugo Waldtner summarised the proceedings of the congress for the journal *Freies Deutschland* which the *Movimiento Alemania Libre* published since November. “From now on, the numerous and hitherto scattered and disorganised anti-Nazi organisations and movements will largely act united.” The “brotherly unity” of “178 delegates representing 74 organisations” had produced an “illustration and anticipation of the future brotherly bonds of the liberated nations of Europe”.<sup>138</sup> He then went on to list the key demands which the congress had raised:

1. The most rapid and comprehensive implementation of the resolutions of the pan-American conference of Rio de Janeiro regarding the dissolution of all fascist organisations.
2. Closure and dissolution of all centres and institutions in which individuals sympathising with Nazifascism are associated [...], such as the German School [*Colegio Humboldt*], the German House [*Casa Alemana*] in Mexico and similar. [...]
3. Complete suppression of the publication of periodicals such as the “*Deutsche Zeitung von Mexiko*” [...]
4. Expropriation of all radio stations which disseminate, under commercial or other disguise, nazi-fascist propaganda [...]
5. Confiscation of all German, Italian, Japanese commercial and industrial enterprises which are infestations of Nazi propaganda, espionage, and sabotage [...]
6. Increase and development of all means of written, oral or radio propaganda (periodicals, journals, books, radio, door-to-door propaganda, schools, etc.) to fight Nazi ideology [...]<sup>139</sup>

It seems that different camps of political exile in Mexico City had divergent perceptions of the first *Congreso Anti-Fascista* in 1942, even though the assembly of the *Círculo “Jaime Vera”* noted on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March that the congress had “offered the magnificent opportunity to establish contacts with other centres of socialist elements from other countries.”<sup>140</sup> The smaller national communities

137 „El primer congreso Antifascista de México“, *Boletín de la Alianza Internacional „Giuseppe Garibaldi“ por la Libertad de Italia* V/2 (Feb 1942), p. 12.

138 „Vom Nutzen der Einheit. Der erste antifaschistische Kongress der »Acción Democrática Internacional«, *Freies Deutschland* I/4 (Feb 1942), pp. 24; the discrepancy of numbers compared to the bulletin of the *Alianza Garibaldi* remains unexplained, as Waldtner even included the absent Austrians in his account of the congress.

139 Ibid., p. 24.

140 „Acitividad. En México. Asamblea del Círculo Jaime Vera“, *El Socialista* I/4 (1 Apr 1942), p.

which had only just launched their own versions of, mostly communist-dominated, national front organisations (such as the *Alianza Internacional "Giuseppe Garibaldi"* and *Alemania Libre*) were most eager to promote their entry into the transnational public sphere of anti-fascist politics in the city. The ADI provided a public platform for those communities of political exile in Mexico City which, for the time being, lacked the funds and resources to access effectively the transnational public sphere by other means.

But the image of “unity” which the press reports painted was misleading. Even if the mobilisation of the anti-fascist communities of European refugees in the city around the *Acción Democrática Internacional* may have fostered and facilitated the cross-cooperation between largely pro-Soviet political currents among the different nationalities in exile in Mexico City, it also marked a period of intensified ideological conflict within those communities, above all the German-speaking group. Since October 1941, the European communists in exile had intensified their campaign against the anti-Stalinist Left in exile which they labelled as “Trotskyists”, irrespective of their actual political affiliations. Main targets were the Russian Bolshevik veteran and renegade Victor Serge, the Catalan POUM activist Julián Gorkín, and the French socialist Marceau Pivert.<sup>141</sup> By January 1942 the German-speaking *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* suffered from severe internal conflicts which had come to a head after the German writer Gustav Regler had published a personal attack against the Czech communist Otto Katz (known under his *nom-de-plume* André Simone). Regler, who had been a communist political commissar of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War, had turned anti-communist by his experiences in Spain and under the impact of the Molotov-Ribbentrop-Pact. By the end of 1941, he witnessed the arrival of ever more European communists in Mexico with the utmost suspicion, and in his article he recalled a public appearance by André Simone on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 1941 – the same day when Michael Grübel had watched Vicente Lombardo Toledano in the *Arena México* delivering a “rhetorical masterpiece” that “incited enthusiasm” which he had not witnessed before.<sup>142</sup> Regler recalled Simone speaking in English, so it is likely that he referred to another event of public lectures to US-American tourists to raise donations for the German-speaking communist group, and he displayed him in the worst possible manner: as a hypocrite, a demagogue, a two-faced turn-coat, a cynical opportunist pretending to be a French journalist denouncing the German occupation of France on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, the French national holiday. His personal attack culminated in a sarcastic

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141 See: „Empieza la Campaña“, in: Marceau Pivert, Gustav Regler, Victor Serge, Julián Gorkín: *¡La G.P.U. prepara un nuevo crimen!* (Edición Análisis, México D.F., 1942), pp. 12-6; cf. Fritz Pohle: *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 136-40; Patrick Iber: *Neither Peace nor Freedom: the cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge Mass., 2015), pp. 43-5.

142 Letter by Michael Grübel to „comrade Richter“ (i.e. J. Buttinger, New York) (5 Aug 1941) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 18884/3 (Sammlung Buttinger), p. 4.



summary of what Regler regarded as the new political guidelines of anti-fascist unity among the German-speaking communists:

Who said that our cause is Germany? Our *heimat* is the Kremlin; we are the guardians of the night which has fallen from within that castle; there one thinks for us, and we obey. There's money in the bank again. Let's head our new journal with a quote from the bible; the pope wants it that way; let's make peace with the rich emigrants in the district of Hipódromo, even if three times a day at their coffee hours they disavow Germany, with all her workers, only because the chief crook Hitler has taken their money away. Let's make peace with all those who do not demand a reckoning from us over these two years of treason. Ah, but let us organise violent mobs for every Victor Serge who wants to talk to the workers about the good times of Lenin and the disastrous times of Stalin.<sup>143</sup>

This attack on the reorientation of communist policies after the attack of Nazi-Germany against the Soviet Union appeared in the first edition of the short-lived journal *Análisis*, edited by Julián Gorkín, Victor Serge, and Marceau Pivert, the leading minds of the left-wing socialist group *Socialismo y Libertad*.<sup>144</sup> His article employed a strong emphasis on national identity and politics (mocking the German-speaking Czech communist Otto Katz for presenting himself as the French journalist André Simone who spoke favourably about the Western allies of the Soviet Union), and Regler's veiled and disapproving reference to the largely Jewish community of German-speaking political refugees in the district of *Hipódromo*, who “disavowed” the German working class because Nazi Germany had “taken their money away” is noteworthy for its latent Anti-Semitism. The communist response was as swift as it was aggressive: During mid- January 1942, Regler was asked to leave his leading position within the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana*, because, as Regler sarcastically noted in his diary, “one might snub the opportunist Toledano. Because one would otherwise never achieve unity [...] Because I live in Coayacán.”<sup>145</sup> Regler had indeed left the city and moved to the

143 „Retrato: André Simone“ by „El observador d'Artagnan“ (i.e. Gustav Regler), *Análisis* I/1 (Jan 1942), pp. 25-8, reprinted in the German original in Fritz Pohle: *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 470-5, this quote on p. 474; cf. the diary entry of 14<sup>th</sup> of July 1941 in: Gustav Regler: *Sohn aus Niemandland. Tagebücher 1940-1943* (Frankfurt a.M., 1994), pp 504-14.

144 Cf. more generally on *Socialismo y Libertad*: Claudio Albertani: „Socialismo y Libertad. El exilio antiautoritario de Europa en México y la lucha contra el estalinismo (1940-1950)“, *Fundación Andreu Nin: Políticas de la Memoria* 8/9 (2008/09), pp. 131-9, online resource: <http://www.fundanin.org/albertani7.htm> [8 May 2013]; see also a French translation including a biographical glossary of its members, in Id.: “Le Group Socialimo y Libertad. L'exil anti-autoritaire d'Europe au Mexique et la lutte contre le stalinisme (1940-1950)”, *Agone* 43 (2010), pp. 241-66, online resource: [https://agone.org/libre/ebook\\_2252.pdf](https://agone.org/libre/ebook_2252.pdf) [2 May 2018].

145 Diary entry of 14<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> of January of 1942 in: Gustav Regler: *Sohn aus Niemandland*.

town of *Coyoacán* about 10 kilometers south of Mexico City out of fear for his personal safety.<sup>146</sup> On the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 1942, the Mexican communist periodical *La Voz de México* published a caricature which depicted the decomposing head of Trotsky out of which a “tree of treason” was growing with five snakes for branches that were labelled “Victor Serge”, “Pivert”, “Regler”, “Gorkín”, and “Munis” (referring to the Spanish Trotskyist Grandizo Munis) covered in swastikas – a scarcely veiled threat that the communists would be prepared to silence this group of international „Trotskyists” in the city as they had silenced Trotsky himself. The group of Serge, Pivert, Regler, and Gorkín, in turn, published a pamphlet that denounced and condemned the communist threats and also presented international messages of solidarity for their anti-Stalinist stance.<sup>147</sup> On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February of 1942, just one day after the conclusion of the *Congreso Anti-Fascista* which the *Acción Democrática Internacional* had staged at the *Teatro de los Electricistas*, the German communists Georg Stibi, Paul Krautter, Rudolf Feistmann, and Paul Hartmann accused Regler in an article published in *El Popular*, the periodical of the CTM, of treason and collaboration with the French *Deuxième Bureau* during his detention in the French internment camp of Le Vernet.<sup>148</sup> Egon Erwin Kisch repeated such charges in the February edition of the journal *Freies Deutschland* and coined the poisonous *bon-mot* that Regler was “an author who differs from his books in the sense that those do not sell at all.”<sup>149</sup> The fact that Kisch's attack under the sarcastic title “a hero of our times” explicitly referred to press reports that Regler had not been admitted to the *Congreso Antifascista* and that it was placed on the page directly opposite to the celebration of unity at the ADI congress which featured the headline “On the Benefits of Unity” illustrates neatly the double-edged effects of political mobilisation in exile in Mexico City as both integrating the main political milieus of exile across national divides while further deepening and entrenching the differences between them to the extent of potentially violent confrontation.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 1942, the Spanish communists continued with their mobilisation efforts under the label of a *Unión Democrática Española* (UDE) which, in their words, “together with the event held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December constitutes a magnificent milestone of unity and of combat”.<sup>150</sup> The

*Tagebücher 1940-1943* (Frankfurt a.M., 1994), p. 585.

146 See his diary entry of 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1941 in Gustav Regler: *Sohn aus Niemandsland. Tagebücher 1940-1943* (Frankfurt a.M., 1994), p. 535; he first mentioned his new home at Avenida Juárez no. 141 in *Coyoacán* two days later: *ibid.*, p. 538.

147 Marceau Pivert, Gustav Regler, Victor Serge, Julián Gorkín: *¡La G.P.U. prepara un nuevo crimen!* (Edición Análisis, México D.F., 1942); see the reproduction of the caricature from *La Voz de México* *ibid.*, p. 79.

148 „Denuncian Antinazis alemanes a un quintacolumnista cubierta“, *El Popular* (2 Feb 1942), p. 2.

149 Egon Erwin Kisch: „Ein Held unserer Zeit“, *Freies Deutschland* I/4 (Feb 1942), pp. 25-6.

150 See the short notice „Un gran acto organizado por la Unión Democrática Española“, *España Popular* III/85 (17 Feb 1942), p. 4; cf. „Spanische Republikaner, Sozialisten, Kommunisten

occasion marked the sixth anniversary of the election victory of the Spanish *Frente Popular* in 1936, but the ambitions of the communist national front went beyond those of the republican Popular Front of 1936: “Unlike the Spanish Popular Front, the UDE tends to unite not only the genuinely Spanish forces but also the parties and organisations of Catalonia, the Basque country, and Galicia which, because of their peculiar composition and for not having organic ties with any Spanish equivalent, may join the ranks of the UDE in order to fight for the programme which serves them as a norm and guidance.”<sup>151</sup> This programme had been formulated on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1942 – five days before the congress of UDE – by Antonio Velao, Elfidio Alonso, and Luis Fernández Clérigo for the *Comité de Unidad de los Republicanos Españoles*, Ramón Lamonedá for the *negrinistas* of the PSOE, Antonio Mije for the Spanish communists, Juan Comorera for the PSUC, and Ramón González Peña and Amaro del Rosal for the UGT. It emphasised the continuing legitimacy of the Spanish Republic of 1931 and its last government led by Juan Negrín, and declared its loyalty to the allied war effort led by Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States, and the Republic of China and the “objective of annihilating German fascism and its satellites, among them Franco.” The immediate objectives were to “contribute” to efforts to topple the Franco regime, mobilise the Spanish community in exile in the Americas, and offer aid and support for those republicans still held in France and North Africa. An invitation to subscribe to the UDE as associations or individuals was extended “if and when an express declaration is made to fight for the mentioned programme” which would not imply to “renounce their own party programme” which they could “uphold and implement in total freedom.”<sup>152</sup> But even such a programmatic effort to establish a framework for inclusive unity did not pass without reference to those political forces that were meant to be regarded as enemies of the national front:

The challenge to beat the anti-unity propaganda which certain people of a certain denomination promote within the republican mould is a challenge that finds a favourable terrain, because the feeling of unity of the Spaniards is infinitely superior to the milieu of particular campaigns which some instigate, in the name of some resentments of the past, in order to place the satisfaction of personal ambitions before the great mission of contributing to the united fight for the liberty of Spain.<sup>153</sup>

und Gewerkschafter“, *Freies Deutschland* V/6 (Apr 1942), p. 31.

151 „Un paso importante en el camino de la Unión Nacional de todos los españoles“, *España Popular* III/86 (6 Mar 1942), p. 1.

152 „Bases programáticas de la »Unión Democrática Española«, *España Popular* III/87 (17 Mar 1942), p. 5.

153 Ibid.

The meeting of the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 1942 attracted an audience of about 300 persons who paid 3.50 pesos for a banquet and offered a standing ovation to a telegramme from Juan Negrín who sent his greetings to the meeting in Mexico City.<sup>154</sup> Among the speakers at this occasion were Juan Comorera for the PSUC, Luis Fernández Clérigo of the *Izquierda Republicana*, Ramón González Peña for the *negrinista* PSOE, Antonio Velao as president of the UDE, and two Mexican speakers, among them the president of FOARE José Mancisidor.<sup>155</sup>

During March 1942, some of the smaller nationalities in exile succeeded in making their voices heard in the urban public of Mexico City: On the 12<sup>th</sup> of March, the *Acción Republicana Austriaca* (ARAM) occupied the conference hall of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* for a commemoration of the fourth anniversary of the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany. In order to advertise the event, the ARAM used a poster campaign across the city designed to attract the attention of the Mexican public:

Mexico was the first country which raised its voice against this act of violence [the annexation by Nazi-Germany in 1938]. Mexico protested in the assembly of the League of Nations, in the name of international law and self-determination against the annexation of Austria. This noble and generous attitude of Mexico, expression of its love of liberty and justice, provides to us Austrian residents in Mexico, lovers of liberty, the opportunity to declare: The Austrian people will throw off the yoke of Nazi-Fascism, and the free and democratic Austria will rise again.<sup>156</sup>

The proceedings of the meeting of the 12<sup>th</sup> of March were framed by musical performances of songs by Schubert, performed by Margarita Maris and accompanied by the renowned musical director Ernst Römer, and a Mozart quartet.<sup>157</sup> The speakers on this occasion were the Mexican engineer Alberto García de Mendoza and the first president of ARAM, Rudolf Neuhaus, who reported on the “resistance of the Austrian people against the Nazi occupation and demanded the right of self-determination, for Austria, referring to the Atlantic Charter”, as Neuhaus himself described the activities to the US embassy in May 1942.<sup>158</sup> Simultaneously, at the beginning of May the intelligence unit of the US

154 „Qué fué el gran acto de unidad organizado por la Unión Democrática Española en conmemoración del 16 de Febrero“, *España Popular* III/86 (6 Mar 1942), p. 5.

155 „Un gran acto organizado por la Unión Democrática Española“, *España Popular* III/85 (17 Feb 1942), p. 4.

156 Memoir by Rudolf Neuhaus in the name of *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM) (May 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800M – 800Ref, s. fol.

157 See the programme and the invitation at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 03637, s. fols., and no. 2903/1a, s. fol.

158 Memoir by Rudolf Neuhaus in the name of *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM) (May 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800M – 800Ref, s. fol.

embassy intercepted a letter that contained further information about the event which was attended by about 400 persons and was “held for the purpose of interesting influential people in obtaining visas and working permits for Austrians.” It emerged that the “organization is very careful not to become involved with the Trotskyists because [Lombardo] Toledano and the Mexican Labour Union are Stalinists.” The laconic comment of Raleigh Gibson, the intelligence chief of the US embassy, simply stated: “Recommend we forget it.”<sup>159</sup> Four days after the meeting of ARAM at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*, the president of ARAM, Rudolf Neuhaus, opened his bookshop, the *Liberería Internacional*, in the district of *Hipódromo* at calle Sonora no. 204, close to the corner with Avenida Amsterdam.<sup>160</sup> The bookshop became an important point of reference for the German-speaking community in exile in Mexico City and also served as de-facto headquarters for the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* until the organisation established its offices further south at calle Sultepec no. 34 in June 1943.<sup>161</sup> During the following weeks, the ARAM launched an initiative to lobby the Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho to grant 104 visas for Austrian refugees stranded in Marseilles and tried to gain the support of the US embassy for its efforts. Again, the US diplomats were unprepared to get involved in Mexican immigration policy, and the ambassador Messersmith simply stated that in this matter “I can make no observation or suggestion of any kind.”<sup>162</sup>

About two weeks after the Austrians' commemoration of the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 1942, the Italian *Alianza Internacional “Giuseppe Garibaldi”* stepped into the limelight of the transnational political public sphere of exile in Mexico City by staging a commemorative event on the occasion of the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Guadalajara during the Spanish Civil War. The chosen location was the theatre of the union of *cinematografistas* at calle Orozco y Berra no. 15 in the district of *Guerrero*. The theatre was equipped as a cinema and became a popular choice for staging events that involved the show of feature films or documentaries. The battle of Guadalajara in March 1937 played an important role in the calendar of Italian anti-fascists, since this battle of the Spanish Civil War saw Italians in combat on both sides of the front line. The attack by the fascist Italian units of the *Corpo Truppe Volontarie* had been halted and beaten back by republican forces, among them the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> International Brigades including the Italian *Batallón “Giuseppe Garibaldi”* after which the *Alianza Internacional* in Mexico was named. The battle thus became a fixture of veteran pride among the Italian anti-fascists. The panel of the presidency of the meeting united 17 veterans, mostly

159 Memorandum on „Austrian Action“ (29 Aug 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

160 See the advert for its opening in *Freies Deutschland* I/5 (Mar 1942), p. 31.

161 See the invitation to the first meeting of ARAM at the new address on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 1943 at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 03637, s. fol.

162 Letter by ambassador George S. Messersmith to Rudolf Neuhaus (27 May 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800M – 800Ref, s. fol.

officers, of the Spanish Civil War, among them former republican air force chief Ignacio Hidalgo de Cisneros, Carlos Contreras (or Vittorio Vidali), former commander of the Fifth Regiment and inspecting commissar of the front of Guadalajara, former chief of staff of the 11<sup>th</sup> International Brigade Ludwig Renn, and other Italian, Spanish, Hungarian, and Mexican veterans.<sup>163</sup> Among the speakers were the Spanish republican ex-minister Antonio Velao and the president of the *Alianza Internacional "Giuseppe Garibaldi"*, Francesco Frola, who gave reassurances of transnational anti-fascist solidarity, the Mexican member of the *Camera de Diputados* Alfredo Félix Díaz Escobar who highlighted the sympathies of the Mexican people for the war effort of the Spanish Republic, Ludwig Renn who recalled the fraternisation of captured fascist Italian troops with the Italian volunteers of the International Brigades, and Severin Ferandel for the *Acción Democrática Internacional*. The event was concluded by a show of a documentary film about the battle of Guadalajara.<sup>164</sup>

Among the attendees of the commemoration of the battle of Guadalajara was colonel Juan Gómez, former division commander during the Spanish Civil War representing the *Comité Nacional Antisinarquista y en Defensa de la Democracia* as its chief of staff.<sup>165</sup> Alfredo Félix Díaz Escobar, who spoke at the meeting of the *Alianza "Garibaldi"* and had asked the ADI's *Congreso Anti-Fascista* in January to monitor the activities of the oppositional right-wing press in Mexico<sup>166</sup>, was, in fact, the president of this organisation which had originated from among the Mexican members of Congress to oppose the rise of the radical right-wing movement of *Sinarquismo*, a Mexican variety of extreme right-wing corporatism that openly emulated elements of the European fascist movements.<sup>167</sup> The activities of Díaz Escobar and the *Comité Antisinarquista* were closely monitored by the intelligence unit of the US embassy describing him as "completely in tow by the international communist brain trust here". The suspicious US-American agents had not a good word to say about his activities which they regarded as opportunist and corrupt:

He is the head of the communist-fronting Comité Nacional Antisinarquista which engages in a totally ineffective and partly fake fifth column witch hunt [...] Díaz Escobar is doing the Communists' bidding because they showed him how they can get money from the rich refugees. Díaz Escobar is scheming to become Governor of a

163 See „Commemoración del V aniversario de la batalla de Guadalajara“, *Boletín de la Alianza Internacional „Giuseppe Garibaldi“ por la libertad de Italia* I/3 (May 1942), p. 8-9.

164 „Zum fünften Jahrestag der Schlacht von Guadalajara“, *Freies Deutschland* I/6 (Apr 1942); p. 8.

165 „Commemoración del V aniversario de la batalla de Guadalajara“, *Boletín de la Alianza Internacional „Giuseppe Garibaldi“ por la libertad de Italia* I/3 (May 1942), p. 9.

166 „Segunda Sesión de Antifascistas“, *Excelsior* (1 Feb 1943).

167 Cf. Héctor Hernández García de León: *The Sinarquista Movement: with special reference to the period 1934-1944* (London, 1999).

State, that is, he intends to purchase the job but has not enough money. The people of the Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana claim that the Communists promised Díaz Escobar that if he played ball with them they would see to it that the refugees give him the money to buy himself the governor's job. My informant stated that Fidel Velázquez of the CTM had evidence to that effect. Hence Díaz Escobar is trying to present himself as the fighter against anti-semitism, Nazi activities, and the fifth column in order to get money from the rich refugees.<sup>168</sup>

The reason for such animosity partly lay in the fact that the *Comité Antisinarquista* published the names and organisational structures of known Nazi sympathisers and agents in Mexico, which appeared to interfere with clandestine surveillance efforts by the Mexican and other intelligence agencies. In March 1942, the *Comité Antisinarquista* initiated another transnational body of anti-fascist political refugees in Mexico City, the *Federación de Residentes Anti-Nazifascistas Extranjeros en México* (FRAEM). Its inaugural meeting also took place in the theatre of the trade union of *cinematografistas* at calle Orozoco y Berra no. 15 in the district of *Guerrero* in the evening of the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 1942, an event by invitation only for which the letter head of the *Comité Antisinarquista* was used.<sup>169</sup> The organising committee consisted of the Costa Rican journalist Vicente Sáenz, the Hungarian sociologist László Radványi (the husband of Anna Seghers), the Czech journalist André Simone (i.e. Otto Katz), a certain Ernesto Félix Díaz Escobar (possibly a mistaken first name for “Alfredo”), the journalist Ramón García Urrutia, a member of the Spanish ex-patriate community in Mexico City, and the Spanish communist in exile Ricardo Castellote.<sup>170</sup> Alfredo Félix Díaz Escobar presided over the meeting and welcomed the individuals and organisations which had responded to the invitation: about 80 persons represented twelve different nationalities and 40 different exile organisations from the pro-Soviet political current among the political refugees in the city, and the Mexican CTM and a range of smaller unions, such as the unions of the *cinematografistas*, the teaching unions, the mining and metalworkers' union, and the union of employees of Public Works. The FRAEM described its objectives as “offering its collaboration to the fight for the Mexican democracy against totalitarianism while assisting the development of international policy of the administration led by division general Don Manuel Ávila Camacho, adjusting its activities to strict compliance with the laws of Mexico”. Alongside the installation of a permanent commission (which turned out to be identical with the organising committee), this

168 Report on the activities of Alfredo Félix Díaz Escobar (5 Jun 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, p. 1; cf. Alexander Stephan: *Communazis. FBI Surveillance of German Emigré Writers* (New Haven / New York, 1995), p. 234.

169 Cf. report on the activities of Alfredo Félix Díaz Escobar (5 Jun 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, p. 4-5; see the invitation to the *Círculo „Jaime Vera“* (9 Mar 1942) at Fundación Pablo Iglesias, Archivos particulares, Ramón Lamóneda Fernández, ARLF 170/37, fols. 1-2.

170 *Ibid.*, fol. 1.

first assembly established a governing council in which ten different nationalities were represented: Antonio Velao for the Spaniards of the *Unión Democrática Española*, Francesco Frola for the Italians, Jadwiga Kaminska for the Poles, Ludwig Renn for the Germans, Rudolf Neuhaus for the Austrians, Dragutin Fodor (alias Theodor Balk) for the Yugoslavs, a Sr. Hartmann for the Hungarians, a yet unnamed member for the Chinese Kuo-Min-Tang, Michel Dumont for the Free French, and Arpad Weissmann for the Czechoslovakians. Severin Ferandel represented the ADI in this committee. The programme of the FRAEM included the organisation of cultural events, public lectures of current events of world politics, radio programmes, film shows, art shows, the edition of a periodical, and a Legal Commission that would offer protection to the anti-fascist community of foreigners and assist in acquiring further immigration permits for political refugees.<sup>171</sup> The office address of the FRAEM at Avenida 5 de Mayo no 43-204 demonstrated the symbiotic relationship with the *Comité Antisinarquista* – they shared their offices.

The 14<sup>th</sup> of April, again, brought the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City into the public for the eleventh anniversary of the second Spanish Republic of 1931. The *Unión Democrática Española* (which, by now, had established its offices at Avenida del Ejido no. 37-19 in the *Tabacalera*<sup>172</sup>) invited their followers to the *Teatro del Pueblo* above the *Mercado Abelardo L. Rodríguez* at calle República de Venezuela in the north of the historic city centre. While Indalecio Prieto toured the United States to address the Spanish community there<sup>173</sup> and the anti-communist republicans celebrated the anniversary with a banquet at the restaurant “Sabino” in the presence of the ambassadors of Columbia and Chile<sup>174</sup>, the pro-Soviet alliance of Spaniards in Mexico gathered their followers and representatives of other nationalities in the evening under the motto of a manifesto issued in the periodical *El Socialista* two weeks earlier. The UDE warned against the possibility of Spain being “thrown into a war against our legitimate allies”, the anti-Hitler coalition and called for the retreat of the Spanish *División Azul* from the Eastern Front. And the UDE reiterated: “In commemorating this 14<sup>th</sup> of April we are directing a powerful appeal to all Spaniards to continue tenaciously the resistance and hostility against the Franco regime, an anti-national regime which oppresses, subjects, and torments the

171 “Quedó constituido la Federación de Residentes Anti-Nazifascistas Extranjeros en México”, *El Popular* (7 Apr 1942), p. 7, BAL, SAPMO, Nachlaß Paul Merker NY 4102/54: “Tätigkeit in Mexiko”, fols. 1-2; cf. also “Eine Ausländer-Föderation in Mexico. Alle Nationen geeint gegen Hitler”, *Freies Deutschland* I/7 (May 1942), p. 31; see also the “Exposición de Motivos y Proyecto de Estatutos” of the FRAEM (6 Mar 1942) at Fundación Pablo Iglesias, Archivos Particulares, Ramón Lamonedá Fernández, ARLF 170/37, fols. 3-7.

172 „U.D.E.“, *El Socialista* I/4 (1 Apr 1942), p. 6.

173 „En Nueva York: próxima conferencia de Indalecio Prieto“, *Adelante* I/4 (1 Apr 1942), p. 4, announcing Prieto's speech in New York on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April.

174 „Commemoración del 14 de abril“, *Adelante* I/15 (15 Apr 1942), p. 4; „El Acto“, *España con Honra* I/6 (14 May 1942), pp. 3-10.



Spanish people.”<sup>175</sup> The “great event of unity” in the *Teatro del Pueblo* on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April, which the communist periodical *España Popular* documented, saw the representatives of the Spanish communists, socialist *negrinistas*, Catalanian united socialists and the pro-Soviet faction of the UGT united under the presidency of Antonio Velao of the *Izquierda Republicana*. Among the speakers were Elfidio Alonso and Luis Fernández Clérigo for the *Unidad Republicana*, the communist Antonio Mije, the socialist Ramón Lamonedá for the *Círculo “Jaime Vera”*, and Ramón González Peña for the UGT.<sup>176</sup> The socialist periodical *El Socialista* documented the speech of Ramón Lamonedá who offered new perspectives for the national front policies of the *Unión Democrática Española* (after, evidently, the Catalanian, Basques, and Galician nationalists had not heeded the invitation issued two months earlier):

The work that we undertake from this moment on consists of joining the effort of all to extinguish the fire which threatens to turn the common home which is Spain into ashes. In this work we have an ally who knows that he is not [an ally], who perhaps begins to understand that he is, because the Spanish Catholics who rose with shotguns and thousands of fanaticised youths to prevent, by the victory of Franco, the ruin of the Church, they already noticed that the influence of the German swastika is more hurtful for the normal and legitimate development of religious beliefs than all the anti-clericalism which the oldest and most anti-clerical republicans may harbour. And those one hundred percent Spanish patriots, patriots who believed that Spain – using an argument which we have seen in many and a diversity of speeches – could end up as a Moscovite military base, they will realise that the triumph of Franco does not mean the consecration of the independence of the fatherland, but instead the burial, with much pain and little glory, of the small independence of the fatherland. (applause)<sup>177</sup>

The communist paper *España Popular* summarised the meeting: “The *Unión Democrática* consequently possesses a magnificent prospect for its great achievements, and by understanding the profound feelings of unity which exist ingrained among the Spanish republicans it will find the support and the collaboration in the struggle of millions of our compatriots, anxious to bring to an end the cost which would come with Franco's regime and to see the Republic of

175 „Catorce de Abril. Manifiesto de la UDE“, *El Socialista* I/4 (1 Apr 1942), p. 1.

176 „Un gran acto de unidad y de lucha de Unión Democrática Española“, *España Popular* III/90 (1 May 1942), p. 3.

177 „La UDE conmemora el Catorce de Abril“, *El Socialista* I/5 (1 May 1942), p. 6-7, this quote p. 7; the speech of Ramón González Peña was published in the following issue: „Unidad sindical, unidad democrática. Un discurso de Ramón González Peña“, *El Socialista* I/6 (1 Jun 1942), p. 6.

Spain restored.”<sup>178</sup> Such rather optimistic assessments became a standard feature of political rhetoric of the pro-Soviet Left in exile in Mexico City as a means to mobilise support and to sustain morale among the communities of political refugees.

The respective differences in political approach, but also in public political practice among the communities of exile in the city became evident on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1942. After his return from New York, Indalecio Prieto again took to the political stage of Mexico City with a speech delivered at the *Centro Republicano Español* in the former Spanish consulate at calle Balderas no. 37. He offered “purely personal opinions” and developed a highly subjective narrative of Spanish socialism as he had experienced it since the closing days of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in his Asturian home town of Oviedo. He recalled the internal conflicts of the early labour movement as well as the repression by the Spanish state before stating the failure of Catholic socialism and anarchism (which he diagnosed as suffering from “decadent romanticism”). After leading the audience in a standing ovation for the “valiant” USSR, “a genuine republic, totally socialist [...] dedicated to the defence not only of the achievements of the proletariat but also of the flag of freedom of the whole world”, he analysed past mistakes of Spanish socialism as it suffered from internal division and a lack of discipline. His main argument, however, consisted of his call for state control over the trade union movement. He recalled excesses of expropriations by the unions and destructive strike action during the Spanish Civil War, and advocated for a limited position of the unions within state-regulated capitalism, supporting private property and entrepreneurial initiative. Parliamentary democracy he envisaged along the lines of party and union congresses which, he argued, offered flexibility as well as genuine democratic representation. His speech culminated, not unlike his speech at the opening of the *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”* in April 1940, in an homage to his “national muse”, and he went so far as to recall with pride the fact that the founder of the *Falange* himself, José Antonio Primo de Rivera (then incarcerated by the Spanish Republic), had approved of his speech of the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1936, quoting Primo de Rivera's words: “What kind of language is this? What does this have to do with Marxism, with historical materialism, with Amsterdam or with Moscow? This is a precise advocacy of an economic revolution with a national sense. That of the Falange.” By this, Prieto did not intend to embrace the national-corporatist policies of Spanish fascism, but, instead, insinuated that his, Prieto's, understanding of socialism “with a national sense” could have avoided the nationalist uprising against the republic of July 1936.<sup>179</sup> The response to Prieto's highly personal account by the *negrinistas* among the Spanish socialists in exile was swift: “The case of the personal, the individual drama, is for the psychologist.” Prieto's criticism of a lack of discipline among the working class

178 „Un gran acto de unidad y de lucha de Unión Democrática Española“, *España Popular* III/90 (1 May 1942), p. 3.

179 „Discurso de Indalecio Prieto ante los socialistas españoles residentes en México“, *Adelante* I/7 (núm. extraordinario, 4 May 1942), p. 1-2.

and the excesses of trade union action was not shared by the socialists of the *Círculo "Jaime Vera"*: "What is it that Indalecio Prieto has suggested to us? That we lay down our arms." Above all, Prieto's identification of nation, state, and socialism was met with their disapproval:

It is the workers who need to sacrifice their salaries so that state finances do not suffer. The state is bourgeois, it is capitalist, but neither the workers nor their officials have the right to create problems because it represents, and this says a socialist, the general interest. [...] How long-winded, how annoying, how sad is all this!<sup>180</sup>

The socialist *negrinistas* and their political allies of the *Unión Democrática Nacional* spent the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1942 not in the *Centro Republicano* but in the streets of Mexico City. The Spanish *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT) had been invited by the Mexican CTM to participate in the 1<sup>st</sup> of May parade through the city centre, and the Spanish union responded with an "ostensible presence", as the periodical *El Socialista* proudly stated. The Spanish contingent behind the Spanish republican flag was headed by the leadership of the UGT, PSOE, the Spanish communists, the Spanish anarchists, left-wing republicans, and the *Círculo "Jaime Vera"*: the president of the UGT and the PSOE Ramón González Peña, the secretary of the PSOE and president of the *Federación Gráfica Española* Ramón Lamonedá, the republican ex-minister José Moix, Antonio Mije for the Spanish communists, Juan Comorera of the Catalanian PSUC, José García Caballero for the anarchist CNT, Amaro del Rosal as assistant secretary of the UGT, José Ignacio Mantecón for the *Izquierda Republicana*, and Gabriel Morón, vice-president of the *Círculo "Jaime Vera"*.<sup>181</sup> Many Spanish socialists also marched with the Mexican CTM as affiliated members. The Spanish *Banda "Madrid"* under the direction of musical director Rafael Oropesa accompanied the demonstration as the parade greeted Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho with both the Spanish republican and the Mexican national anthem. The day continued in the afternoon with a "brotherly lunch" in the Hotel "Biltmore" at calle Ramos Arizpe no. 27 in the district of *Tabacalera*, close to the *Monumento a la Revolución*. The *Círculo "Jaime Vera"* had invited "several socialist activists from other countries in order to renew the tradition of international brotherhood which has always characterised the celebration of Labour Day [...]"<sup>182</sup> Among the international guests were Vicente Sáenz, secretary of the Costa Rican socialist

180 „Liquitadores del Socialismo“, *El Socialista* I/6 (1 Jun 1942), p. 2.

181 „Primero de Mayo en México“, *El Socialista* I/6 (1 Jun 1942), p. 4 (with photographs); „El 1o. de Mayo en México. Las banderas de los pueblos de España entre las banderas mexicanas“, *España Popular* III/91 (22 May 1942), p. 3, photographs of the demonstration on pages, 1, 3 & 6. At this moment in time, Gabriel Morón published his own take on „the crisis of the PSOE, the course of the Spanish war“, and his „perspectives of the future, according to a broad, constructive, and adequate vision of the political and social transformation which the world experiences“, „Libros“, *El Socialista* I/6 (1 Jun 1942), p. 6; cf. Gabriel Morón: *Política de ayer y política de mañana: (los socialistas ante el problema español)* (México D.F., 1942).

182 „Actividad. México: Lunch fraternal“, *El Socialista* I/5 (1 May 1942), p. 2.

party and the French journalist Simone Téry. After introductory words by the organising committee, Vicente Sáenz reminded the audience of the importance of international politics in the fight against European fascism, as some Latin American governments had used their commercial relations with Spain to trade with Nazi Germany. Ramón Lamonedá concluded the occasion with a commitment to socialist internationalism:

How privileged is our situation to be able to check that we are, we have a second fatherland, that we have come – as always, those who we are socialists – to the Demonstration of 1<sup>st</sup> of May, that we are now gathering at an almost internationalist family party, since [Vicente] Sáenz reminds us of the presence of [Paul] Lafargue in Madrid, [...]<sup>183</sup>

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1942, both factions of Spanish socialism had displayed distinctly different modes of political thought and practice in Mexico City. While the socialist followers of Indalecio Prieto gathered in the relative privacy of the *Centro Republicano Español* to listen to his ideas of a disciplined, state-controlled socialist movement within a regulated capitalist economy that would take inspiration from a deep commitment to national identity (and might even convince hardened fascists of democracy), the *Unión Democrática Española* took to the streets of Mexico City, upholding the cause of the Spanish Republic in ostentatious fraternisation with their Mexican comrades and celebrated the ideal of internationalism in the shadow of the *Monumento a la Revolución* in the *Tabacalera*.

The following week, in the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 1942, the three German-speaking organisations of *Alemania Libre*, the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México*, and the cultural association *Heinrich-Heine-Club* used the conference hall of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* to commemorate the ninth anniversary of the national socialist night of book burning in 1933.<sup>184</sup> The Yugoslavian writer Theodor Balk (alias: Dragutin Fodor) used the location adjacent to the *Alameda Central* of Mexico City to draw a parallel to the *auto-da-fés* of the Spanish Inquisition which took place on the Alameda beginning in 1574. He characterised the meeting of German-speaking political refugees as a reversed tribunal of inquisition, a trial “against those, who, centuries after the fires of the Inquisition had been extinguished, swarmed out to burn out with fire the spirit out of the body of humanity.” The meeting was presided over by Enrique González Martínez, president of the Mexican PEN-Club, the former rector of the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* Antonio Castro Leal, the Mexican writer Ermilo Abreu Gómez, Pablo Neruda, Anna Seghers, Ludwig Renn, and the Austrian communist Bruno Frei.<sup>185</sup> The most important outcome of this protest

183 „Primero de Mayo en México“, *El Socialista* I/6 (1 Jun 1942), p. 5.

184 „Zum Tag der Verbrennung des Deutschen Buches. Kundgebung für die freie deutsche Kultur“, *Freies Deutschland* I/7 (May 1942), p. 6.

185 Theodor Balk: „Alameda und Opernplatz“, *Freies Deutschland* I/8 (Jun 1942), p. 15.

against the repressive cultural policies of the Nazi regime was the foundation of the German publishing house *El Libro Libre*, directed by Walter Janka, which began to publish works whose authors had been persecuted and forced to flee the country.<sup>186</sup> In the evening, the German political refugees in exile took to the radio waves of the Mexican station XEB: Antonio Castro Leal and Ludwig Renn informed the Mexican audience about the repressive regime in Germany, presented texts by Anna Seghers and Bertolt Brecht in Spanish translation and played songs of the German resistance. Balk concluded his report not without pathos:

And so it came to pass that in a country where once the Inquisition ruled and in the location where once the pyre was burning, the movement Alemania Libre raised the accusing voice of that Germany which no modern inquisition and no modern pyre can kill.<sup>187</sup>

But the celebration of culture by the communities of political exile in Mexico City could also strike a lighter tone: At around the same time, the *Acción Democrática Internacional* was instrumental in uniting the exile organisations of *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México*, the *Agrupación Checoslovaco-Mexicana*, the Polish union, the Italian *Alianza Internacional "Giuseppe Garibaldi"* and the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* for a celebration of Oscar Straus, at the time a renowned Austrian composer of operettas at the Hotel "Reforma". The Austrian medical doctor Bernhard Hollinger, the ADI's president Raúl Cordero Amadero, and the director of *El Popular* Alejandro Carrillo spoke at the event, which also saw the president of the international PEN-Club Jules Romain, the Mexican naval minister Heriberto Jara, and the *Chargé d'Affairs* of the Czech government-in-exile Karel Wendl in attendance, before a Mexican band entertained the audience under the rotating direction of their own musical director, the Austrian composer Egon Neumann, and Oscar Straus himself, on visit from the United States.

Shortly after, on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1942, German submarines sank the Mexican tanker vessels *Potrero del Llano* and *Faja de Oro* in the Caribbean straight between Cuba and Florida. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, the *Secretaría de Gobernación* began to compile lists of property and investment by ex-patriate Germans in Mexico City<sup>188</sup>, and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May the Mexican government declared war against the Axis powers.

186 Paul Merker: *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika. Erinnerungen, Dokumentationen und Berichte* (1965) at BAL SAPMO, NY 4102/5 (Nachlaß Paul Merker), fols. 475-89: cf. Olivia C. Díaz Pérez: „Der Exilverlag El Libro Libre in Mexiko“, *Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch*, vol. 22: *Bücher, Verlage, Medien* (München, 2004), pp. 156-79.

187 Theodor Balk: „Alameda und Opernplatz“, *Freies Deutschland* I/8 (Jun 1942), p. 15.

188 See AGN, DGIPS, caja 70, exp. 1, fols. 93-5, 99-103.

### c. War (May 1942 – February 1943)

The communities of exile in Mexico City reacted immediately and with great unanimity to the attack of the German Navy against Mexican ships and the Mexican declaration of war against the Axis. All political milieus published declarations of loyalty to the Mexican government and offered their services.<sup>189</sup> The *Federación de Residentes Anti-fascistas Extranjeros en México* (FRAEM) responded to Mexico's entry into the war with a manifesto which stated that "as far as the struggle of Mexico against nazi-fascism is concerned, and in the ways and under the conditions the services of FRAEM could be used by the government of the republic, our organisation is fully at the disposal and disposition of the national authorities." The FRAEM spelled out its transnational character in detail, claiming representation of "free French, Czechoslovakians, anti-Falangist Spaniards, Greeks, Austrians, Jews, Poles, Hungarians, Chinese representatives of the regime of Chiang-Kai-Chek, anti-nazi Germans, anti-fascist Italians, Russians, Dutch, Hispano-Americans who have found a second fatherland in Mexico" who would be able to offer their support to the Mexican government as "writers, teachers, men of science, manual workers, engineers, air plane pilots, technicians of various specialities, and soldiers of various latitudes who have learned to fight heroically against the armies of Hitler and his followers."<sup>190</sup> On Sunday the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 1942, the public demonstration of national unity and international solidarity and loyalty by the European political refugees culminated in the central *plaza* of Mexico City, the *Zócalo*, in front of the *Palacio Nacional*. In representation of the German *Movimiento Alemania Libre*, its president Ludwig Renn was invited to speak from the presidential balcony overlooking the *plaza*. Here, at the symbolic heart of Mexican politics and sovereignty, Renn used the opportunity to claim the attention of the Mexican national public to establish the hegemony of the German communists and their national front policies over the German community of political refugees and, potentially, members of the ex-patriate colony in the city:

As president of the movement "Free Germany" I declare that there are Germans who condemn and despise the war-style attack by Hitler against Mexico with the same indignation as the Mexican people. Without the gruesome and terrorist suppression of the German people Hitler could not have let his armies march against the free nations. We,

189 Cf. „Al Lado de México“, *El Socialista* I/6 (1 Jun 1942), p. 1; “En estas horas graves para México, México es más que nunca nuestra patria“, *Adelante* I/9 (1 Jun 1942), p. 1; „España Popular al lado de México contra el Eje fascista“, *España Popular* III/92 (5 Jun 1942), p. 1; „Somos Beligerantes“, *España con Honra* I/7 (12 Jun 1942), p. 1; „Die Sache Mexikos ist unsere Sache“, *Freies Deutschland* I/8 (Jun 1942), p. 2; „En Defensa del Hombre“, *Solidaridad Obrera* I/4 (20 Jun 1942), p. 1; certain reservations about the declaration of loyalty issued by the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* are mentioned by Fritz Pohle: *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986), p. 189.

190 „Manifiesto de la Federación de Residentes Anti-fascistas Extranjeros en México (FRAEM)“ (23 May 1942) at BAL, NY 4102/54, Nachlaß Paul Merker: „Tätigkeit in Mexiko“, fol. 3.

who here in Mexico we enjoy the opportunity to express our opinions freely, declare: Hitler is not the German people. Our nation equally longs for the liberation from the brown dictatorship as do the nations attacked and subjugated by Hitler. But the destruction of Hitler is not just the task of other peoples but also that of the German people. Therefore we stand on the side of the democracies, the Allies, of Mexico and its government presided over by general Manuel Ávila Camacho. Therefore we accuse the agents of Hitler, the leaders of the “German National Community”, of forming the most dangerous fifth column in this country. We accuse them of being accessory to Hitler's attack on Mexico. We request from the Mexican people in this fateful hour that it may allow us to regard ourselves as its allies in its struggle for its independence and its sovereignty. But we call out to all honourable Germans: Place yourselves on the side of Mexico and defend with us, who we have already organised, the sacred soil of Mexico!<sup>191</sup>

Numerous exile organisations followed up on such public statements by their own declarations of loyalty to the Mexican government by way of personal letters, messages and telegrammes to president Ávila Camacho.<sup>192</sup> While the Mexican entry into the war against the Axis powers considerably facilitated access to the public political discourse for individuals and organisations from among the community of political refugees in the city, in some cases precautions taken by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* indicate that certain sectors of the community of European exile in the city were not above suspicion and continued to be perceived as a possible threat to public safety, above all the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists of the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT). The membership of some 400 *cenetistas* was meticulously recorded by the security services, including information about their suspected involvement in recent acts of violent crime, such as the murder of Guillén Guardiola at the FIASA in June 1941 or the armed robbery of a vehicle of the brewery *Cervecería Modelo* which had occurred on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 1941, a company founded and owned by Spanish immigrants.<sup>193</sup>

191 Paul Merker: *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika. Erinnerungen, Dokumentationen und Berichte* (1965) at BAL SAPMO, NY 4102/5 (Nachlaß Paul Merker), fols. 32-3; cf. „Mexikos Beispiel für Lateinamerika“, *Freies Deutschland* II/8 (Jun 1942), p. 5; see also the photograph of the demonstration on the *Zócalo* in *España Popular* III/92 (5 Jun 1942), p. 1.

192 Cf. the collection of such letters, messages, and telegrammes to Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho at AGN, Archivo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 836, exp. 550/44-16-8, s. fols.

193 See the list at AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 1, fols. 530-43; on the armed robbery of the vehicle of *Cervecería Modelo* see the case files at Archivo Histórico del Distrito Federal (AHDF), Fondo Departamento del Distrito Federal (DDF), Sección Jefatura de Policía, serie Investigación y Seguridad, Servicio Secreto, caja 6, exp. 46; cf. Carlos Martínez: *Crónica de una Emigración (la de los republicanos españoles en 1939)* (México, D.F., 1959), p. 48; on the history of the brewery, see: Francisco Javier Elvira Guinda: *Vasco-navarros en la fundación de*

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of June 1942, the German-speaking community of exile around the *Movimiento Alemania Libre* and the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* continued with their fund-raising efforts in the form of literary *soirées* held in English for US-American audiences of tourists at the Hotel “Reforma” on the corner of Paseo de la Reforma and calle París. The programme of the event, organised by the “Exiled Writers’ Committee”, reveals the extent to which the German group had developed their transnational ties with other communities of political refugees in the city: the Spanish writer Constanca de la Mora acted as honorary chairman and Charles Obermayer, former professor for English Literature at Columbia University, led the proceedings during the evening as chairman. For an entrance fee of two pesos the audience was treated to a mixture of readings from the works of Anna Seghers (in English translation by the US-American writer Ralph Roeder), Egon Erwin Kisch, Ludwig Renn, and Lion Feuchtwanger, interspersed with remarks by Constanca de la Mora on the role of “free literature in a free world” and Ludwig Renn on “underground literature in Germany”. All these contributions were limited to about 5 to 10 minutes while the musical side of the event (held in the “Beethoven Hall” of the hotel) was delivered by Marcel Rubin who opened the evening with a rendering of the Mexican national anthem and accompanied Paula Bach-Conrad for classical songs by Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Brahms, and Heine. A male choir performing songs of the German resistance (the Dachau song and the “Peatbog Soldiers”) completed the political message of the evening. All proceeds were dedicated to funding the publishing house of *El Libro Libre* which had come into existence under the direction of Walter Janka one month earlier at the commemoration for the anniversary of the national socialist book burning of 1933 held at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* in May 1942.<sup>194</sup> The German-speaking community in exile in Mexico City continued their transnational activities with a commemoration of the victims of nazi atrocities in the Czech town of Lidice and in Lichterfelde organised by the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* at the *Editorial Séneca* at calle Varsovia no. 35-A in the district of Juárez on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 1942. After an introduction by Leo Deutsch, the evening saw Ludwig Renn speak about the “Shame of the mass shootings of Jews in Lichterfelde”, Alexander Abusch on “Lidice and the Czech people's struggle for freedom”, and Egon Erwin Kisch offering reminiscences of Prague while Albrecht Viktor Blum, Charls Rooner, and Günter Ruschin recited poetry by Bialik, Fuchs, Rilke, and Jiří Wolker.<sup>195</sup> The date of the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 1942 is significant for the German-speaking community in exile in another way, as it marked the final break-

*la cervecería Modelo* (ITESM, 2011), [https://www.academia.edu/11327603/Vasconavarros\\_en\\_la\\_fundación\\_de\\_la\\_Cervecería\\_Modelo](https://www.academia.edu/11327603/Vasconavarros_en_la_fundación_de_la_Cervecería_Modelo) [25 Mar 2015].

194 Programme of the „Anti-Nazi Literary Evening“ by the Exiled Writers’ Committee (11 Jun 1942) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 7249, s. fols.; cf. „Ein amerikanischer Abend für das deutsche Buch“, *Freies Deutschland* II/9 (Jul 1942), p. 30.

195 See *Heines Geist in Mexico*, ed. by the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* (México D.F., 1946), p. 26; *Freies Deutschland* II/9 (Jul 1942), p. 2, and „Lidice und Lichterfelde“, *Freies Deutschland* II/10 (Aug 1942), p. 30; see also: Egon Erwin Kisch: „Recuerdo a Praga“, *Alemania Libre* I/31 (1 Sep 1942), p. 2.



up of the conflict-ridden *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* (LPC). The tensions between the communist members and the faction around Heinrich Gutmann and Max Diamant had erupted at a meeting a week earlier, and evidently the communist group now felt sufficiently confident in their own efforts to organise the German political refugees as well as the anti-fascist parts of the German ex-patriate colony to declare publicly their resignation from the LPC. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, the Mexican newspaper *El Popular*, associated with the Mexican trade union CTM, carried a declaration by the communist faction that they resigned in protest from the organisation, because the LPC's executive committee had allegedly “refused for months, in spite of our insistence, to declare themselves openly and unconditionally in favour of the cause and the victory of the Allies over Nazi-fascism.” the group denounced a “defeatist attitude” at the LPC meetings as they had failed to introduce a policy of “expulsion of such members as do not unreservedly support the struggle of the Allies against Nazi-fascism, its allies and its Fifth Column in Mexico.” The declaration explicitly named Gustav Regler, together with Victor Serge, Julián Gorkín, and Marceau Pivert as “traitors to the cause of democracy and secret agents of the Fifth Column”. Among the signatories of the declaration were Ludwig Renn and Paul Elle, the Swiss photographer Gertrude Düby, the electrical engineer Gertrude Kurz, the Austrian composer Marcel Rubin, and the communist writer Bodo Uhse.<sup>196</sup> The remaining leadership of the LPC immediately reacted with a public statement that emphasised the non-partisan nature of the organisation and protested its loyalty to the cause of the anti-Hitler coalition – not without pointing out the changing policies of the German communists who, until recently, had followed the strategic priorities of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.<sup>197</sup> The conflict eventually made the news in emigrant circles beyond Mexico when the German-speaking exile journal *Aufbau* in New York reported a “fight among the immigration in Mexico”:

From both sides the confrontation is being conducted in the fiercest way. Arguments, accusations, and the tone are reminders of the worst days of German party-political strife. At a time when all energies are needed in the struggle against Hitler, those immigrants in Mexico should have better things to do than to descend on each other.<sup>198</sup>

After this schism in the membership of the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana*, the organisation ceased to be of relevance to the politics of exile in Mexico City. After

196 „The reason for separation from the German Cultural League (Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana) is explained“, translation (24 Jul 1942) of an article in *El Popular* (9 Jul 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843D – 843Z, s. fols.; cf. Fritz Pohle: *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 188-9.

197 Cf. Pohle, pp. 190-2.

198 „Streit in der mexikanischen Immigration“, *Aufbau* (31 Jul 1942), p. 7; cf. Fritz Pohle: *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 191-2.

an attempt to re-organise under the title of *Liga Anti-Nazi de Habla Alemana en México* in order to attract not just German, but all German-speaking anti-fascists in Mexico the organisation finally closed down its offices at calle Ramón Guzman no. 125 in the district of *San Rafael* and ended its activities in March 1943.<sup>199</sup>

During the summer of 1942, the Mexican *Sociedad de Amigos de la Unión de las Repúblicas Soviéticas Socialistas* (SAURSS) entered the public sphere of the Mexican capital when on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1942 (the first anniversary of the attack of Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union) the SAURSS held its first regular congress in the *Teatro de los Electricistas* at calle Artes no. 45 in the *Tabacalera*. The organisation had existed at least since the spring of 1942, although the statutes of the SAURSS were not finalised until September of the same year.<sup>200</sup> The congress of 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> of June 1942 established the programme and executive board and saw numerous political refugees as guests: “Among the immense Mexican crowd one felt the bustling presence of the Spanish »refugees«. And of Jewish, Chinese, German, French emigrants...” The Spanish communist periodical *España Popular* noted manifestations of solidarity with the Spanish Republic.<sup>201</sup> The *Acción Democrática Internacional* featured among the organisations which had issued invitations to the congress.<sup>202</sup> While the Italian bulletin of the *Alianza Internacional “Giuseppe Garibaldi”* proudly documented its participation and its telegramme to Stalin, the German communists appear to have adopted a somewhat more distant role in the proceedings and staged simultaneous events at the *Universidad Obrera* and the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* at the *Casa Schiefer* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21 in the historic city centre.<sup>203</sup> The speakers at the SAURSS congress included José Mancisidor on the “Character of the movement of Friends of the USSR”, Miguel Othón de

199 Cf. Pohle, *ibid.*, pp. 193-200; see also the memorandum by Manuel M. Barrera on the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* (25 Mar 1943) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 205, exp. 6, fol. 1.

200 See an invitation to organise dating from February 1942 at GARF, fond 5283 (VOKS), opis 14 (Department of American Countries), delo 144 (Mexican Society of Friendship), fol. 57; the statutes of SAURSS dating from September 1942, *ibid.*, fols. 85-9; see also several draft statutes dating from July 1942, *ibid.*, fols. 137-43; a memorandum on Enrique Arreguín (6 Sep 1944), the press secretary of SAURSS, mentions first public activities of the organisation as early as in October 1941 at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

201 „Ante las banderas de la URSS y de las Naciones Unidas“, *España Popular* III/94 (7 Jul 1942), p. 6, a picture of the stage of the SAURSS congress on page 1.

202 See the invitation at GARF, fond 5283 (VOKS), opis 14 (Department of American Countries), delo 144 (Mexican Society of Friendship), fol. 136rev.

203 See „Attività varie“, *Bolletino della Alleanza Internazionale „Giuseppe Garibaldi“ per la libertà d'Italia* I/4 (Jul 1942), p. 13; the simultaneous activities by the German-speaking communist group of political refugees in the city: mention of two lectures by László Radványi and André Simone at the *Universidad Obrera* on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June at BAL, NY4246/19, Nachlaß Georg Stibi, fol.s. 2-3; Egon Erwin Kisch's lecture on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June on „Humboldt, Mexiko und die Rassenfrage“, *Heines Geist in Mexico*, ed. by the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* (México D.F., 1946), p. 26; cf. Egon Erwin Kisch: „Die wissenschaftliche Conquista“, *Freies Deutschland* II/11 (Sep 1942), pp. 11-3.

Mendizábal on “The national problem and its resolution in the USSR”, Ignacio Millán on the “Development of science in the USSR, patrimony of the world”, Victor Manuel Villaseñor on the “Aid of the Mexican people to the Soviet Union”, Nabor A. Ojeda on the “National Defence and the relations between Mexico and the USSR”, and Luis Chávez Orozco on “Soviet education and culture”.<sup>204</sup> Other speakers included Eugenio Gallo, general Zuno Hernández, and the leader of the CTAL, Vicente Lombardo Toledano, who celebrated “the new man which the Soviet Union has created, the soldier who today fights until death and until victory over the Germanic invaders.”<sup>205</sup> A collection of donations resulted in a sum of 2,632 pesos, and the executive committee was elected with José Mancisidor (the president of the FOARE) as president, Fausto Pomar as secretary general, and Enrique Arreguín as press secretary.<sup>206</sup> Arreguín's position is of interest as he reportedly controlled the facilities of the building at calle Ramón Guzmán no. 125 in the district of *San Rafael* where the SAURSS established its first headquarters: the very same building also housed the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* which had come into severe conflict with its communist faction and was about to break up during the summer of 1942.<sup>207</sup> The SAURSS continued to follow closely the events on the European eastern front and unfailingly reacted quickly to the dramatic developments, as on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 1942 when the *Teatro de los Electricistas* at calle Artes no. 45 in the district of *Tabacalera* hosted a public “Homage to the Defenders of Stalingrad”. The SAURSS was joined at the event by the Mexican trade unions of electricians, railway workers, the workers of sugar plantations, and miners. The Mexican Communist Party (PCM) publicly endorsed the event, as did the Mexican vice-employment secretary Manuel R. Palacios, the *Agrupación Amics de Catalunya*, and the German movement *Alemania Libre*.<sup>208</sup> On this occasion, Pablo Neruda recited his first *Canto a Stalingrado* and became the most prominent poetic voice of the pro-Soviet Left in Mexico City.<sup>209</sup>

204 See the abstracts of contributions at GARF, fond 5283 (VOKS), opis 14 (Department of American Countries), delo 144 (Mexican Society of Friendship), fols. 144-53. Full texts of the lectures can be found for the contributions of Mancisidor (ibid., fols. 92-6), Othón de Mendizábal (ibid., fols. 97-105), Villaseñor (ibid., fols. 115-26), and Chávez Orozco (ibid., fols. 127-34).

205 „Ante las banderas de la URSS y de las Naciones Unidas“, *España Popular* III/94 (7 Jul 1942), p. 6.

206 Memorandum on the *Sociedad de Amigos de la URSS* (11 Aug 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, pp. 2-3; see also the special edition of *SAURSS. Bi-mensual de la Sociedad de Amigos de la URSS* I/3 (20 Jul 1942).

207 See the memorandum by Manuel M. Barrera on the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* (25 Mar 1943) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 205, exp. 6, fol. 1; on the location of SAURSS see: GARF, fond 5283 (VOKS), opis 14 (Department of American Countries), delo 144 (Mexican Society of Friendship), fols. 58-9, 61, 63, 168; on Enrique Arreguín see the memorandum (6 Sep 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

208 „Homenaje a los Defensores de Stalingrado“ (including a picture of the event), *SAURSS. Quincenal de la Sociedad de Amigos de la URSS* I/8 (15 Oct 1942), p. 3.

209 Cf. Wilberto Cantón: „Pablo Neruda en México“, *Anales de la Universidad de Chile* 157-60 (1971), p. 266.

The second half of the year 1942 also saw another wave of activities of the anti-fascist transnational political sphere in Mexico City which had no physical home in the streets of the Mexican capital: The Mexican national radio broadcasters XEFO and XEUZ invited representatives of all national groups of political refugees in the Mexican capital to report on the situation of their home countries and produced over 200 interviews which were broadcast between the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 1942 and the end of the year. Organised by José Gomis Soler, international news editor of the *Cadena Radio Nacional*, the series “Por un Mundo Libre” thereby brought together a broad spectrum of communities in exile in Mexico which were offered an opportunity to present themselves and their politics of exile to the Mexican public alongside occasional cultural contributions of a literary or musical character. The complete transcripts of the radio series were published in February of the following year and attracted wide attention.<sup>210</sup>

The main public stages of the Mexican capital hosted the transnational events of the political emigration in Mexico, such as the upcoming Assembly against Nazi-Fascist Terror. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1942, the organisers convened a press conference for the meeting which was to take place in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*. Presided over by Raúl Noriega, the chief editor of the periodical *El Nacional*, the official periodical of the governing party PRM, the press conference attracted an audience of about 75 in the roof garden of the hotel “Reforma” on Paseo de la Reforma.<sup>211</sup> Wan Li Yen, who spoke in the name of the Chinese legation in Mexico, denounced Japanese atrocities in occupied China and described the Japanese mentality as a combination of insecurity, paranoia, and sadism. The post-war order would necessitate the disarmament of Japan and the reintegration of the country into the international community, “in order that her sense of insecurity and inferiority may be alleviated and her mental state normalised.” L. Le Boulengé, former professor of the University of Brussels, spoke on the methods of Nazi occupation in Belgium and the activities of resistance, Raúl Noriega demanded the fair treatment of prisoners of war, hostages, and refugees under the rule of the Vichy regime, Severin Ferandel as secretary of the *Acción Democrática Internacional* (ADI) denounced the pacifism of the inter-war years as the main culprit for the early successes of the Nazi regime and “warned against allowing Vichy leaders ever to appear in public life again.” A señorita Gamboa spoke on the Nazi atrocities in Russia, before Leo Lambert (an alias for the German Leo Zuckermann) announced the date of the meeting to be 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of September 1942.<sup>212</sup> This press conference had been convened just two days after the Mexican trade union movement had staged its own protest against the anti-Semitic atrocities of the Nazi regime in Europe in the

210 See: *Por un Mundo Libre: un reportaje radiofónico 200 entrevistas* (Distribuidoras y Editora de Publicaciones, México D.F., 1943); cf. the extensive memorandum (14 Jun 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, s. fol.

211 See the photo feature covering the event in *El Nacional* (25 Aug 1942), p. 2.

212 Memorandum by Donald B. Campbell (24 Aug 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A – 843C, s. fol.

*Palacio de Bellas Artes* on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August. At this event, Vicente Lombardo Toledano had emphasised that the fight against racism and anti-Semitism constituted one of the principal tasks for anti-fascists and progressive minds. The German periodical *Alemania Libre* quoted a message by the Jewish *Comité Central Israelita* in the sense that “the Jews understood that the struggle against anti-Semitism is inseparable from the great anti-fascist struggle of the masses”.<sup>213</sup> In fact, the files of the *Comité Central Israelita* reveal that the organisation, when asked to join and participate in public demonstrations against the anti-Semitic atrocities of the Nazi regime, was very careful not to commit itself to any events or public statements which could be interpreted as an open association or affiliation with any single political current within the anti-Hitler coalition.<sup>214</sup> The German communists, in turn, were very keen to present themselves as the most loyal allies of the European Jews.<sup>215</sup>

The Assembly against Nazi-Fascist Terror finally took place in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of October 1942 after it had been postponed by three weeks. The fact that the Mexican *Secretario de la Gobernación* Miguel Alemán Valdés personally opened the proceedings in the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> of October demonstrated that since the Mexican declaration of war even the highest government officials no longer felt the need to observe any discreet distance from the political arena of exile in Mexico City. After a morning of systematic introductions into the “Objectives of the assembly” by Alberto Bremauntz, “Persecution and fascist terror” by Alejandro Carrillo, editor of *El Popular*, “The racist law of the Third Reich” by the Mexican vice-attorney general Roberto Guzmán Arraujo, “Persecution and Christian conscience” by the Spanish publisher José Bergamín of the *Editorial Seneca*, and the “Persecution of the Jews in Europe” by the former *Chargé d’Affaires* of the Spanish republican embassy in Greece Maximino José Kahn, the congress covered the situation of every European country under fascist rule in seventeen lectures by speakers from the relevant communities in Mexico City. In the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, the assembly moved to the *Teatro de los Electricistas* at calles Artes no. 45 in the *Tabacalera* for a show of documentary films on Nazi atrocities in Europe before returning to the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* for the concluding ceremony on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October. The event was accompanied by an exhibition of photographs and documents of Axis atrocities.<sup>216</sup> Erich Jungmann as the observer of the German movement *Alemania Libre* proudly pointed out that “no fewer than eight Mexican government ministers” participated in the congress, “the Senate and the Chamber

213 „Contra el Terror Antisemita de Hitler“, *Alemania Libre* I/31 (1 Sep 1942), p. 4.

214 Cf. the minutes of the meetings of the *Comité Central* at CDICA, Actas del Comité Central Israelita de México, vol. 2, no. 182 (23 Jun 1942), p. 21; no. 185 (14 Jul 1942), p. 26; no. 187 (21 Jul 1942, p. 28rev.; no. 188 (28 Jul 1942), p. 30; no. 190 (18 Aug 1942), p. 33-33rev; no. 193 (8 Sep 1942), p. 36rev.; no. 196 (6 Oct 1942), p. 40rev.

215 Cf. „Contra el Terror Antisemita“, *Alemania Libre* I/31 (1 Sep 1942), p. 4.

216 See the programme at Fundación Pablo Iglesias, Archivos Particulares, Archivo Amaro del Rosal Díaz, AARD 364-26, fol. 1-1rev.

of Deputies, 21 out of 28 state governors participated personally or via representatives, furthermore the leader of the Distrito Federal, Rojo Gómez [...] the president of the state party PRM, Sr. Villalobos, the Attorney General Sr. Aguilar y Maya” as well as many union leaders participated. Jungmann noted with satisfaction the impact of the event beyond the Mexican borders across Latin America and Europe, its transmission via three radio stations, and characterised the meeting as “the first public court trial against Nazism on the American continent”.<sup>217</sup> The event also attracted similarly enthusiastic coverage in other parts of the transnational community of exile in Mexico City.<sup>218</sup>

The ongoing protests against the crimes and atrocities of fascist governments in Europe entailed a certain degree of cooperation between the communities of exile in Mexico City and the Jewish community in the city. Already on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 1942, a meeting in memory of the Basque communist union leader Jesús Larrañaga was held who had been executed in Spain in January. The commemoration took place in the convention hall of the *Centro Cultural Israelita* de México which occupied the building at calle Tacuba no. 15, known as the *Palacio de Marmol* because of its marble façade, in the historic city centre just a block away from the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*.<sup>219</sup> The commemorative meeting united Leandro Carro as representative for the communist party with Rafael Guerra for the *Izquierda Republicana*, Félix Ezquizábel for the *Acción Nacionalista Vasco*, Ramón González Peña for both the *Unión Democrática Española* and the UGT, and Vicente Lascuráin and Antonio Huerta for the *Círculo “Jaime Vera”*, as well as representatives of a range of other Spanish and regional associations. The *Banda Madrid* under the direction of its *maestro* Pedro de Mendizábal provided the musical background to the meeting which also featured Basque folkloric dance.<sup>220</sup> In his speech, Vicente Lascuráin used the opportunity to restate the position of Spanish republicanism in opposition to the Franco dictatorship as well as to Basque separatism and defined the freedom of the Basques as freedom under a legitimate constitutional republican order:

The Basque country did not give its dead so that we in exile break up the community that exists between the graves of the Basques and the

217 Erich Jungmann: „Der Prozeß gegen den Terror“, *Freies Deutschland* II/1 (Nov/Dec 1942), p. 17; cf. Paul Merker: „Los Alemanes Libres en la Asamblea contra el Terror Nazi“, *Alemania Libre* I/34 (25 Oct 1942), p. 3; the text of the speech by Bodo Uhse on behalf of the *Movimiento Alemania Libre*: „El Azote Nazi sobre los Pueblos“, *ibid.*, p. 4.

218 Luis Zapirain: „Una gran asamblea anti-anzifascista en México“, *España Popular* III/105 (23 Oct 1942), p. 3 with photographs of the event on pages 1 & 4; „Los Austriacos Libres saludan a la Asamblea contra el Terror Nazi“, *Austria Libre* I/3 (15 Oct 1942), p. 1.

219 „Gran Velada“, *El Socialista* I/9 (1 Sep 1942), p. 4.

220 „La Velada en homenaje a Jesús Larrañaga“, *España Popular* III/99 (11 Sep 1942), p. 3. Interestingly, this report mentions the venue only as the *Palacio de Marmol* and does not acknowledge the hospitality of the *Centro Cultural Israelita*.

Spaniards. The Basque country did not give its dead so that here in exile we go on saying on foreign soil that we are better than others. The Basque country sacrificed its sons for a constitutional and republican legal order to which we all, whether we want it or not, are committed. (Very good. Applause.)<sup>221</sup>

Two weeks later, the *Centro Cultural Israelita* in the *Palacio de Marmol* at calle Tacuba no. 15 again hosted an event by the Spanish exile community, this time a lecture by the Spanish communist Antonio Mije who marked the 100<sup>th</sup> edition of the communist periodical *España Popular* with a lecture entitled “Spain and the second front”. The paper covered the event, proudly listing representatives from among the community of Spaniards in exile, as well as Pablo Neruda and “anti-fascists of other countries.” The meeting, so claimed the paper, attracted an audience of about a thousand people.<sup>222</sup> The campaign to influence public opinion in favour of the demand for a rapid military engagement of the Western powers at a second front in Western Europe was conducted across the national sub-groups of exile in Mexico City, as the German publishing house *El Libro Libre* had staged another fund-raising event at the Hotel “Reforma” on Paseo de la Reforma, just the previous day of 9<sup>th</sup> of September. The event dedicated to “Churchill's journey to Moscow and the second front” was presided over by the former rector of the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*, Antonio Castro Leal, and featured Ludwig Renn, André Simone, and Bodo Uhse as speakers.<sup>223</sup> The German-speaking community in exile was closely engaged in the denunciation of the campaign of mass murder of European Jews by the Nazi dictatorship. In November 1942, US-American Rabbi Stephen S. Wise and Nahum Goldmann, the president of the Jewish World Congress, had visited Mexico and revealed at a meeting of the German-speaking association of Jews in Mexico, the *Menorah*, their knowledge about the ongoing mass murder of the European Jews, above all the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto.<sup>224</sup> The German cultural association of exiled political refugees, the *Heinrich-Heine-Club*, responded by suspending its activities during the month of December and staging a meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 1943 dedicated to the “denunciation against the mass murderers of the Jews” in the *Sala Schiefer* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21 in the historic city centre.<sup>225</sup> André Simone presided during the event where Erich Jungmann and Alejandro Carrillo, the editor of *El Popular*, addressed the meeting.<sup>226</sup> Carrillo

221 „El Separatismo y la Unidad de los Vascos“, *El Socialista* I/10 (Oct 1942), p. 7.

222 „La conferencia de Mije: »España y el segundo frente«, *España Popular* III/100, p. 1 & 4.

223 „Los Alemanes Libres en México. Los escritores alemanes antinazis celebraron un importante acto público“, *Alemania Libre* I/32 (15 Sep 1942), p. 4.

224 „La Guerra Hitleriana de Exterminio contra los Judíos“, *Alemania Libre* I/36 (15 Nov 1942), p. 4.

225 See *Heines Geist in Mexico*, ed. by the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* (México D.F., 1946), p. 26.

226 See the report on „Subversive Activities“ (7 Apr 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, p. 5.

spoke out against a sadist tendency of Nazi ideology to “splash about in blood”:

Nazism has endeavoured to bring back to life old prejudices and therefore persecuted cruelly and relentlessly the members of a certain race which is, in this case, the illustrious Jewish race. This is not the first racist persecution in history, but Hitler's surpasses all because Nazism aims for and succeeds in its minions to extract the worst from their animal nature to put it into action in crime and bestiality. The physiognomy of the Nazi consists of doing away with all the generous and good that man possesses.<sup>227</sup>

The campaign to raise public awareness of the crimes and atrocities committed by European fascism culminated in a public meeting of protest on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Nazi rule in Germany in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 1943. The *Comisión Permanente de la Asamblea contra el Terror Nazi-Fascista* had been the result of the first meeting against the fascist terror in Europe in October of 1942 and combined the denunciation of the Nazi regime with the cause of the Spanish republicans who continued to lobby and campaign in favour of the Spanish republican refugees still stranded in France and North Africa. To this end, a press conference was organised on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 1943 in the roof garden of the Hotel “Majestic”, directly overlooking the central plaza of the *Zócalo* on the corner of Avenida Madero.<sup>228</sup> The principal speakers were the sub-attorney of the *Distrito Federal* Roberto Guzmán Araujo, the French journalist Simone Téry, and the Spanish writer in exile Max Aub. The invitation caused some embarrassment to the US embassy which failed to react or respond in time, while the importance of the *Comisión Permanente de la Asamblea contra el Terror Nazi-Fascista* was recognised in spite of it being “pretty well filled with leftist elements”, but the embassy staff noted that “there are quite a number of rather prominent Mexicans in it”.<sup>229</sup> In fact, the organisation counted on the support of the founder of the Mexican liberal party Camilo Arriaga as honorary president and was headed by the president of the PRM Antonio Villalobos. The law professor Alberto Bremauntz, who also served on the FOARE, acted as vice-president while the agricultural engineer Alberto Aguirre appeared as secretary with the Basque Ricardo Castellote and the German Leo Zuckermann as vice-secretaries, both communist refugees in Mexican exile. The press commission consisted of Raúl Noriega, the editor of *El Nacional*, Alejandro Carrillo, the editor of *El Popular*, Francesco Frola, president of the Italian *Alianza Internacional “Giuseppe Garibaldi”*, and the Spanish anarchist Aurelio Fernández.<sup>230</sup>

227 Alejandro Carrillo: „La Demencia Fascista debe Desaparecer para Siempre“, *Alemania Libre* II/2 (15 Jan 1943), p. 3.

228 See the invitation (7 Jan 1943) and the programme of the event at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P – 800PolishRefugees, s. fol.

229 Internal memorandum (15 Jan 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P – 800PolishRefugees, s. fol.

230 See the invitation (7 Jan 1943) and the programme of the event at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894,



The great public *Asamblea contra el Terror Nazi-Fascista* on the evening of the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 1943 in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* was, if the report by the periodical *Alemania Libre* is to be believed, attended by an audience of “thousands”. After a Mexican police orchestra had played the popular march “Zacatecas” and set the tone of the event, the secretary general of the PRM Florencio Padilla and the secretary general of the Mexican Antifascist Council Agustín Rodríguez Ochoa opened the proceedings. Victims of Nazi persecution in Germany were honoured by appointing their relatives as an honorary praesidium of the event: Martha Berg-André, Hilde Abusch, Clara Muth, Hans Marum, and Hilda Maddalena. The Mexican parliamentary deputy Félix Díaz Escobar drew attention to the activities of pro-fascist groups in Mexico and presented the programme of the anti-fascist institutions. Ludwig Renn recounted the rise of fascism in Germany as a result of plutocratic and aristocratic sponsorship as well as the disunity of the working classes and appealed to the audience to join in the struggle against Nazi-Fascism on the side of Mexico and the Allies and concluded: “Long live Mexico, the classical land of asylum for persecuted liberty!” Miguel Ángel Velasco represented the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) and identified the political programme of anti-communism as an important ingredient of national socialist propaganda which consequently was to be avoided in the future, and he praised the communist resistance against the Nazi regime. The French writer Jeanne Garuier-Stern and her German colleague Anna Seghers represented an anti-fascist Franco-German fraternisation: “Between a free France and a free Germany there will not exist any dispute other than the emulation of the perfection of liberty. The two countries must be two pillars of democracy in a free Europe.”<sup>231</sup> The main speaker of the evening, however, was Vicente Lombardo Toledano who called for a new international alliance of peace and democracy under the direction of the United Nations. He praised the allied nations of the anti-Hitler coalition:

We have faith in Roosevelt and his great people! We have faith in the British people which re-educated itself during those tragic ten years acquiring a conscience which it did not possess! We have faith in the Soviet Union and its people, not because the USSR is going to propagate communism, but because ever since it exists it respected the right of self-determination and is not a country, but the sum of many countries in one powerful nation!<sup>232</sup>

800P – 800PolishRefugees, s. fol.

231 „Diez Años de Barbarie Hitleriana“, *Alemania Libre* II/4 (15 Feb 1943), pp. 3-4; cf. *Unser Kampf gegen Hitler. Protokoll des ersten Landeskongresses der Bewegung „Freies Deutschland“ in Mexiko, 8. und 9. Mai 1943, Hotel Regis, México, D.F.*, ed. by Bewegung Freies Deutschland (México, D.F., 1943), pp. 180-3.

232 „Diez Años de Barbarie Hitleriana“, *Alemania Libre* II/4 (15 Feb 1943), p. 4; see also „10 Años de barbarie nazi“, *Austria Libre* II/2 (1 Mar 1943), p. 4; cf. „Mexikos Volk an der Seite der Freien Deutschen“, *Freies Deutschland* II/4 (Mar 1943), p. 31.

While the event was broadcast by Mexican radio and filmed for the current newsreel, it also served to launch the most important publication by the German publishing house *El Libro Libre*, a documentation of Nazi atrocities in Europe, which appeared under the title “El Libro Negro del Terror Nazi en Europa” under the patronage of Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho with an introductory chapter by Thomas Mann.<sup>233</sup>

Meanwhile, the pro-Soviet current of the Spanish community in exile in Mexico City (which did not take much note of the *Asamblea contra el Terror Nazi-Fascista* in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*) used the second half of the year 1942 and the early weeks of 1943 to establish theatres of the Mexican trade unions as its preferred public stages in the city, above all the *Teatro de los Electricistas* at calle Artes no. 45 in the *Tabacalera*. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1942, the *Unión Democrática Española* (UDE) used this venue to continue its campaign in support of the evacuation of the Spanish republican refugees in France and North Africa. The organisation could count on the support of prominent figures of the national and transnational political elite in the city, such as the government official in the ministry of health Enrique Arreguín, several Mexican members of parliament, such as César Garizurieta and the director of *El Popular*, Alejandro Carrillo, the revolutionary veteran, journalist, and politician Félix Fulgencio Palavicini, and the Costa Rican journalist Vicente Sáenz. The UDE president Antonio Velao urged the American governments to intervene before the government of Vichy in support of the Spanish republican refugees, and the *Banda Madrid* closed the event with the Spanish republican anthem.<sup>234</sup> A similar meeting in protest against the collaborationist Vichy government of Pierre Laval took place in the same venue on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 1942. Among the speakers were the representative of *Alemania Libre* Ludwig Renn, the Italian veteran of the Spanish Civil War Carlos Contreras (i.e. Vittorio Vidali), the Czech writer Lenka Reinerová, the Spanish socialist Antonio Huerta, and the president of the PRM Antonio Villalobos. A wide range of messages of adhesion to the protest meeting demonstrated a transnational network of anti-fascist politics in the city, including organisations such as *Alemania Libre* and the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM), and *Hungria Libre*.<sup>235</sup>

The 7<sup>th</sup> of November 1942 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian October Revolution but was also marked by the Spanish community in exile in Mexico City as the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Madrid. This celebration in

233 *El Libro Negro del terror Nazi en Europa. Testimonios de escritores y artistas de 16 naciones* (México D.F., 1943); cf. the exposé of the publication and related correspondence with the presidential office at AGN, fondo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1145, exp. 704/297.

234 „El importante mitin del 31 de Agosto en México. Representantes de las organizaciones antifascistas mexicanas, abogaron por los refugiados españoles en Francia“, *España Popular* III/99 (11 Sep 1942), p. 3; „Pro Refugiados Españoles en Francia y Norte de África“, *El Socialista* I/9 (1 Sep 1942), p. 4.

235 „Un gran mitin“, *España Popular* III/104 (16 Oct 1942), p. 3.

honour of the defenders of Madrid in 1936 took place in the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> of November in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*.<sup>236</sup> The event was organised by the association of Spanish republican professional soldiers of the Civil War (*Asociación de Militares Profesionales Leales a la República Española*) under the patronage of the José Miaja, legendary commander of the defence of Madrid. Among the speakers were the former deputy of the Spanish *Cortes* from Valencia, Fernando Valera, and Matilde Cantos, the former director of the Spanish republican prison service.<sup>237</sup> Interestingly, other organisations chose that very evening to stage competing events in the city, such as a theatre evening by the *Agrupació Catalana d'Art Dramàtic* of the *Orfeó Català* at their social centre at calle República de Uruguay no. 49 in the historic city centre<sup>238</sup> and an evening in honour of the Chilean ambassador, Manuel Hidalgo y Plaza, held in the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50. The president of the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano*, Luis Octavio Madero, called the Spanish refugees “privileged men” who owed their presence in Mexico to “those who had fought for the triumph of justice and liberty in their countries.” Belarmino Tomás spoke for the Spanish UGT and expressed the gratitude of the Spanish workers for the hospitality that Chile provided for the Spanish republican refugees. Emilio Maldonado added in the name of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT greetings to the Spanish and Chilean workers, before Diego Martínez Barrio of the *Unión Republicana*, who still carried the official title of president of the permanent commission of the Spanish *Cortes*, encouraged the ambassador rhetorically to charge the Spanish republican refugees for the services rendered to them by the Chilean government by demanding they unite for the challenge of freeing Spain from the Francoist oppression.<sup>239</sup> Once again, the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* proved its anti-communist credentials by ignoring the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian October Revolution.

A public mass meeting was held at the *Monumento a la Revolución* at the heart of the *Tabacalera* district on the following 8<sup>th</sup> of November. The meeting was organised by members of both houses of the Mexican congress, the Mexican communist party (PCM), the governing party PRM, the trade union CTM, and the SAURSS to demand the restoration of diplomatic relations between Mexico and the USSR and the opening of a second front against Nazi Germany in Europe. Mexico formed part of a coalition of United Nations, in which, so claimed the Spanish communists, “the USSR takes up a place of honour at the extreme forefront.”<sup>240</sup> The Mexican senator Mayes Navarro stated that

236 See: *España Popular* III/106 (30 Oct 1942), p. 2.

237 See AGN, Archivo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1191, exp. 710.1/101-81, s. fols. (erroneously dated 6 Nov 1942, including the full text of Varela’s speech).

238 See the invitation to a „vellada teatral a càrrec de l’Agrupació Catalana d’Art Dramàtic“ at Orfeó Català (México), Biblioteca, Activitats de L’Orfeó Català de Mèxic, 1940-1959, s. fol.

239 „El homenaje al embajador de Chile fue un éxito“, *Solidaridad Obrera* I/14 (15 Nov 1942), p. 3.

the soldiers of the Red Army and the Russian people are defending something more than their fatherland: they are defending something more than their freedom and more than their life, by also defending the independence and the freedom of the Mexicans. Over there, they are defending our libertarian traditions, they are defending the legacy which, in America, came down to us from Bolívar, Washington, Lincoln, Hidalgo, Morelos, and Juárez.<sup>241</sup>

The following day, the German movement *Alemania Libre* staged a meeting at the *Sala Schiefer* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21 on the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> of November which linked the date of the 7<sup>th</sup> of November to the anniversary of the German Revolution of 1918. Ludwig Renn spoke about the German military defeat of 1918 and “symptoms of a new defeat”<sup>242</sup>, “prophesying a Russian victory over the Nazis”, as the US embassy noted.<sup>243</sup> Alexander Abusch compared the insurrection of 1918 with the present situation, Paul Merker linked the German Revolution of 1918 to the Russian October Revolution of 1917, Paul Elle recalled the experiences of the German ex-patriate colony during the Mexican Revolution, and Günter Ruschin recited public appeals by Thomas Mann and German prisoners of war in the USSR.<sup>244</sup> The programme of the evening demonstrated the Communist technique of embedding their ideological message within a broader tableau of historical and cultural themes that helped to avoid the impression of communist propaganda and invited the idea of an anti-fascist national front movement.

Another opportunity for sociability among the transnational pro-Soviet Left in Mexico City provided a banquet held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 1942 in honour of Francesco Frola on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Italian *Alianza Internacional “Giuseppe Garibaldi”* over which Frola presided. About 200 guests assembled in the restaurant “Lido” on the Avenida San Juan de Letrán no. 6 (today: Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas) just south of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*, and the guest list reads like a Who-Is-Who of the transnational anti-fascist Left in Mexico City.<sup>245</sup> From among the Mexican governing elite, the director

240 „México, en un gran acto, se pronuncia por inmediatas relaciones con la URSS“, *España Popular* III/108 (13 Nov 1942), p. 4; cf. *SAURSS. Quincenal de la Sociedad de Amigos de la URSS* I/9 (7 Nov 1942), p. 12.

241 Speech by Mexican senator Mayes Navarro at AGN, Archivo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1191, exp. 710.1/11-81, s. fols.

242 „Gran Mitin de »Alemania Libre«. El 7, y el 9 de noviembre y su importancia para los momentos actuales“, *Alemania Libre* I/35 (1 Nov 1942), p. 4.

243 Report on „Subversive Activities“ (7 Apr 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, p. 3.

244 „Gran Mitin de »Alemania Libre«. El 7, y el 9 de noviembre y su importancia para los momentos actuales“, *Alemania Libre* I/35 (1 Nov 1942), p. 4.

245 Cf. the extensive illustrated report: „Il banchetto in onore dell’ on. Francesco Frola“, *Alleanza Internazionale „Giuseppe Garibaldi“ per la Libertá d’Italia* (Dec 1942), pp. 9-19.

general of *Petroleos Mexicanos* (*Pemex*, the nationalised oil industry) Efrain Buenrostro attended the occasion as Frola's employer who, in turn, used his *Pemex* office at calle Donato Guerra no. 1-112 on the northern end of the district of *Juárez* to organise the anti-fascist Italian community in Mexico City. Rafael Murillo Vidal represented the *Secretaría de Gobernación*, Prof. González Padilla the Ministry of Labour, Florencio Padilla the governing party PRM, and Rafael Sánchez de Ocaña the official governing party periodical *El Nacional*. José Mancisidor attended in his function as president of the FOARE, the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) was represented by its secretary general Dionisio Encina and the polit-bureau members Miguel Velasco, Ángel Olivo, and Blas Manrique, and the *Universidad Obrera* by Roberto Treviño. Fausto Pomar attended for the SAURSS and Gregorio Lozano for the CTM. From the transnational community of exile in Mexico Antonio Mije represented the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) alongside the former air force chief of the Spanish Republic, Ignacio Hidalgo de Cisneros. The German movement *Alemania Libre* was prominently represented by Paul Merker, member of the politburo of the German Communist Party (KPD), its president and secretary Ludwig Renn and Georg Stibi, Alexander Abusch as editor of the journal *Freies Deutschland*, Paul Elle, the communist writer Bodo Uhse, Leo Zuckermann, and Walter Janka, the director of the publishing house *El Libro Libre*. László Radványi (the husband of Anna Seghers) represented the movement *Hungria Libre*, the architect Hannes Meyer the "Swiss colony", Rudolf Neuhaus the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM), André Simone the Czech community in exile, Dragutin Fodor the organisation *Yugoslavia Libre*, the designer Clara Porset the Cuban emigration in Mexico City, Sverin Ferandel, secretary of the *Acción Democrática Internacional* (ADI), the free French community, alongside Raúl Cordero Amador, the president of the ADI. The *Comité Central Israelita de México* made a rare public appearance by sending Abraham Winter to attend the occasion. Most remarkable, however, was the presence of former Spanish republican defence minister Indalecio Prieto, who found himself surrounded by the pro-Soviet transnational Left in Mexico City which his socialist *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"* routinely denounced as mere puppets in the service of Moscow. The former Italian university professor Leone Olper opened the proceedings by paying tribute to former Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas and *Pemex* director Efrain Buenrostro for their support of the *Alianza "Giuseppe Garibaldi"*. The Italian communist Mario Montagnana expressed the hope for a speedy liberation of Italy after the invasion of North Africa, and Alejandro Carrillo, the editor of *El Popular*, "made a rather impassioned speech in which he eulogised Russia when he stated that the Nazis had found the resistance that they had not found before and perhaps would not have yet met in any other place."<sup>246</sup> The US embassy (which had obtained this report) regarded the banquet in honour of Francesco Frola as important enough to dedicate a meeting of the

246 Report by Gus T. Jones: „Meeting of »Alianza Internacional Giuseppe Garibaldi« on November 14, 1942“ (17 Nov 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 2-3; cf. also „Survey of Italian activities“ by Birch D. O’Neal (14 Mar 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 800 – 820.02, p. 10.

“coordination of subversive information” group on the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> of November to a “discussion of Garibaldi Society meeting”.<sup>247</sup>

During November 1942, the public activities of the Spanish republican community in exile in Mexico City intensified following the news of the British-US-American invasion of French North Africa known as Operation “Torch” which was launched on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November and lasted for one week. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of November the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) used the *Teatro de Cinematografistas* at calle Orozco y Berra no. 15 in the district of *Guerrero* for a 3-day convention led by a lecture by Ángel Álvarez on the current situation of Spain, who denounced the Franco regime as treacherous to the interest of the Spanish people and laid out perspectives for the overthrow of the Franco regime. The international situation was presented by Luis Soto who demanded a second European front against Nazi Germany by the Western powers. Federico Melchor emphasised the importance of the united socialist youth movement (JSU) for the campaign against Franco, before Dionisio Encina spoke in the name of the Mexican communist party (PCM) and Ricardo Castellote attacked Trotskyism as the fifth column of fascism. Other speakers included José Armisén, managing director of *España Popular*, and Pedro Pujol for the Catalan communists of the *Partido Socialista Unificada de Cataluña* (PSUC).<sup>248</sup> Only two days later, the Spanish communists gathered again, this time back in the *Teatro de los Electricistas* at calle Artes no. 45 in the *Tabacalera* for a “great mass meeting”. The intelligence unit of the US embassy covered this event closely through confidential contacts within the PCE and further anonymous sources.<sup>249</sup> They estimated the audience at about 2,500 persons who filled the theatre beyond capacity. The meeting was dedicated to Dolores Ibarruri, known as the “La Passionaria”, Spanish communist leader in exile in Moscow whose son Rubén had just been confirmed dead after fighting with the Red Army on the Eastern Front. The intelligence report noted the presence of delegates of fraternal organisations, among them the German and Mexican communists, the Mexican FOARE, and the Italian *Alianza Internacional “Giuseppe Garibaldi”*.<sup>250</sup> As speakers, Ángel Álvarez emphasised the role of the Red Army in recent successes of the Allied forces in North Africa, Santiago Carrillo spoke for the communist youth (JSU) about the importance of working class organisation under capitalism, and Antonio Mije envisaged the return of Spanish republicans to Spain in order to resume the fight against the Franco regime while he reminded the audience of the non-

247 See the agenda of „Coordination of Subversive Information“ (16 Nov 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

248 „Por la Unión Nacional, por la Salvación de España“, *España Popular* III/110 (27 Nov 1942), pp. 4-3.

249 Memorandum on „Communist activities“ (25 Nov 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fols.; the clandestine approach by US intelligence contained, on this occasion, a somewhat comical aspect, as the report pointed out: „The major part of the meeting was broadcast over Mexico City radio stations XEFO and XEUZ.“, *ibid.*, p. 1.

250 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

interventionist stance of the Western powers during the Spanish Civil War which had made Franco's triumph possible in the first place.<sup>251</sup>

Meanwhile, the anti-communist faction of the Spanish community in exile in Mexico had organised under the name of the *Comité de Defensa de los Emigrados Españoles* their own meeting in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* in the evening of the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 1942. The speakers included the pro-Prieto socialist of the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"* Manuel Albar, Álvaro de Albornoz, and Mariano Ruiz Funes of the *Izquierda Republicana*, Diego Martínez Barrio of the *Unión Republicana*, Belarmino Tomás of the UGT, and Manuel Jiménez Iguada of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT. The meeting addressed precisely the same issue of the critical situation of Spanish republican refugees stranded in France and North Africa and united in its presiding panel the anarchist Progreso Alfarache, Félix Díaz Escobar of the FRAEM, and general José Miaja. The objectives of the meeting were to commemorate the victims of the Franco regime in Spain, to remind the public of the fate of those detained in Spain, in France, and (as in the case of former republican prime minister Francisco Largo Caballero) in German concentration camps, and to ensure that the Spanish dictatorship would be considered as part of the Axis powers and, thus, an enemy of the anti-Hitler alliance, even though the Spanish government continued to claim is technical (even if not practical) neutrality in the conflict. Belarmino Tomás formulated this latter objective thus:

There are those who are saying that the war began when Hitler invaded Poland. To that, we, the Spaniards, are saying that the war began in our country and that it was in Spain where that so-called new order was first practised. And those countries which today find themselves subjected to that new order, the countries that today find themselves suffering as we Spaniards have been suffering for six years, raise their protest and rise up in anger.<sup>252</sup>

In this way, the *Comité de Defensa de los Emigrados Españoles* intended to raise awareness of the fate of the Spanish republicans across the Mexican and international public so that, in Manuel Albar's words, "the universal conscience, or at least the conscience of America, shall wake up – that part which is asleep."<sup>253</sup> Such appeals to the international conscience were no doubt inspired by the invasion of North Africa by British and US-American forces which raised hopes among the Spanish republicans that the Franco regime would lose its strategic security in the Western Mediterranean and might, thus, be vulnerable to

251 Ibid., pp. 3-4. The meeting was followed by similar public and internal meetings of the Mexican Communist Party (PCM) over the next few days at different venues of the Mexican labour unions, *ibid.*, pp. 5-14.

252 „El imponente Mitin del Comité de Defensa de los Emigrados Españoles“, *Adelante* I/21 (1 Dec 1942), p. 1.

253 Ibid., p. 3.

challenges by Spanish republican or even Allied forces. In the light of these rather dramatic events in North Africa, it is striking how mutually isolated from one another the two camps of pro-Soviet and anti-communist Spanish republicans operated. Not only did both sides ignore the activities of the other, but even went so far as to refuse to acknowledge the very existence of their opponents, for example when the anarcho-syndicalist periodical *Solidaridad Obrera* claimed that at the meeting in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* “all Spanish sectors [of the community in exile in Mexico City] were present.”<sup>254</sup>

The winter of 1942/43 saw a number of celebratory banquets among the pro-Soviet Left in Mexico City. The restoration of diplomatic relations between Mexico and the USSR on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1942 led to a farewell dinner on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 1943 for Mexico’s new ambassador to Moscow, Luis Quintanilla, in the same location of the restaurant “Lido” where the banquet for Francesco Frola had taken place two months earlier. The event was organised by the SAURSS, and its president José Mancisidor was the only speaker.<sup>255</sup> The banquet formulated an address of friendship and adhesion to the Soviet Union, to be delivered to Moscow by Quintanilla, and stated that the SAURSS in Mexico “feels inspired in its work by the unparalleled struggle of the USSR – to which all peoples of the world are indebted for its victorious war against the nazi-fascist armies – and promises to continue working to divulge the peaceful work of the Soviet Union as well as the heroic acts of its fighters.”<sup>256</sup> The address closed with a “Long live Josef Stalin, the great leader of freedom and democracy!” and was signed for the SAURSS by its president José Mancisidor, the secretary general Fausto Pomar, the press secretary Enrique Arreguín, and the treasurer Victor Manuel Villaseñor.<sup>257</sup> All guests in attendance added their signatures, so that the audience can be reconstructed with great accuracy: from among the transnational community in Mexico City Pablo Neruda attended as the consul general of Chile, the Italian community was represented by Francesco Frola, Mario Montagnana, and Vittorio Vidali (who signed as “Carlos J. Contreras”), and among the guests were also the former Spanish republican air force chief Ignacio Hidalgo de Cisneros, the German communist journalist Alexander Abusch, the Spanish writer and publisher José Bergamín, the US-American communist Edith Landis, the

254 „Mitin de Protesta por la Entrega de Refugiados“, *Solidaridad Obrera* I/15 (28 Nov 1942), p. 1. The paper also reprinted excerpts of the speeches given by Diego Martínez Barrio, Berlamino Tomás, Manuel Albar, and Miguel Jiménez Igualada in: „Una manifestación de solidaridad antifascista“, *Solidaridad Obrera* I/16 (15 Dec 1942); p. 3, and Mariano Ruiz Funes in: „Una manifestación de solidaridad antifascista“, *Solidaridad Obrera* I/17 (5 Jan 1943); p. 3.

255 See the invitation at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843Free Hungarians – 845E, s. fol.; cf. „Cena al Embajador Luis Quintanilla“, *SAURSS. Quincenal de la Sociedad de Amigos de la URSS* II/12 (1 Feb 1943), p. 7.

256 Address of banquet in honour of Luis Quintanilla (11 Jan 1943) at GARF, fond 5283 (VOKS), opis 14 (Department of American Countries), delo 144 (Mexican Society of Friendship), fol. 69.

257 *Ibid.*, fol. 70.



Spanish writer Constanca de la Mora, the Costa Rican journalist Vicente Sáenz, the German communist Erich Jungmann, the Spanish communist Vicente Uribe, the French journalist Simone Téry, the US-American dancer and choreographer Waldeen von Falkenstein, the secretary general of the ADI Severin Ferandel, and the Cuban designer Clara Porset.<sup>258</sup> Vidalí's presence at the banquet would soon become a critical element of public debate about whether he was involved in the assassination of the Italian union leader and outspoken anti-Stalinist Carlos Tresca in New York that same evening of 11<sup>th</sup> of January 1943. Mario Montagnana would later insist that on that evening he himself was sharing a table at the banquet for Quintanilla at the restaurant "Lido" with Vidalí and Francesco Frola.<sup>259</sup>

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 1943, the day after the *Asamblea contra el Terror Nazi-Fascista* had taken place in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*, the Mexican *Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra* staged a celebratory dinner in honour of the Soviet Union which had been initiated by a group of Mexican and international writers who united about 160 intellectuals in the *Centro Vasco* on Avenida Madero no. 6 in the historic city centre. Among those who had issued the invitation were the Mexican writer and former rector of the University of Mexico, Antonio Castro Leal, the president of the *Colegio de México* Alfonso Reyes, and the writers Theodor Balk (Yugoslavian, alias: Dragutin Fodor), the Catalán Josep Carner, the Spaniard Enrique Diez Canedo, the Austrian Bruno Frei, the Czechoslovakian Egon Erwin Kisch, the Chilean consul general Pablo Neruda, the US-American Ralph Roeder, the Costa Rican Vicente Sáenz, and the German Anna Seghers.<sup>260</sup> Antonio Castro Leal as president of the *Comité de Ayuda a Rusia* opened the event with a declaration of sympathy and support for democracy and the Soviet Union, before Anna Seghers spoke about the long-standing admiration of the German people and its intellectuals for Russia which had only been suppressed by the Nazi dictatorship (her speech in German was translated into Spanish by Eugenio Imaz). Finally, Pablo Neruda set the tone of the event with a recital of his *Nuevo Canto de Amor a Stalingrado*, which transformed the banquet into a celebration of the Soviet victory at Stalingrad which coincided with the date set for the event. Josep Carner concluded the banquet with historical-philosophical remarks about the Russian character "until the current time when that soil reveals, with its stance against fascism, that everything there is true, powerful, and noble."<sup>261</sup> As in the case with the British-US-American invasion of North Africa, the military events in the overseas theatres of war had a direct impact on the political and social practice among the communities of exile in Mexico City.

258 See the signatures at GARF, fond 5283 (VOKS), opis 14 (Department of American Countries), delo 144 (Mexican Society of Friendship), fols. 71-6.

259 See the memorandum on Mario Montagnana (14 Jun 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, p. 6; cf. Mario Montagnana: *En Defensa de un Antifascista* (México D.F., 1943).

260 „Un homenaje a la URSS“, *España Popular* III/119 (29 Jan 1943), p. 3.

261 See the report „160 Intelectuales rinden homenaje a Rusia“, *Ayuda a Rusia. Publicación Mensual del „Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra“* II/5 (Feb 1943), pp. 4-5.

This immediate impact of the turn of tides on the Eastern front after the battle of Stalingrad became further evident a week later, when the Spanish communist leader and former republican minister for Agriculture Vicente Uribe addressed the Spanish republicans in Mexico City in the *Teatro de los Electricistas* on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1943. His topic was the question of national unity, and he opened his speech with a reference to the victory of Stalingrad which marked a new confidence and priority of action: “We do not attribute much importance to the Casablanca Conference. We no longer trust conferences of that type. What we need in the current struggle, after this one-and-a-half year of gigantic efforts by the USSR and of the struggle which the nations subjugated by Nazism are conducting, are not words. What we need are deeds.” Uribe renewed the communist commitment to republicanism, and presented the idea of national union as a practical idea which explicitly called for the violent overthrow of the Franco regime:

For Francoism, for the Falange, for Hitlerism in Spain, and its minions and servants there remains nothing but to throw them out, to annihilate them. When I have said that it is necessary to fight in the Soviet style, in the style of Stalingrad, then it is because it is necessary to put into practice all the means of power: only by power will we throw out Franco, and only by power and only by violence will the Spanish people be able to be free. (great applause)<sup>262</sup>

Uribe suggested the broadest possible national front against fascism, even appealing to Spanish patriotism beyond the republican camp. However, he explicitly likened any criticism of communism to fascist anti-communism: “they have shared the job with Hitler. Hitler also insults the communists.”<sup>263</sup> Finally, Uribe praised the “combat quality” of the Spanish communists to fight to the death to “pulverise for ever those dark forces which have brought so much evil to humanity.”<sup>264</sup>

Meanwhile, the former *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana*, which now operated under the name of *Liga Anti-Nazi de Habla Alemana*, managed to step into the public for one last time by organising a lecture series under the title “Ten Years of Nazi Barbarism” at the conference hall of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* during the months of January and February of 1943. Co-sponsored by the Mexican Central Committee of Civil Defence, the series offered analytical perspectives on the character of the Nazi regime both within Germany and in some of the occupied territories, as well as on the situation of Spain. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of January, Franz Feuchtwanger analysed the economic situation of the Third Reich and the role of

262 „Que es y que representa la Unión Nacional de los españoles. Texto integro de la conferencia de Vicente Uribe“, *España Popular* III/121 (12 Feb 1943), p. 3.

263 Ibid., p. 4.

264 Ibid., p. 5; see also the personal memorandum on Vicente Uribe (31 Mar 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02T, s. fol.

industrial trusts in the Nazi regime and Heribert B. de Cote presented the Nazi dictatorship as “My Struggle in action”. The following week, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February Paul Gutmann recalled the public book burning of 1933 and Paul Westheim denounced the anti-intellectualism of “art as a medium for perversion” under Nazi rule. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of February, Alfred Stern spoke on the “education for death” of the Nazi regime, Máximo José Kahn presented the Gestapo as a modern version of the Inquisition, and José Silva of the National University of México denounced the Nazi regime's “crusade against God”. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of February, Diego Martínez Barrio of the Spanish *Unión Republicana* spoke about the situation of Spain, Otto Weiss on behalf of the Czechoslovakian emigration, and Erich Schimmerl about Austria. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, the Spanish republican ex-minister Álvaro de Albornoz of the Spanish *Izquierda Republicana*, again, raised the Spanish experience of Fascism while Jules de Cock, secretary of the Belgian confederation of trade unions, spoke about the fate of the Benelux countries and France. Finally, Paul Gutmann concluded the series on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February with future perspectives regarding the final victory over Nazi Fascism. Characteristically, during the whole series the Soviet Union was barely ever mentioned, and only Martínez Barrio referred to “the splendid proof of sacrifice and energy” which the USSR, however, only produced long after the defeat of the Spanish Republic in 1939.<sup>265</sup> The public resonance of this lecture series appears to have been limited.

The series of celebrations of the Soviet Union and its major victory at Stalingrad culminated during the last week of February in an homage to the Red Army on its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February. Vicente Lombardo Toledano presided over this act which the Mexican *Consejo Nacional Antifascista* had organised and brought together speakers from the trade unions, the PRM and the Mexican communists as well as José Mancisidor in representation of the *Amigos de la URSS*. Lombardo demanded, once again, a strict repression of all fifth column activities in the Americas and announced the formation of a Latin American volunteers' brigade.<sup>266</sup> The legacy of the International Brigades of the Spanish Civil War was publicly celebrated just three days later on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, once again at the *Teatro de los Electricistas* in the *Tabacalera* district.<sup>267</sup> The event had been initiated by the Spanish socialist *Círculo “Jaime Vera”* in collaboration with numerous other exile organisations, among them the *Alianza Internacional “Giuseppe Garibaldi”*, the movement *Alemania Libre*, and the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México*. The main speakers were three international veterans of the Spanish Civil War, the Mexican Roberto Vega González, the German Ludwig Renn, and the Italian Vittorio Vidali.<sup>268</sup> As president of the meeting, Ramón Lamonedá, secretary of the PSOE, recalled that as in the case of China and Ethiopia, the outbreak of Civil War

265 Full texts of all lectures are available at AGN, fondo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1191, exp. 710.1/101-91.

266 „México rinde homenaje al Ejército Rojo“, *España Popular* IV/124 (26 Feb 1943), p. 4.

267 See the announcement at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/4, s. fol.

in Spain had been greeted with indifference by “people who have made of neutrality a joker of cowardice.” He paid tribute to the veterans and reminded those present of those “who inexplicably remain in concentration camps after the soldiers of liberty arrived in North Africa.” Ludwig Renn credited the International Brigades for having “forged many of the heroes of the present war [...] who are now the combative soul of the oppressed nations of Europe.”<sup>269</sup>

By the spring of 1943, the transnational networks of pro-Soviet anti-fascism had established a hegemony over public spaces and the discourse of international politics in the Mexican capital. Between Mexico's entry into the war in May 1942 and the Soviet victory in Stalingrad in January 1943, the communists in Mexico were able to capitalise on the new military alliance with the Soviet Union which led to the restoration of diplomatic relations in November 1942 and to a series of public celebrations during the winter of 1942/43 in honour of the Soviet Union and the Red Army on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of both. Anti-communism did not gain much ground during this phase of exile in Mexico, as non-sectarian organisations such as the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* succumbed to polarisation and, eventually, political infighting and disintegration.

#### **d. Polarisation (March 1943 – Aug 1943)**

At the beginning of 1943, the institutional topography of exile in Mexico City underwent some changes, as a number of organisations re-located within the cityscape. In November 1942, the *Centro Andaluz* which had only come into existence in July, announced its new domicile at calle Bolívar no. 57 in the historic city centre which still underwent some works of redecoration before the inauguration on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 1943. Its president, Francisco Zapata, belonged to the ex-patriate Andalusian community in Mexico City, but this new regional *Centro* of the Spanish community attracted a great number of Spanish republicans, such as Matilde Cantos of the *Comité de Mujeres Antifascistas de España* or the Spanish poet Juan Rejano.<sup>270</sup> The executive board consisted exclusively of Spanish republican refugees: Fernando Vázquez Ocaña, the editor of the periodical *El Socialista* of the Spanish *negrinista* socialists in exile in Mexico, acted as the organiser of lectures for the *Centro*, Francisco Serrano Pacheco, on the other hand, who headed the section of social and political sciences, belonged to the anti-communist *Unión Republicana*, while Ramón Lamonedá, responsible for the section of poetry and literature, was the secretary of the *negrinista* faction of the PSOE and president of the *Círculo “Jaime Vera”*.

268 „Mitin en honor de las Brigadas Internacionales“, *El Socialista* II/13 (Mar 1943), p. 8.

269 Memorandum on „Manifestation of the Spanish Communists“ (3 Mar 1943), at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800C – 801.01Rod, s. fol.

270 „Próxima inauguración del »Centro Andaluz«,“ *España Popular* III/107 (6 Nov 1942), p. 3; see also the short notice of the inauguration: „Inauguración del Centro Andaluz“, *España Popular* III/119 (29 Jan 1943), p. 3.

Pedro Garfias of the *Izquierda Republicana* was the president of the musical section, and the section of sciences was headed by Victoriano Acosta.<sup>271</sup> Politically, the *Centro* enjoyed close contacts to the pro-Soviet republican Left in the city which was also illustrated by the fact that only three weeks after the inauguration of the *Centro Andaluz* the *Sociedad de Amigos de la URSS* (SAURSS) relocated its domicile into the very same building on the same floor at calle Bolívar no. 57 on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 1943. The occasion was marked by a celebration with Mexican and Russian music and dance and the opening of an exhibition about the Soviet Union: “So we begin a new phase of our activities in which, we trust, all our *socios* and friends shall participate.” The organisation hoped for their domicile to become “part of the firm friendship between our fatherland and the Soviet Union.”<sup>272</sup> The SAURSS engaged in frequent events that promoted Russian language and culture, as well as the scientific, technological, and economic achievements of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the *Centro Republicano Español* began the new year of 1943 at its new location at the *Palacio de Marmol* at calle Tacuba no. 15 in the historical city centre, up until then the domicile of the *Comité Central Israelita de México*.<sup>273</sup> The *prietista* faction of Spanish socialists moved with the *Centro* to the new location, as the *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”* announced in its periodical *Adelante* in its second edition of 1943<sup>274</sup>, where they celebrated their first general meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January led by their president Rufino Laiseca and the secretary Felipe García.<sup>275</sup> Simultaneously, the *Centro Cultural Israelita*, in turn, vacated the premises of the *Palacio de Marmol* and relocated to a building just a few blocks north of the central plaza of Mexico City, the *Zócalo*, at calle República de Cuba (not to be confused with its old address at calle Tacuba) no. 81.<sup>276</sup>

When the *Comité Central Israelita* congregated at its new domicile for one of its regular weekly meetings on Tuesday, the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 1943, the agenda contained the discussion of an event that was organised by the group *Jüdischer*

271 See the list of officers of the *Centro Andaluz* at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A – 843Free Germans, s. fol.

272 „Inauguración de Nuestra Nueva Casa“, *SAURSS. Quincenal de la Sociedad de Amigos de la URSS* II/12 (1 Feb 1943), p. 7. See also „Inauguremos nuestra casa“, *ibid.* II/13 (23 Feb 1943), p. 2.

273 See the memorandum on the president of the *Centro Republicano*, Álvaro de Albormoz (13 May 1944), at USNACP, RG84, UD2895, 820.02, p. 2.

274 „Cambio de domicilio“, *Adelante* II/24 (15 Jan 1943), p. 1.

275 „Círculo Cultural »Pablo Iglesias«. Asamblea General Ordinaria“, *Adelante* II/23 (1 Jan 1943), p. 4.

276 In November, the secretary of the *Comité Central*, Moises Glikowski, was still mentioned in connection with the *Comité Central* at calle Tacuba no. 15: see the memorandum on Mauricio May Metzger (10 Nov 1942) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 88, exp. 8, fol. 102; cf. the discussion of the move to calle República de Cuba no. 81 when Tuvia Maizel offered office space to the *Comité* at CDICA, *Actas del Comité Central Israelita de México*, vol. 2, no. 203 (24 Nov 1942), p. 51rev.

*Arbeiterbund von Polen und Rußland*, an organisation of predominantly Yiddish-Speaking Jewish socialists originating in the Western provinces of Tsarist Russia during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, commonly known as simply the *Bund*. The objective of their meeting which was scheduled at the *Centro Cultural Israelita*, the social centre of the *Comité Central Israelita* located at the same address of calle República de Cuba no. 81, just 24 hours later in the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> of March, was to commemorate two Polish-Jewish socialists who had been executed as “fifth-Columnist spies” by Soviet authorities after they had taken refuge in the Soviet Union from the German attack on Poland in 1939. Just weeks before, in February 1943, the Soviet Ambassador to the United States, Maxim Litvinov, had confirmed the execution of Victor Alter and Henryk Erlich, and their *Bund* comrades, now dispersed in exile, immediately launched a transnational campaign that also involved the group around Víctor Serge in Mexico<sup>277</sup> against what they perceived as a politically-motivated atrocity by the Soviet government with distinctly anti-Semitic undertones.<sup>278</sup> The *Centro Cultural Israelita* had hosted broadly pro-Soviet meetings from the community of exile in Mexico City before<sup>279</sup>, so it is not surprising that two representatives of the *Sociedad de Amigos de la URSS* joined the *Comité Central Israelita* in protest against the upcoming *Bund* event. Their secretary Fausto Pomar and the financial secretary Víctor Manuel Villaseñor repeated the statement of Litvinov and pointed towards the alliance between Mexico and the Soviet Union which should prohibit any political activities that could damage the reputation and image of the Soviet government. They concluded their objection to the *Bund* meeting with a sinister scenario in which such a meeting would have “grave consequences for the Comité Central and the Jewish community” and they foresaw that “some trade unions would bring their followers to the meeting and there would be a scandal which might then be

277 On Serge's contacts to the anti-Stalinist Left in New York see: Alan Wald: “Victor Serge y la izquierda antiestalinista de New York”, *Políticas de la Memoria* 8/9 (2008/09), pp. 141-8; see also Id., “Victor Serge and the New York anti-Stalinist Left”, in: *The Ideas of Victor Serge. A Life as a work of art*, ed. by Susan Weissman, special edition of *Critique*, 28/9 (1997), pp. 99-117.

278 See the documentation of the campaign for Alter and Erlich in: *Homenaje a Tresca, Alter y Ehrlich. El asalto stalinista al Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* (México D.F., 1943), pp. 6-10. The campaign had a transnational character and spanned from New York to London and into South America: *The Case of Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter*, foreword by Camille Huysmans (London: Liberty Publishers, 1943); J. Hart, *Henrik Erlich un Wiktor Alter: a lebn fun kempfer – a toit fun martirer* (New York: Bund, 1943); *Henrik Erlich un Viktor Alter: Gedank-Bukh* (Buenos Aires: Di Bundiše Grupe, 1943); *The Living Record of two Leaders of Labor: Henryk Erlich, born 1892; Victor Alter, born 1890; executed – December 1942* (New York: Erlich-Alter Memorial Conference, 1943); cf. George Sirgiovanni, *An Undercurrent of Suspicion: Anti-Communism in America during World War II* (New Brunswick, 1990), pp. 179-85.

279 See e.g. Antonio Velao's speech to the *Unión Democrática Española* on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1942, „Pasado, Presente, Futuro“, *El Socialista* I/8 (1 Aug 1942), p. 6; the commemoration of the Basque communist union leader Jesús Larrañaga on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August, „Gran Velada“, *El Socialista* I/9 (1 Sep 1942), p. 4; and the speech by the communist leader Antonio Mije on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> edition of *España Popular* on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, „La conferencia de Mije: España y el segundo frente“, *España Popular* III/100 (18 Sep 1942), p. 1.

utilised by the reactionary press to propagate anti-Semitism.”<sup>280</sup> The importance of this meeting for the SAURSS can be gathered from the fact that Villaseñor was scheduled on this very evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> of March to inaugurate his own series of weekly lectures on the “economic and political organisation of the Soviet Union” at the domicile of the SAURSS at calle Bolívar no. 57.<sup>281</sup> After the SAURSS representatives had left, Tuvia Maizel who represented the *Bund* at the *Comité Central Israelita* reassured the meeting that no hostility against the Soviet Union would occur at the planned meeting on the following evening.<sup>282</sup> The *Comité* recommended that the SAURSS leadership should contact Lombardo Toledano (who had just led public celebrations of the Soviet Union and the Red Army at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* two weeks earlier) who did not seem to object to the meeting. Should the SAURSS uphold their objection, the *Comité Central Israelita* would recommend the meeting to be cancelled, and all further responsibility would then rest with the meeting's organisers of the *Bund*.<sup>283</sup>

The scheduling of the commemoration of Alter and Erlich at the *Centro Cultural Israelita* reveals the political logic of polarisation and ideological confrontation among the transnational Left in Mexico City during the spring of 1943<sup>284</sup>. For the same evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> of March, the Mexican *Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra* (which had also organised the celebratory dinner at the *Centro Vasco* on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January) had advertised another social and political high-profile event in celebration of the Soviet Union, a “Russian night of carnival” at the prestigious University Club on Paseo de la Reforma no. 150. Several kilometres distant from the *Centro Histórico*, the guests of this event would enjoy – for a considerable entrance fee of 20 pesos – Russian food, vodka, „fifty bottles of whisky“, and cigarillos of the brand „Timoshenko“, as well as a variety show of

280 CDICA, Actas del Comité Central Israelita de México, vol. 2, acta no. 219 (9 Mar 1943), fol. 76rev.

281 See the announcement at GARF, fond 5283: All-Union Society for Foreign Cultural Relations, opis 14, delo 144: Correspondence with the SAURSS about cultural relations, fol. 84.

282 On Maizel and his relationship with the *Bund*, see Adina Cimet: *Ashkenazi Jews in Mexico: Ideologies in the Structuring of a Community* (Albany, 2012), pp. 87-92.

283 CDICA, Actas del Comité Central Israelita de México, vol. 2, acta no. 219 (9 Mar 1943), fols. 76rev-77.

284 For a more detailed analysis of the events of March/April 1943 see: Aribert Reimann: “Local Brawls and Global Conflict. Transnational political violence among the exiled Left in Mexico City during 1943”, *JILAR – Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* 23/1 (March 2017), pp. 1-17; see also Tamara Gleason Freidberg: *Di Shvue, los bundistas en México y participación en la comunidad judía* (México D.F., 2007), pp. 99-102; on the conflict between the *Bund* socialists and communists, see Adina Cimet-Singer: “The last Battles of old-world Ideologies in the Race for Identity and Communal Power: Communists vs. Bundists vs. Zionists in Mexico, 1938-1951”, *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe* 5/2 (1994), online resource at: <http://eial.tau.ac.il/index.php/eial/article/view/1215/1243> [18 Aug 2015]; Alicia Gojman de Backal: *Generaciones Judías en México. La Kehilá Ashkenazi (1922-1992)* (México D.F., 1993), vol. VI, pp. 53-61.

Russian music performed by celebrities of the Mexican and international stage.<sup>285</sup> The organisers of the commemoration of Alter and Erlich evidently tried to bypass the attention of the pro-Soviet public in Mexico City by staging their event simultaneously to the evening of the “Russian Night of Carnival”, but at a location at a long distance from the University Club. The short notice of barely 24 hours given to the *Comité Central Israelita* contributes to the impression that the *Bund* socialists tried to avoid the attention of their pro-Soviet detractors. When the event took place on the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1943, the result was a transnational violent confrontation between pro-Soviet and anti-communist activists in Mexico City. The press reported with mixed loyalties: In the anglophone section of the periodical *Novedades*, readers were told the following day about a “protest against the execution of two Trotskyist spies by a Soviet firing-squad” which led to the intervention by the police “when a part of the audience, which had been brought in by handbills distributed among the local foreign colony, protested against alleged pro-Nazi remarks by those officiating”.<sup>286</sup> The right-wing oppositional *Excelsior* struck a different tone with its report which first explained the reason for the commemoration of Alter and Erlich before reporting the events of that evening which saw “an unusual number of people of diverse nationalities” at the *Centro Cultural Israelita* who were told that “if they did not understand Yiddish their presence at the meeting would be pointless”. The following events were reported thus:

When Chopin’s funeral march was about to be performed, the president of the organising committee asked everybody present to rise. The communists flatly denied to do this and responded with raised voices: “Down with the Nazi agents!”, “Death to the fifth column!”, “Long live the Red Army!”. And obscuring their intentions with “Vivas!” to Mexico they got involved in a brawl with the audience.

The president of the commemoration, José Zacarías, was forced to close the meeting after batons, pistols, and knives emerged “so that no victims would have to be lamented”.<sup>287</sup> Responding to this report, the pro-Soviet community of exile in Mexico City presented the facts differently when they claimed the commemoration of Alter and Erlich had been staged “by the Trotskyists and other groups of enemies of the United Nations as a pretext to cause a scandal thereby to further the propaganda of Goebbels in order to create discord among the allied powers.” They claimed further that José Zacarías had

resorted to insults against the Red Army which produced indignation among the majority of those present who protested against the

285 „Fiesta en México: la Noche Rusa de Carnaval“, *Ayuda a Rusia. Publicación mensual del “Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra”*, II/5 (February 1943), p. 2.

286 “Police break up anti-Soviet fest”, *Novedades* (11 Mar 1943).

287 “Escándalo de los Comunistas en el Comité Israelita”, *Excelsior* (12 Mar 1943), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 1 & 4.



president's statements with shouts of "Viva México!", "Long live the allied forces!", "Long live the Red Army!", "Down with Hitler and Goebbels!", "Down with the fifth column!".

The representatives of the SAURSS regarded it as "significant that the organisers had kept their plans secret from the authorities, which is understandable since the Mexican authorities never would have permitted an anti-Allied meeting in this democratic country."<sup>288</sup> The violent brawl that ensued was far from harmless, as Paul Merker, the leader of the German communists in Mexico, recalled:

On 10<sup>th</sup> March 1943 [Heinrich] Gutmann and [Max] Diamant organised a public and anti-Soviet "commemoration" of Ehrlich [i.e. Henryk Erlich] and Adler [i.e. Victor Alter] who were convicted as spies in the Soviet Union. They acted in the name of a so-called Jewish Federation [the *Bund*] in the hall of calle de Tacuba no. 81. [sic! – recte: calle República de Cuba no. 81] Apart from Gutmann and Diamant were present Serge, Gorkin, Pivert, Regler, Feuchtwanger, Friedemann [i.e. Erwin Friedeberg] as well as Öttinghaus and his circle. But the hall was predominantly occupied by us and our Jewish friends. Members of the Mexican Society of Friends of the Soviet Union and some Spanish comrades had come, too. When the chairman of the event in his opening address directed attacks against the Red Army, the brawl started. Within just a few minutes the hall was cleansed of the Trotskyists and the commemoration therefore had come to an end. Regler and Gorkin needed to seek medical treatment.<sup>289</sup>

Merker's report (written about 20 years after the event) suggests that the audience for the commemoration for Alter and Erlich included the anti-communist group around Víctor Serge, Julián Gorkín, Marceau Pivert, and Gustav Regler (who had already come into open conflict with the transnational communist community of exile in Mexico City during the winter of 1941/42) and Enrique Gutmann, Max Diamant, Franz Feuchtwanger, Erwin Friedeberg, and Walter Öttinghaus, remaining activists of the former *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana*.

The fallout of the events of the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1943 reached the *Comité Central Israelita* during its regular meeting of the following week on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March. The opposing camps were represented by Tuvie Maizel for the *Bund* socialists and Paul Drucker for the German-speaking Jewish association *Menorah* which maintained close relations with the German-speaking community of

288 "Una provocación contra la Unidad de los Aliados", *Alemania Libre* II/7 (1 Apr 1943), p. 4, signed for the *Sociedad de Amigos de la URSS* by secretary Fausto Pomar and press secretary Dr Enrique Arreguín Jr. on 12 Mar 1943.

289 Paul Merker: *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika*, at BAL, SAPMO, NY 4102/5-6, Nachlaß Paul Merker, fol. 360.

communists in exile in Mexico City.<sup>290</sup> A letter signed by Bruno Frei, Leo Zuckermann, and Leo Katz (all three members of the *Menorah*) had laid out the reasons for “preventing by force that a meeting was held in memory of Alter and Erlich which was organised by the group *Bund* last Wednesday” while a second letter by the *Menorah* asked why the *Comité Central* “had not taken appropriate measures to prevent the meeting”.<sup>291</sup> While Paul Drucker also complained about the article in *Excelsior* which blamed “communist agents” for the disturbance, the *Bund* socialists maintained that the article had originated from “persons who have nothing to do with the Jewish community or with the *Bund*”.<sup>292</sup> The *Comité Central Israelita*, meanwhile, did its utmost to remain neutral in this conflict mainly by simply ignoring the continuing complaints from all sides.<sup>293</sup> The events of the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1943 also signalled the end of the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana*: Five days after the brawl at the *Centro Cultural Israelita*, its leader Enrique Gutmann was accused of acting on behalf of a pro-Fascist “fifth column” in Mexico in the hispanophone press of the German communists in exile in Mexico City.<sup>294</sup> Another week later, Gutmann cleared out the LPC's offices at calle Ramón Guzmán no. 125 in the district of *San Rafael* (the former domicile of the SAURSS controlled by its press secretary Enrique Arreguín) and moved his papers to his private home at calle Artes no. 123 in the same district.<sup>295</sup> Finally, Gutmann successfully applied in June of 1943 for permission to leave the Federal District for the state of Michoacán to conduct “studies of folklore”.<sup>296</sup>

By April of 1943, the arena for violent conflict among the transnational community of left-wing exile in Mexico City had shifted to another location. Another public event to commemorate Alter and Erlich was scheduled on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1943. In addition to the memory of the two *Bund* socialists, the commemoration was also dedicated to Carlos Tresca, an Italian union leader in the United States who had been shot dead in Manhattan on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 1943 – an act that was quickly blamed on agents of the Soviet GPU operating on orders of Stalin.<sup>297</sup> If in March the *Bund* socialists had organised their meeting at the

290 On Maizel, see e.g.: Adina Cimeti: *Ashkenazi Jews in Mexico: ideologies in the structuring of a community* (Albany, 1997), pp. 84-92.

291 CDICA, Actas del Comité Central Israelita, vol. 2, acta no. 220 (16 Mar 1943), fols. 78-78rev

292 Ibid., fols. 78rev-79.

293 See the committee minutes at CDICA, Actas del Comité Central Israelita, vol. 2, acta no. 221 (23 Mar 1943), fol. 80-80rev.; *ibid.*, acta no. 223 (13 Apr 1943), fol. 82-83rev.

294 „Contra una Provocación de la Quinta Columna“, *Alemania Libre* II/6 (15 Mar 1943), pp. 2 & 4.

295 See the memorandum by Manuel M. Barrera on the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* (25 Mar 1943) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 205, exp. 6, fol. 1; on Enrique Arreguín see the memorandum (6 Sep 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

296 See Gutmann's application and the permit at AGN, DGIPS, caja 122, exp. 45, fols. 10 & 12.

297 Cf. „El asesinato de Tresca“, *Solidaridad Obrera* II/20 (20 Feb 1943), p. 1; *Homenaje a Tresca, Alter y Ehrlich. El asalto stalinista al Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* (México D.F.,

*Centro Cultural Israelita* to coincide with the “Russian night of Carnival” at the University Club to avoid the attention of the pro-Soviet milieu in the city, the commemoration of the 1<sup>st</sup> of April betrayed an entirely different rationale: The organisers – Víctor Serge, Jacobo Abrahams, Julián Gorkín, Emilio Maldonado, and Pablo Chevalier – had chosen as a venue the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50, home of a transnational group of anti-communist socialists as well as the Spanish anarchists, located literally just around the corner from the headquarters of the *Sociedad de Amigos de la URSS* at calle Bolívar no. 57.<sup>298</sup> This choice of location suggests a more aggressive approach to the public sphere of the *Centro Histórico* on the part of the organisers from among transnational community of anti-communists, and the choice of date also betrays this rationale: The meeting was set to coincide with the regular weekly meetings of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists of the CNT who met every Thursday for their “*Jueves de la Solidaridad Obrera*”, “intimate presentations of a critical character” at which the Catalan anarchist Jaime Aragó was scheduled to speak on “Experiences of War and Revolution” at 8 pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1943.<sup>299</sup> The commemoration of Alter, Erlich, and Tresca was not scheduled to begin until an hour later at 9 pm, but while the anarchists congregated for their meeting, a group of about 100 communists started to attack the building, armed with sticks, rattles, daggers, and pistols.<sup>300</sup> After breaking down the door, the attackers injured

1943), p. 5; “Carlos Tresca”, *Mundo – Socialismo y Libertad* 1 (June 1943), p. 12. Even though his assassination has never officially been resolved, the relevant historiography also discusses the possibility of Tresca having fallen victim to the Italian mafia in New York; cf. Dorothy Gallagher: *All the right Enemies. The life and murder of Carlos Tresca* (New Brunswick, 1988); and Patrick Iber: *Neither Peace nor Freedom: the cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge Mass., 2015), p. 21.

298 On the identity of the organisers see the memorandum by Clarence W. Moore on the events at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* (24 May 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, p. 1; cf. Claudio Albertani: „Socialismo y Libertad. El exilio antiautoritario de Europa en México y la lucha contra el estalinismo (1940-1950)“, *Fundación Andreu Nin: Políticas de la Memoria* 8/9 (2008/09), pp. 131-9, <http://www.fundanin.org/albertani7.htm>, who identifies „Pablo Chevalier“ as the Italian ex-communist Leo Valiani; I am grateful to Daniel Goldstein (Università degli studi di Roma – Tor Vergata) for alerting me to this detail; on the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* cf. the brief report about the building and premises (15 Jun 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, s. fol.

299 “Jueves de Solidaridad Obrera. Experiencias de la Guerra y la Revolución”, *Solidaridad Obrera* II/19 (6 Feb 1943), p. 4.

300 Cf. the eyewitness account of Victor Serge: „Cuadernos Mexicanos 1940-1947“, *New Left Review* 82 (edición española, Sep-Oct 2013), pp. 84-6 (the relevant passage appears to be missing in the English edition); The events of the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1943 have already been mentioned by Susan Weissman: *Victor Serge. The course is set on hope* (London / New York, 2001), pp. 180-1; Jonathan Miles: *The Nine Lives of Otto Katz* (London, 2010), p. 251; Olga Glondys: *La Guerra Fría cultural y el exilio republicano español. “Cuadernos del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura” (1953-1965)* (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2012), p. 38; Patrick Iber: *Neither Peace nor Freedom: the cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge Mass., 2015), pp. 21 & 45-6; see also the eyewitness account of Serge’s daughter Jeannine Kibalchich, “My Father”, in: *The Ideas of Victor Serge. A Life as a work of art*, ed. by Susan Weissman, special edition of *Critique* 28-9 (1997), p. 12.

Enrique Androher Gironella, a former leader of the Catalan militia, and began to vandalise the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano*, but “fortunately, they met with an active and lively resistance”, as the *Centro* later reported with some degree of satisfaction. The defending side were able to barricade themselves into some of the rooms of the *Centro* who feared for their lives, and the number of injured during this evening was considerable on both sides.<sup>301</sup> The organisers of the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* later claimed to have recognised “a number of Stalinist *pistoleros* with orders to gun down some of the activists who were inside the house”, but had warned the city police in advance of a possible confrontation so that police units arrived in time “to prevent murder”. While some parts of the Mexican press reported that the meeting had consequently to be abandoned<sup>302</sup>, the *Centro* itself claimed that the commemoration of Alter, Erlich, and Tresca had gone ahead as planned, „in total tranquility, with all the dignity required for a mournful commemoration“. While Julián Gorkín could no longer attend the meeting because of his injuries, the speakers included the journalist Jacobo Abrahams, the CNT leader Emilio Maldonado, a representative of the *Bund* named Kristal, and Victor Serge, all of whom „paid tribute to the brave soldiers of the Red Army who are defending the life and future of the Russian people whilst the crimes of the G.P.U. are stabbing the honour of their country in the back.“<sup>303</sup> The Spanish anarcho-syndicalist periodical *Solidaridad Obrera* assisted:

Once the trouble-makers had been suppressed, the event went ahead in front of a numerous audience who applauded the speakers with enthusiasm, all of whom paid tribute to Mexican democracy which, in spite of all attempts to interfere, knows how to uphold the right to freedom of expression and thought.<sup>304</sup>

The *Centro's* officials claimed that the attack had been organised well in advance. In an interview with the oppositional newspaper *Excelsior*, published three days after the event, Julián Gorkín (who acted as cultural secretary of the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano*) identified those responsible for the attack as the Spanish communist leader Antonio Mije, the leader of the Catalan communists in exile Juan Comorera, the Italian communist Vittorio Vidali (alias: Carlos Contreras), and the

301 A short memorandum of the US embassy mentions the number of 73 injured during the attack, cf. memorandum on Antonio Mije (24 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; a press report spoke of 73 individuals detained – so this probably results from an error in translation, cf. “Fueron 73 los detenidos en el incidente comunista”, *El Universal Gráfico* (2 Apr 1943), p. 3.

302 See Patrick Iber: *Neither Peace nor Freedom: the cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge Mass., 2015), p. 46, quoting several reports: “Incidente provocado por unos conocidos Trotskistas”, *El Popular* (2 Apr 1943); “Escandalosa trifulca en el Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano por un atraco comunista”, *La Prensa* (2 Apr 1943), p. 23; “Fueron 73 los detenidos en el incidente comunista”, *El Universal Gráfico* (2 Apr 1943), p. 3.

303 *Homenaje a Tresca, Alter y Ehrlich. El asalto stalinista al Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* (México D.F., 1943), pp. 11-3.

304 “Gran Mitin de Protesta”, *Solidaridad Obrera* II/23 (3 April 1943), p. 3.

secretary general of the Spanish communist youth organisation *Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas* (JSU) Santiago Carrillo.<sup>305</sup> On the 8<sup>th</sup> of April, Gorkín informed the *Secretaría de Gobernación* that two days before the attack, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 1943, a meeting had taken place at the domicile of the Spanish JSU at calle Morelos no. 77 in the district of *Juárez* to coordinate the attack. He claimed that the conspirators (Mije, Carrillo, Vidali, and Marlés, the secretary of Comorera) had agreed that the “assault should be effected by Mexican communists so that it would not appear to be a struggle between two factions of Spanish immigrants.” He continued:

Among the assaulters, which numbered one hundred, there should be four gunmen who should fire on the writers Victor Serge (a Russo-French leader who is internationally known) and Julián Gorkín, the person making this declaration. The firing was to be done while the assault was going on.

The “directors of the assault”, so Gorkín continued, had remained in the street outside the building “and fled when the police arrived from the 4<sup>th</sup> precinct.”<sup>306</sup> Another “reliable confidential source” reported to the intelligence unit of the US embassy that the “instigators and directors” of the assault on the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* were a rather different group of the “high command of the Communist Party, made up mostly of the directors of Free Germany”. According to this source, the group included André Simone, Leo Zuckermann, László Radványi, and Hannes Meyer who allegedly had positioned themselves about two blocks west of the *Centro* in a café next to the Hotel “Avenida” (which was located at Avenida San Juan de Letrán, today: Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas no. 38), “listening to the reports which they received continuously as to what was going on.”<sup>307</sup> Evidently, the event had significant impact on the politics of exile in the city, and accusations were launched in several directions.

While the Spanish anarchists had commented on the events of March at the *Centro Cultural Israelita* still with some degree of sarcasm<sup>308</sup>, they now denounced the event at their own domicile at the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* as a serious assault on their basic liberties, executed by “various assault units of the communist party, consisting of Mexican elements under the direction of the

305 Memorandum on the events at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* by Clarence W. Moore (24 May 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, p. 2; cf. Victor Serge: „Cuadernos Mexicanos 1940-1947“, *New Left Review* 82 (edición española, Sep-Oct 2013), p. 85 (the relevant passage appears to be missing in the English edition); cf. also: Claudio Albertani: „Vittorio Vidali, Tina Modotti, le stalinisme et la revolution“, *Agone – Histoire, Politique & Sociologie* 46 (2011), pp. 216-7.

306 Memorandum on the events at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* by Clarence W. Moore (24 May 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, p. 2.

307 Ibid., p. 3.

308 “Un gesto ‘heróico’ de los comunistas”, *Solidaridad Obrera* II/22 (20 Mar 1943), p. 4.

Spanish communists who, as always, did not possess the dignity to show their faces.”<sup>309</sup> Two weeks later, their journal *Solidaridad Obrera* characterised the communists and their ideology as „in conflict with the elementary pre-conditions of spiritual life without which life is not worth living. May the whole world take notice of this. Particularly the Spanish.” Still, the CNT activists would not be drawn easily into the increasingly polarised confrontation between the communists and their anti-Soviet adversaries, as they described the Stalinists and their opposition as „two sides of the same coin“. Given that prominent anti-communist figures of the movement *Socialismo y Libertad*, such as Julián Gorkín himself, had been leading activists of the *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (POUM), they remembered their readership that “in Russia the Trotskyists have killed anarchists and destroyed the opportunity of a progressive development of the revolution that was murdered by the communist party. Therefore, there does not exist any fundamental difference [between them].”<sup>310</sup> When veterans of Spanish anarchism later remembered the events of 1943 they did so in the narrative register of valiant self-defence and defiance under the impact of political violence by the communists. The Catalan anarchist Ricardo Mestre Ventura was among those who defended the building against the assault of 1<sup>st</sup> of April, and 45 years later he remembered the events vividly: The battle inside the building, so he recalled, had been broken up by the police who cleared the building of the attackers, but a demonstration continued outside the building to prevent the commemoration of Alter, Erlich, and Tresca from going ahead until the police arrested most of the pro-Soviet agitators. They made identical statements to the effect that from the meeting at the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* shouts of “Viva Hitler! Viva Franco!” could allegedly be heard which had led the communist protesters to intervene by force.<sup>311</sup> This, to Mestre Ventura, clearly proved the premeditated character of the attack as the identical statements before the police sounded rehearsed. The following day, so he remembered, his message to the communists (in this case to Juan Comorera, the leader of the Catalan PSUC) was to be unmistakable:

There was a Catalan communist whom I knew, when I got to know him he was not a communist but a small bookseller in Barcelona, and I said: »Look, what has happened was surely inspired by Comorera« - he was here [in Mexico], and I said: »Tell Comorera that the next time they disturb an event, the people of the CNT will take action, we will not stick to the brutes that he sent us, but we will come down on him and those responsible.« They never bothered us ever again.<sup>312</sup>

309 “Gran Mitin de Protesta”, *Solidaridad Obrera* II/23 (3 April 1943), p. 3.

310 “Los comunistas contra la libertad”, *Solidaridad Obrera* II/24 (17 Apr 1943), p. 4.

311 Since Mestre Ventura had not witnessed himself the interrogation of the detained protesters, he probably paraphrased the report from *El Popular*; cf. “Incidente provocado por unos conocidos Trotskistas”, *El Popular* (2 Apr 1943); cf. *Homenaje a Tresca, Alter y Ehrlich. El asalto stalinista al Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* (México D.F., 1943), p. 14.

312 Interview with Ricardo Mestre Ventura (conducted by Enrique Sandoval, Mar-May 1988) at

Whether this account of the aftermath of the attack was correct or possibly coloured by a degree of self-glorifying posturing, Mestre Ventura had good reason to be concerned about the safety of the CNT meetings, as he himself was scheduled as a speaker at the weekly meeting of “Jueves de Solidaridad Obrera” at the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* only two weeks later on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 1943.<sup>313</sup>

At the height of political mobilisation of the transnational Left in Mexico City, the commemorations of Alter, Erlich, and (at the second occasion) Tresca were met with violent interventions by the communist faction of political exile in Mexico City and their pro-Soviet Mexican allies. The police statements of those detained by the police suggest that the communist attackers at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* intended to liken the commemorative meeting to the pro-Fascist celebrations at the *Casino Español* four years earlier, when Mexican trade unionists had attacked the building at calle Isabel la Católica no. 29 and the *Centro Asturiano* at calle 16 de Septiembre no. 14. Their actions in 1943 dealt a severe blow to their public image and their standing within the communities of exile in the city. The organisers of the two events, however, did not achieve their objectives either, as the *Comité Central Israelita* jealously guarded its political neutrality and refused to be drawn into an anti-communist campaign, and the Spanish anarchists equally maintained their independence from either camp of the conflict. In the wake of the Soviet victory at Stalingrad, the events of spring 1943 in Mexico City offered a first glimpse at a global ideological confrontation which originated from the anticipation of Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe<sup>314</sup>, and it was thus no coincidence that the tragic fate of two Polish-Jewish socialists had become the trigger for violent confrontations between the pro-Soviet forces and their anti-communist detractors. The violent atmosphere among the European communities of exile in Mexico City during those days of spring 1943 is further illustrated by the murder of the Spanish socialist Fernando Castillo Ramírez of the *Círculo “Jaime Vera”* in the morning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April (the day after the violent clashes at the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano*) on his way to work in calle Puebla in the district of *Roma Norte*.<sup>315</sup> Castillo had been a long-standing Spanish socialist and worked in Mexico as a printer. Whether there existed any link to the violent attack on the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* the previous evening remained unclear, but the

BNOB, Archivo de la Palabra. PHO/10/099, pp. 434-7.

313 “Jueves de Solidaridad Obrera. Experiencias de la Guerra y la Revolución”, *Solidaridad Obrera* II/19 (6 Feb 1943), p. 4.

314 See: „Polonia“, *Mundo. Socialismo y Libertad. Revista Mensual*, no. 2. (15 Jul 1943), p. 8: „The inhabitants of the territories in question – the Ukrainians and Belorussians as well as the Poles and the Jews – have never expressed the slightest desire to become citizens of the USSR or of the Ukrainian and Belorussian republics which are part of the USSR.“; cf. also José Bullejos: „La cuestión nacional en la nueva situación histórica“, *ibid.*, pp. 14-5.

315 „Fernando Castillo, asesinado“, *El Socialista* II/14 (1 May 1943), p. 11; see also Victor Serge: „Cuadernos Mexicanos 1940-1947“, *New Left Review* 82 (edición española, Sep-Oct 2013), p. 86. Serge identified Castillo as an „anti-Stalinist“ and recorded the reaction of *El Popular* on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April that the murder of Castillo was „lamentable“ as it appeared it must have been „a tragic error“.

series of violent attacks continued later that year when, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, a group of Spanish communists attacked a meeting at the *Orfeó Català* at calle República de Uruguay no. 49 in the historic city centre. Among the injured were Jordí Arquer, veteran of the POUM during the Spanish Civil War (and who, in December 1944, would be among the signatories of the *Pacto de Galeuzka* between the Galician, Basque and Catalan republican communities in Mexico) and Enrique Gironella, co-editor of the journal *Mundo*.<sup>316</sup>

The violent events of 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1943 at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* had been all the more shocking as they had occurred less than a week after the Spanish republican community in Mexico had organised a high-profile public event in honour of their host country by staging a celebratory lunch for the Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho at the *Casino Militar* in the north of *Parque de Chapultépec* on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1943. The event was designed to present a mirror opposite to the reception in honour of Ávila Camacho which the Spanish-nationalist business community had staged at the *Casino Español* two years earlier.<sup>317</sup> Beyond the public demonstration of gratitude and loyalty on the part of the Spanish-republican community in exile towards Mexico, the event showcased an image of unity across all political sectors of the Spanish community of exile. Among the 1,500, 2,000 or 2,500 guests in attendance<sup>318</sup> were no representatives of the nationalist ex-patriate Spanish colony, such as the *Casino Español* or the *Centro Asturiano*, but instead practically all social and political institutions, clubs, and associations which had been created by the republican Spanish community in exile in Mexico City (and beyond), including the Spanish and Catalan Communist Parties (PCE and PSUC), the anarcho-syndicalist CNT, and the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* – precisely those groups which would literally be at each others' throats only a few days later. The occasion was presided over by the ex-governor of Albacete, Arturo Cortés, and included speeches by Dr. Manuel Márquez for the association of Spanish medical doctors in Mexico (the *Ateneo Ramón y Cajal*), general José Miaja, and the president of the Spanish Cortes, Diego Martínez Barrio before Ávila Camacho praised the alliance between Mexico and the Spanish republicans which he described as of mutual benefit.<sup>319</sup> One prominent absentee from this prominent celebration, however, was

316 Victor Serge: „Cuadernos Mexicanos 1940-1947“, *New Left Review* 82 (edición española, Sep-Oct 2013), pp. 90-1; cf. the report on „Pact of Galeuzka“ (26 Jan 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

317 Cf. *La Colonia Española ante el Presidente de Méjico* (México D.F., 1941).

318 The reports of the number of people attending display a diverse range of estimates: „La Emigración rinde Homenaje a México“, *Solidaridad Obrera* II/23 (3 Apr 1943), p. 1; „El grandioso acto que reafirmó la alianza entre los pueblos de España y México“ (with photographs), *España Popular* IV/129 (2 Apr 1943), p. 1 & 3; the report „Spanish Refugee Groups in Mexico City tender a Luncheon to President Avila Camacho“ by Harold D. Finley (5 Apr 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P – 800PolishRefugees, s. fol.

319 See the publication of proceedings including photographs and full transcripts of speeches: *Homenaje de los republicanos españoles a México en la persona de su presidente Excelentísimo señor General de División don Manuel Avila Camacho* (México D.F., 1943).



noted by the observers of the intelligence unit of the US embassy: While former Spanish republican prime minister Juan Negrín had sent his greetings from his exile in London<sup>320</sup>, his socialist adversary Indalecio Prieto, “although a place had been reserved for him, [...] was not present”, and the *Círculo Cultural “Pablo Iglesias”* associated with Prieto's current of Spanish socialism in exile was the only Spanish republican organisation in Mexico not listed among the subscribing associations.<sup>321</sup> While the celebration was widely covered in the Mexican press, speculations arose about the reasons for this obvious snub against the Mexican president, and the US embassy observed:

Referring doubtless to the alleged disappearance of JARE funds which had been brought to Mexico under the charge of Prieto before they were finally taken into custody by the Mexican government, *La Prensa* rebuked “croesus” Prieto for the excessive pride which prevented his attendance.<sup>322</sup>

The periodicals of the Spanish community in exile were treading much more carefully: *Adelante*, the journal of the *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”*, ignored the occasion altogether, and their *negrinista* rivals of *El Socialista* only referred to the necessity of “the abdication of personal ambition, the eradication of harmful *caudillismo*, and the search for those concrete bases upon which we all can live together.”<sup>323</sup> In April, after the violent clashes at their domicile at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano*, the Spanish anarchists commented cryptically:

In this comment, we wish to confirm our position with regard to recent incidents that occurred in the bosom of the emigration and which we had to make public at an opportune moment. We do not retract anything of what we said. Therefore we reject the deceptive

320 Ibid., s. p.: „una adhesión significativa“.

321 Report „Spanish Refugee Groups in Mexico City tender a Luncheon to President Avila Camacho“ by Harold D. Finley (5 Apr 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P – 800PolishRefugees, p. 1; *Homenaje de los republicanos españoles a México en la persona de su presidente Excelentísimo señor General de División don Manuel Avila Camacho* (México D.F., 1943), s. p.

322 Report „Spanish Refugee Groups in Mexico City tender a Luncheon to President Avila Camacho“ by Harold D. Finley (5 Apr 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P – 800PolishRefugees, p. 3. This comment referred to the transfer of JARE funds to the government-controlled *Comisión Administradora del Fondo de Auxilios a los Republicanos Españoles* (CAFARE) in November 1942; cf. Aurelio Velázquez Hernández: *La Otra Cara del Exilio: Los organismos de ayuda a los republicanos españoles en México (1939-1949)*, tesis doctoral, Universidad de Salamanca, Facultad de Geografía e Historia (2012), pp. 499-508. Immediately before the celebratory lunch for Ávila Camacho, Prieto and Carlos Esplá of the *Izquierda Republicana* had been dismissed from their positions at the *Financiera Hispano Mexicana* on orders from the Mexican government which, in turn, led to the resignation of José Andreu Abelló of the *Ezquerria Republicana Catalana* and the socialist Eusebio Rodrigo, see: “Expulsiones y Dimisiones”, *Adelante* II/28 (15 Mar 1943), p. 4.

323 „Homenaje al Sr. Presidente M. Avila Camacho“, *El Socialista* II/14 (1 May 1943), p. 10.

interpretations of certain emigrants, above all of the one who slapped the event [the lunch for Ávila Camacho] in the face, which meant that things became manifest which should remain private [...]<sup>324</sup>

Given that this comment referred to “recent incidents” among the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City and to the “slap in the face” for the Mexican president, it became evident that the intended show of cross-party unity among the Spanish political refugees represented nothing more than a public façade behind which fundamental conflicts were brewing. During April, the Spanish republican community in exile celebrated the 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Spanish Republic separately: on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April, the *Centro Republicano Español* hired the *Frontón México* directly opposite of the *Monumento a la Revolución* in the *Tabacalera* for a banquet of about 600 guests<sup>325</sup>, while the *Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas* (JSU) simultaneously held their own anniversary banquet in memory of their foundation in 1936 for about 250 invited guests at the domicile of the *Amics de Catalunya* at calle República del Salvador no. 73.<sup>326</sup> The pro-communist faction of Spanish exile reiterated their commitment to the restoration of the Spanish Republic on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1943 in the form of a manifesto.<sup>327</sup> The May Day celebrations passed in a similar fashion, already established the year before: the pro-Soviet Spanish political and trade union organisations participated in the Mexican May Day demonstrations in the *Centro Histórico* before congregating, once again, in the Hotel “Biltmore” at calle Ramos Arizpe no. 27 directly opposite to the *Frontón México* and the *Monumento a la Revolución*<sup>328</sup>, while Indalecio Prieto delivered his already customary speech to the *Centro Republicano Español* at the *Palacio de Mármol* at calle Tacuba no. 15.<sup>329</sup> His faction of Spanish socialists also continued to denounce the execution of Alter and Erlich by reporting about protest activities in New York.<sup>330</sup>

One week later, it was the German movement of *Alemania Libre* which captured the attention of the public by staging its first congress at the prestigious Hotel “Regis” at Avenida Juárez no. 73 to the west of the *Alameda Central*. The event lasted for two days during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of May 1943 and was later

324 „La Emigración rinde Homenaje a México“, *Solidaridad Obrera* II/23 (3 Apr 1943), p. 1.

325 „XII Aniversario. Banquete conmemorativo del 14 de Abril“, *Adelante* II/30 (15 Apr 1943), p. 3.

326 „Las J.S.U. celebran del VII aniversario de su creación“, *España Popular* IV/132 (16 Apr 1943), p. 3.

327 „A los Españoles“ (14 Apr 1943) at AEM, Archivo Personal Tomás Bilbao, impresos sueltos I, fol. 75.

328 „La gran manifestación del 1o. de Mayo“, *España Popular* IV/135 (7 May 1943), p. 4; „El Primero de Mayo en México“, *El Socialista* II/15 (Jun 1943), p. 4.

329 „España después de la Guerra. Conferencia pronunciada en el Círculo Cultural »Pablo Iglesias« de México por Indalecio Prieto“, *Adelante* II/32 (15 May 1943), pp. 1-2.

330 „Cartas de Nueva York. El fusilamento de Erlich y Alter“, *Adelante* II/31 (1 May 1943), p. 2.

published verbatim in German to be disseminated among the German colonies across Latin America.<sup>331</sup> The event was notable for the presence of numerous representatives of the Mexican government: the secretary general of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* Adolfo Ruiz Cortines (who would later serve as president of Mexico between 1952 and 1958), José Muñoz Cota in representation of the Mexican minister for national defence, former president Lázaro Cárdenas, a representative of the governor of the *Distrito Federal*, Alejandro Gómez Maganda, and representatives of the foreign ministry, the ministries of public transport and of communication, of the attorney general, the ministry of public education, and several Mexican trade unions.<sup>332</sup> After a brief commemoration of the victims of the German Nazi regime by Anna Seghers, the president of *Alemania Libre* Ludwig Renn presented a general report on the activities of the organisation, and Alexander Abusch presented the publications which, since April 1942, also included a German-speaking supplement *Der Deutsch-Mexikaner* which was directed at the German ex-patriate community in Mexico.<sup>333</sup> The leader of the German communists in exile in Mexico, Paul Merker, then outlined the international situation and prospects of a Latin American organisation of *Alemania Libre* while stressing that no immediate socialist regime should be erected in post-war Germany – evidently an attempt to broaden the basis for the organisation beyond the pro-Soviet faction of German exile in Mexico.<sup>334</sup> Leo Zuckermann spoke as the legal expert of the organisation on issues of nationality and the legal status of “enemy aliens” which also applied to the anti-fascist Germans in Mexico and contained the potential for conflicts with the Mexican authorities.<sup>335</sup> On the second day, K.B. Wolter reported on the rather mixed resonance of *Alemania Libre* among the ex-patriate German colony in Mexico (which did not yet engage with the organisation in substantial numbers), the political refugees who represented the vast majority of activists, the German-speaking Jewish emigration which, again, did not always approve of the politics of *Alemania Libre*, and the Austrian community which had chosen to organise separately. In this context, he raised the delicate issue of the perceived “radicalism” of some of the leading personnel of the organisation which appeared

331 *Unser Kampf gegen Hitler. Protokoll des ersten Landeskongresses der Bewegung „Freies Deutschland“ in Mexiko, 8. und 9. Mai 1943, Hotel Regis, México, D.F.*, ed. by Bewegung Freies Deutschland (México, D.F., 1943); cf. invitations, the programme, and related correspondence at AGN, Fondo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1145, exp. 704/297; cf. „El primer congreso de los Alemanes Libres“, *Alemania Libre* II/9 (1 May 1945, p. 1; „Mexicanos y Alemanes Libres unidos por el ideal de la libertad“, *Alemania Libre* II/9 (15 May 1945), p. 1.

332 See *ibid.*, p. 11-6; see also the report of the intelligence unit of the US embassy (13 May 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, p. 1; see also the more elaborate report by W.K. Alshie (13 May 1943) at BAL, SAPMO, SgY 14/20, fols. 32-43.

333 *Unser Kampf gegen Hitler. Protokoll des ersten Landeskongresses der Bewegung „Freies Deutschland“ in Mexiko, 8. und 9. Mai 1943, Hotel Regis, México, D.F.*, ed. by Bewegung Freies Deutschland (México, D.F., 1943), pp. 21-39.

334 *Ibid.*, pp. 40-58.

335 *Ibid.*, pp. 61-77.

to present an obstacle to the recruitment of larger sections of the ex-patriate and the Jewish refugee communities – a thinly veiled reference to the predominance of German communists in *Alemania Libre*.<sup>336</sup> Rudolf Neuhaus (who emphasised that he spoke not in the name of the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* but in a personal capacity) briefly explained the reasons for maintaining a separate Austrian representation in exile in Mexico.<sup>337</sup> Paul Mayer's report on intellectual aspects of anti-fascist mobilisation, K.B. Wolter's critical characterisation of the ex-patriate social and cultural institutions of the German colony in Mexico, and Erich Jungmann's report on organisation and finances completed the series of the main presentations to the congress.<sup>338</sup>

The main topics for debate, however, consisted of three more problematic issues: Walter Janka, the director of the publishing house *El Libro Libre*, complained about a recent publication by the *Acción Democrática Internacional* (ADI) which denied the existence of a German anti-fascist resistance and described the “German problem” as one of “60 million murderers and robbers”.<sup>339</sup> Janka pointed out that it was the Nazi regime itself that tried to convey the impression that the Allies would not only fight against national socialism but against the whole German people as such, and he suggested that *Alemania Libre* reconsider the basis for cooperating with the ADI – a resolution that was passed by the congress and may have caused more than a little awkwardness, as the ADI's president, Raúl Cordero Amador, was present and about to address the congress of *Alemania Libre* with a short but extremely flowery message of solidarity, praising the achievements of German culture.<sup>340</sup> The second issue, which Ludwig Renn had already raised in its introductory remarks, concerned the fight against anti-Semitism. He warned not to underestimate the extent of the anti-Semitic campaign in the United States and, indeed, in Mexico: “It is for us an extremely unpleasant reminder, since precisely such things we could once read in Europe, before propaganda turned into slaughter. It is our task to confront these things.”<sup>341</sup> He referred to the position of Paul Merker who, in October 1942, has published a fundamental policy statement of the German communists with regard to the problem of anti-Semitism. In it, Merker had declared the struggle against anti-

336 Ibid., pp. 86-9.

337 Ibid., pp. 96-9.

338 Ibid., pp. 106-10, 111-25. and 135-41.

339 Ibid., pp. 92-3; cf. *El Problema Alemán*, ed. by Acción Democrática Internacional (México D.F., 1943).

340 *Unser Kampf gegen Hitler. Protokoll des ersten Landeskongresses der Bewegung „Freies Deutschland“ in Mexiko, 8. und 9. Mai 1943, Hotel Regis, México, D.F.*, ed. by Bewegung Freies Deutschland (México, D.F., 1943), p. 134; in its own press report of the congress in its journal *Libertad* of the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1943, the ADI eagerly defended *Alemania Libre* against all criticism from the *Liga Anti-Nazi de Habla Alemana*, possibly to save its relationship with *Alemania Libre*; see an excerpt translated into German and published by *Alemania Libre*, *ibid.* p. 162.

341 Ibid., pp. 25-6.

Semitism an integral part of the war against fascism, demanded the indemnification and restitution of looted Jewish property, and called for the Jewish emigration to join the cause of the Allies as active participants.<sup>342</sup> At the congress, Merker re-emphasised his position, pointed towards what he regarded as the economic support structure of anti-Semitism amongst the capitalist and land-owning classes, and called for a fundamental democratisation of post-war Germany which would simultaneously uproot any residues of anti-Semitism:

In the struggle for the realisation of democracy in Germany and the eradication of anti-Semitism all must participate, especially the German-Jewish refugees, not just in their personal interest, but also in the interest of those who today in Poland, after having been deported there by Hitler, are in permanent mortal danger under the most terrible conditions and in the interest of a real indemnification of the perpetrated crimes.<sup>343</sup>

Finally, a more delicate matter arose when K.B. Wolter declined the offer to join the new executive board of *Alemania Libre* on the grounds that, as a naturalised Mexican citizen, he was prohibited from joining any political organisation that would call into question his loyalty to the Mexican nation. Leo Zuckermann immediately replied that this provision of the Mexican law only applied to organisations that operated under or could be associated with directives or even orders of foreign governments which, as he emphasised, was not the case with *Alemania Libre* as an independent, legally Mexican organisation.<sup>344</sup> What Wolter implicitly addressed was the political hegemony of the German Communist Party over the organisation of *Alemania Libre* which could be understood as subject to the directives of the Communist International (the congress had passed an explicit message of solidarity with the Soviet Union), a charge which Zuckermann, himself a communist, immediately recognised and tried to dismiss. Only two weeks later, the executive committee of the Communist International in Moscow would issue a statement proposing its own dissolution – which arguably brought communist organisations across the globe under even more direct control by the Soviet government.

The congress of *Alemania Libre* received broad coverage in the Mexican press and also provoked one last public protest by the *Liga Anti-Nazi de Habla Alemana* (the former *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana*) in the periodical *Novedades* on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1943 which aimed at fighting the public impression that *Alemania Libre* represented the whole German-speaking anti-fascist community in Mexico.

342 Cf. Paul Merker: „Hitlers Antisemitismus und wir“, *Freies Deutschland* I/12 (Oktober 1942), pp. 9-11.

343 *Unser Kampf gegen Hitler: Protokoll des ersten Landeskongresses der Bewegung „Freies Deutschland“ in Mexiko, 8. und 9. Mai 1943, Hotel Regis, México, D.F.*, ed. by Bewegung Freies Deutschland (México, D.F., 1943), p. 103.

344 *Ibid.* pp. 148-9.

Enrique Gutmann and Heriberto de Grote complained that “in celebrating in these days a congress, a group which calls it self *Alemania Libre* and which is made up almost exclusively of members of a single party is trying to appear to the public as the authentic representation of the German anti-Nazi movement in the American continent.”<sup>345</sup> Likewise, the US embassy in Mexico was concerned about the extent to which the organisation would be able to capitalise on its public performance during the congress and develop into a quasi-representation of anti-fascist Germans in Mexico and the Western hemisphere, “in which role it will very likely seek to speak for Germany at the peace conference.”<sup>346</sup> But the US diplomats tried to dismiss the event as little more than ideological window-dressing coupled with the attraction of high-profile sociability:

In the first place, the Embassy does not consider that the First National Congress of the Free Germany Movement in Mexico was a national congress in the true sense of the words. In reality, it was nothing more than a mutual admiration society, in which everyone praised Ludwig Renn, and Ludwig Renn praised everyone. There was no real representation from the various States of the Republic, although there may have been a few scattered delegates from a few of the outlying districts. Furthermore, there was no voting on resolutions or matters of policy, no free discussion, no resolutions, no differences of opinion; the meeting was purely and simply a forum for the expressions of the views of Ludwig Renn, Paul Merker, and a carefully selected group of their associates. [...] It might be assumed at first glance that the Congress was enthusiastically and strongly supported by the Mexican Government, in view of the attendance of so many government officials and the effusive greetings conveyed to the Congress by various official and private Mexican citizens. The Embassy does not believe that this is the case. It is noteworthy that at the opening of the Congress, the President of the Republic and Members of the Cabinet did not attend personally, but were represented by minor officials. The truth is that Mexicans dearly love to attend conventions and make speeches. Add to this characteristic the fact that Mexico also dearly loves its role as a great liberal country which has always been in the forefront in the matter of affording refuge to political exiles, and it is not hard to understand how *Alemania Libre* was able to secure the apparent support and patronage of the Government of Mexico. In the Embassy's opinion, this means nothing, in the circumstances.<sup>347</sup>

345 Quoted after the report by W.K. Alshie (13 May 1943) at BAL, SAPMO, SgY 14/20, fol. 39.

346 Ibid., fol. 43; cf. Heike Bungert: *Das Nationalkomitee und der Westen: die Reaktion der Westalliierten auf das NKFD und die Freien Deutschen Bewegungen 1943-1948* (Stuttgart, 1997).

347 Ibid., fol. 40; cf. the correspondence of *Alemania Libre* with Mexican government officials in the run-up to the congress at BAL, NY4102/54, Nachlaß Paul Merker, fols. 12-33.

Nevertheless, the US diplomats recognised that “it is remarkable that an organisation which was created only a little over a year ago has been able in such a short time to impose itself on this continent as the authentic representative of German liberalism” and concluded that the organisation “deserves the close attention of all agencies of our Government”.<sup>348</sup> The first congress of *Alemania Libre* was followed by a dinner in honour of Ludwig Renn in the restaurant Chapultépec in the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1943, probably the event which finally prompted the US diplomats to characterise the weekend of the congress of *Alemania Libre* as an occasion where “everyone praised Ludwig Renn, and Ludwig Renn praised everyone.” Renn was joined by representatives of the ministry of education (as he had taught at the University of Morelia) and a representative of Vicente Lombardo Toledano while Anna Seghers offered the customary eulogy to Renn's achievements as a writer and commander of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War which was translated into Spanish by the Spanish communist law professor Wenceslao Roces. Pablo Neruda dedicated a poem to the German rivers to Renn, and K.B. Wolter spoke on behalf of the anti-fascist German ex-patriate colony in Mexico City. Brigadier general Francisco J. Aguilar praised the German people which he hoped to see liberated soon from the Nazi dictatorship, and the German choral association performed under the direction of Marcel Rubin. Congratulatory telegrams included greetings from a number of embassies in Mexico, the Spanish communists, the Society of Friends of the USSR, and the Mexican governing party PRM.<sup>349</sup>

During May of 1943, the news of the dissolution of the Comintern caused some excitement among the community of left-wing political refugees across the Western hemisphere, as a communist from Bogotá reported to Antonio Mije in Mexico City “a certain amount of confusion among the communists” while the *Acción Republicana Española* (ARE) reportedly saw the influence of the Spanish communists now limited, and the followers of the *Izquierda Republicana* “were worried lest the dissolution means that the Spanish Communist Party will join the Spanish Socialist Party.”<sup>350</sup> The anti-communist socialists of the group *Socialismo y Libertad* around Víctor Serge, Marceau Pivert, and Julián Gorkín commented on

348 Report by W.K. Alshie (13 May 1943) at BAL, SAPMO, SgY 14/20, fol. 43; the „close attention“ chiefly consisted of systematic surveillance and censorship of the mail and telegramme communications of the German communists in Mexico which the US embassy regarded as beneficial to their cause, see: *ibid.*, fol. 42; cf. Alexander Stephan: *Communazis. FBI Surveillance of German Emigré Writers* (New Haven / New York, 1995), pp. 223-77.

349 See *Unser Kampf gegen Hitler. Protokoll des ersten Landeskongresses der Bewegung „Freies Deutschland“ in Mexiko, 8. und 9. Mai 1943, Hotel Regis, México, D.F.*, ed. by Bewegung Freies Deutschland (México, D.F., 1943), pp. 164-6; the report by Manuel M. Barrera (11 May 1943) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 748, exp. 70, fols. 5-6, and the report by W.K. Alshie (13 May 1943) at BAL, SAPMO, SgY 14/20, fols. 38-9; cf. „Ludwig Renn zu Ehren“, *Freies Deutschland* II/8 (Jul 1943), p. 33.

350 Intercepted letter by „Pepe“ to „Antonio“ (29 May 1943) in memorandum on „Dissolution of the Third International“ by Clarence W. Moore (2 Aug 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, p. 2.

this decision in the very first issue of their new journal *Mundo*, which they launched in June 1943, with a greater degree of sober reflection:

By dissolving the III International, Stalin has brought about a fundamental vindication of the Axis, the Anticomintern pact, and has satisfied the desire of the majority of the allied nations. The problem consists in finding out whether this dissolution of the Communist International will be followed by the dissolution of the national parties, real dissolution or formal dissolution, with change of names etc. If the national parties continue to exist in one form or another, as it seems that this is what is going to happen, the decision taken will come down to a symbolic gesture while waiting for the circumstances to allow a reconstitution of the Comintern itself under the same name or any other. In that case, the dissolution will have come down to yet another farce.

The true consequences of this decision, so the commentary concluded, would only become clear “once the emissaries and the orders from Moscow will have reached the different countries, carrying precise instructions.”<sup>351</sup> Between the 29<sup>th</sup> of May and the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) held no fewer than four meetings of consultation at the theatre of the *Sindicato de Cinematografistas* at calle Orozco y Berra no. 15 in the district of *Guerrero* which, as their party periodical claimed, offered “a high example of the political capacity and of the practice of internal democracy.” Unsurprisingly, the dissolution of the Comintern was finally welcomed and “the nucleus of Spanish communists” left the theatre allegedly “extraordinarily fortified, with more security and enthusiasm than ever to dedicate their activity to the concrete implementation of the combative unity of the republican and patriotic forces against Franco and the *Falange*, and to the fight against the complete entry of Franco into the war.”<sup>352</sup> The statement issued on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June reiterated the party's dedication to the “Communist doctrines and principles” and represented, as an informant communicated to the US embassy, “a full and complete outline of the intentions of the Party and that, to his knowledge, no secret or unofficial statements will be issued.”<sup>353</sup>

Other international news concerned the Italian community in exile in Mexico City as the liberation of Tunis from Axis forces in May 1943 opened up the prospect of allied landings first in Sicily and then on the Italian mainland. The *Alianza Internacional “Giuseppe Garibaldi”* tried to position itself as a quasi-

351 „La Tercera Internacional“, *Mundo* I/1 (15 June 1943), p. 3; See also the discussions held at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1943: „La Disolución de la Tercera Internacional“, *Mundo* I/2 (15 Jul 1943), pp. 22-4, and *Mundo* I/3 (15 Aug 1943), pp. 26-7.

352 „Lo que demostró la Asamblea, *España Popular* IV/140 (11 Jun 1943), p. 1.

353 Memorandum on „Dissolution of the Third International“ by Clarence W. Moore (2 Aug 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, p. 3.



official representative body of the anti-fascist Italian forces that would support the Allies in the overthrow of Mussolini's regime and the eventual exit of Italy from the war, and on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1943, its president and secretary, Francesco Frola and Mario Montagnana, contacted the US embassy in Mexico City to ask for a meeting to exchange opinions "in relation to the current conflict and especially to the situation of Italy."<sup>354</sup> The US diplomats remained unimpressed, suspecting that the Italian refugees in exile were planning to ask for the support of the US government in returning to Italy as soon as possible, and the generally negative attitude of the US embassy can be deduced from a short internal memorandum commenting on this approach by the *Alianza "Garibaldi"*:

While this outfit is, I think, a communist one, I see no reason why these lads should not come around to see one of the secretaries and tell their story. For communist, if for not other reasons, I can see how they would like to get back to Italy as soon as the country folds up. It might be interesting to draw them out, however, to see what they have on their minds.<sup>355</sup>

While information about Francesco Frola himself seemed to suggest that he was held in high regard, for example by Frola's employer Efraín Buenrostro, the director of the Mexican national oil company *Pemex* (to whom the US consul Philip W. Bonsal referred as "our friend Buenrostro"), the standing policy of the US government did not allow for any substantial form of cooperation with the communist-dominated exile organisations: "Dr. Frola apparently is quite a respectable person but I do not see how he could be of any real help to us, and in view of the Department's standing instructions on the »free« movements, I believe that we should be very circumspect in any dealings we might have with them."<sup>356</sup> After the liberation of Sicily, the fall of Mussolini, and the invasion of mainland Italy, the *Alianza "Garibaldi"* made itself heard by a lengthy policy statement that expressed deep distrust against the Italian king Vittorio Emanuele III and the new prime minister Pietro Badoglio, and stated that these two "personalities with whom the United Nations have agreed an armistice, are as responsible as Mussolini for the disastrous deeds perpetrated by fascism for more than twenty years."<sup>357</sup> They demanded the suspension of the monarchy in Italy and the

354 Letter by *Alianza Internacional „Giuseppe Garibaldi“* to US ambassador Geroge S. Messersmith (17 Jun 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843Free Hungarians – 845E, s. fol.; on the same day, the *Alianza „Giuseppe Garibaldi“* complained to the censorship bureau in Washington about the ongoing mail surveillance directed against their organisation, *ibid.* s. fol.

355 Memorandum to Gibson and Birsley (18 Jun 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843Free Hungarians – 845E, s. fol.

356 Confidential information by US consul Philip W. Bonsal to the US ambassador (12 Jul 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843Free Hungarians – 845E, s. fol.; memorandum by William K. Ailshie (19 Jul 1943), *ibid.*, s. fol.

357 „Declaración de la Alianza Garibaldi sobre la situación italiana“ (14 Sep 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843Free Hungarians – 845E, p. 1.

establishment of a provisional government consisting of the political forces “of indisputable anti-fascist precedents”, the permission for all political refugees to return to Italy, an appeal to the Italian nation to join the fight of the United Nations in exchange for “concrete guarantees for Italy to be met in the post-war period with comprehension and justice”, and the opening of new fronts of war against Germany in Europe.<sup>358</sup> As far as the prospect for the Italian refugees of returning to Italy was concerned, the US embassy in Mexico City “made a non-committal reply to that communication stating that it was unaware of any facilities then existing for the transport to Italy of such persons.”<sup>359</sup> The hope of the activists of the *Alianza Internacional “Giuseppe Garibaldi”* for a speedy return to Italy was, thus, disappointed and turned into a drawn-out public campaign, for example in the form of a press conference held by the *Alianza “Garibaldi”* on the roof garden of the Hotel “Majestic” at Avenida Madero no. 73 adjacent to the *Zócalo* on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 1943. Frola, Montagnana, and Vittorio Vidali used the opportunity to declare the royal house of Savoy to be responsible for the situation in Italy and, while acknowledging “with gratitude the presence of the liberating allied forces”, to criticise the governing authorities of the liberated southern parts of Italy. Frola reiterated: “We desire to return to our country to take part in the solution of the Italian crisis, to aid in the formation of a true Italian army which will fight against our enemy of today, the Germans.” And Vidali assisted:

Italy [...] does not need tutelage, but aid. The political victory of de Gaulle and of general Tito demonstrates the reasoning of the people. We ask that we may be permitted to return to Italy, and that we are facilitated by boat, a plane, or whatever it is, so that we may join in with the fight for the liberation of our country and for the cause of the democratic nations.<sup>360</sup>

Vidali’s insistence, however, did not bear any fruit as the US diplomats were not inclined to facilitate the return of the Italian anti-fascists of the *Alianza Internacional “Giuseppe Garibaldi”* any time soon, and they had to wait beyond the end of the war in Europe before getting a chance to leave Mexico. Frola would be able to leave the port of Tampico with his wife Germania and their son Luis Enrique no sooner than almost three years later on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 1946 on the *Pemex* tanker “Minatitlán” bound for Rotterdam.<sup>361</sup>

Meanwhile, the political polarisation of the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City continued and developed into an entrenched opposition of the pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet camps of Spanish republicans. The practice of this political

358 Ibid., pp. 4-5.

359 Letter by Harold D. Finley (first secretary of US embassy) to US Secretary of State (15 Oct 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843Free Hungarians – 845E, p. 2.

360 „La Voz de los antifascistas“, *El Nacional* (11 Dec 1943).

361 Memorandum on Frola’s departure (21 Mar 1946) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800B, s. fol.

polarisation can be traced around political and cultural events during June 1943, particularly around the date of the second anniversary of the German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June. The date was of paramount importance for the pro-Soviet camp of political refugees in Mexico, and the Spanish community of pro-Soviet refugees staged a major public celebration of the Soviet Union and the Red Army in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June. Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho, Mexican defence minister and former president Lázaro Cárdenas, and other Mexican government departments had sent representatives to the event which thereby acquired a semi-official character in the public political discourse of exile in Mexico City. A close musical cooperation between the Mexican government and the Spanish community in exile was evident when the Mexican band of the defence ministry and the Spanish *Banda Madrid* performed the respective national anthems and thereby displayed “their enthusiastic collaboration which was rewarded by great applause.”<sup>362</sup> The Basque nationalist Tomás Bilbao directed the proceedings which included as speakers the coordinator of the communist and anarchist youth organisations in exile Serafín Aliaga, the socialist Veneranda Manzano of the *Círculo “Jaime Vera”*, Enrique Varela representing the Spanish Civil War veterans, the secretary general of the UGT José Rodríguez Vega, the writer and editor José Bergamín, the PSOE’s secretary Ramón Lamonedá, the former head of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Madrid Dr. Manuel Márquez, the vice-president of the Spanish *Cortes* Luis Fernández Clérigo, the Spanish republican ex-minister Bernardo Giner de los Ríos of the *Acción Republicana Española*, his former cabinet colleagues Juan Lluhi of the *Ezquerria Catalana* and Segundo Blanco, and the Spanish communist leader Vicente Uribe, who all praised the gallantry and heroism of the Red Army and the peoples of the Soviet Union. Apart from Giner de los Ríos, only the former president of the Spanish republican constitutional court, Álvaro de Albornoz, could be associated with the anti-communist *prietistas* of the *Centro Republicano Español* as he recalled his “indignation” when he first heard of the German-Soviet pact of August 1939, “but later”, as the communist paper *España Popular* reported with evident delight, “he understood that the same cloud, which had prevented many from seeing clearly the Spanish problem, had prevented him from seeing the reality of the politics of the Soviet Union.” He praised the Red Army as, at once, soldiers of the republic and of the revolution:

Those Russian and republican soldiers are to us, who we do not fight for an old fatherland or for a historic republic but for the republic of tomorrow and for a new world, the guarantee that victory will not be a victory for the dynasties, for the kings who hope for another Congress of Vienna and the restitution of their crowns, and not for the two hundred families of monopolists who were in power in every country before the war, but for the peoples.<sup>363</sup>

362 „El grandioso homenaje de los republicanos españoles a la Unión Soviética“, *España Popular* IV/142 (25 Jun 1943), p. 3.

363 Ibid.

If these words sounded like an offer for a common political platform between the pro-Soviet camp of Spanish republican refugees in Mexico and the anti-communist camp of the *Centro Republicano Español*, this fourth week of June also saw a number of cultural events scheduled to coincide with the celebration of the Soviet Union and the Red Army that struck a decidedly different tone among the Spanish community in the city. The Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at the National University of Mexico staged a week-long series of lectures in its *Anfiteatro Bolívar* at calle Justo Sierra no. 16 in the *Centro Histórico* to commemorate the centenary of the birth of the Spanish novelist Benito Pérez Galdós, a towering figure of Spanish romanticism who, for a time, had been a prominent proponent of republicanism, critical of the role of the Catholic Church in Spain. His friendship with the party's founder Pablo Iglesias made him an important cultural reference point for Spanish republican socialists in exile. Speakers included the writer, dramaturg and faculty director Julio Jiménez Rueda, the poet and former Spanish diplomat Enrique Diez Canedo, the Mexican writer and president of the *Colegio de México* Alfonso Reyes, the author Ceferino Palencia of the *Centro Republicano Español*, the Mexican writer Agustín Yañez, the Catalan poet Josep Carner, and the Mexican writer and academic Francisco Monterde. The high profile of the speakers involved certainly drew substantial crowds during this fourth week of June, and the socialist paper *Adelante* of the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"* awkwardly excused this scheduling choice with the fact that Pérez Galdós' actual centenary on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May "has passed in a silence which is difficult to justify."<sup>364</sup> The scheduling conflicts of this week became even clearer when the *Centro Republicano Español* chose Tuesday, the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, the second anniversary of the German attack on the Soviet Union, to stage a lecture by the eminent Mexican lawyer Raúl Carrancá y Trujillo on the social and cultural characteristics of the American hemisphere. Carrancá was involved in the persecution of Ramón Mercader, the assassin of Trotsky and Spanish communist in exile who, by that time, was still only known by his pseudonym Jacques Mornard.<sup>365</sup> In his lecture, entitled "America, a new world", Carrancá praised the American synthesis as neither a continuation of European hegemony nor a post-colonial denial of European influence. "Anyone arriving from Europe", so the paper *Adelante* reported his argument, "who approaches it with prejudices will never penetrate its secret, but [it will be] easy for those who encounter it with a sincere and warm spirit." Carrancá, thus, tried to respond to the *hispanismo* of the Spanish *Falange* which wished to see the Spanish-speaking world to be united in a cultural community under Spanish leadership by a balance of economic Pan-Americanism and confident cultural Hispano-Americanism:

And history, of which we are the children, will bring us, once the war is over, days of full maturity. That which here in America and over

364 „Conferencias – en honor de B. Pérez Galdós“, *Adelante* II/35 (1 Jul 1943), p. 1.

365 Cf. the recollections of Niceto Alcalá Zamora y Castillo and the editor's note, in: *España desde México. Vida y testimonios de transterrados*, ed. by Ascención Hernández de León-Portilla (México D.F., 1978), p. 155.

there in Spain, once Spain returns to its own self, the noblest and most authoritative voices here and there will take as a starting point. That of Carrancá Trujillo is one of them.<sup>366</sup>

This celebration of occidentalism in the form of economic partnership with the United States and cultural diversity among free nations marked a clear counterpoint to the celebration of the social-revolutionary message of the celebrations of the Soviet Union at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* the night before. And the fact that this vision of westernisation of the trans-Atlantic partnership with the American hemisphere was propagated on the anniversary of the German attack on the Soviet Union suggested that at the *Centro Republicano Español* the perspective of “the West” was meant to supersede the calls for solidarity with the Soviet Union.

The fourth week of June of 1943 also held some tragic events for the German-speaking community in exile: on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, the German educationalist and former socialist member of the imperial *Reichstag* Otto Rühle died from heart failure at his home at calle Manuel Villalongín in the north of the district of *Cuauhtémoc*. In 1915, Rühle had been the first to follow the example of Karl Liebknecht in defying the domestic truce of the First World War by voting against the war budget. The following year he had been among the founders of the Spartacus League and continued his political career with the left-wing communist opposition to Leninism. Exiled to Mexico in 1935, he had worked for the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* in his specialist field of socialist education (which coincided with the ambitions of post-revolutionary educational reform in Mexico) but had long suffered from poor health. Just hours after his death, his widow, Alice Rühle-Gerstel, herself an accomplished writer and the translator of the works of Trotsky into German, threw herself out of the apartment window and died soon afterwards from her injuries.<sup>367</sup> On the same evening of the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, the audience of the German-speaking *Heinrich-Heine-Club* was awaiting a lecture by Rudolf Feistmann on “The downfall of the German officer corps”, advertised as a “sociology of the war criminal”.<sup>368</sup> Ludwig Renn presided over the event, but everybody still waited for the club’s president, the writer Anna Seghers, to arrive. The rain season in Mexico City had set in, and this evening appears to have seen particularly intense rainfall. Lenka Reinerová recalled the city as partly inundated and recreated the scene in a literary voice:

366 „América, un mundo nuevo“, *Adelante* II/35 (1 Jul 1943), p. 4.

367 „Otto y Alicia Rühle“, *Mundo. Socialismo y Libertad. Revista Mensual*, no. 2 (15 Jul 1943), pp. 30-1.; see also the report of their funeral attended by Julián Gorkín (POUM), Victor Serge, Kristal for the Polish *Bund* socialists, Franz Pfemfert, and the eulogy offered by the psychoanalyst Fritz Fränkel: „Adiós a Otto y Alicia“, *ibid.*, p. 31; cf. Lizette Jacinto Montes: „Alice Rühle-Gerstel y Otto Rühle. La experiencia del exilio político de izquierda en México 1935-1943“, *Historia Mexicana* 64/1 (253) (Jul-Sep 2014), pp. 159-242; Ead.: „Alice Rühle-Gerstel: Exilio y suicidio“, in: J. Opatrný (ed.): *Emigración Centroeuropea a América Latina IV. Emigración en testimonios y novelas* (Prag, 2006), Suplementum 17 (2000), pp. 143-57.

368 See *Heines Geist in Mexiko*, ed. by Heinrich-Heine-Klub (México D.F., 1946), p. 27; cf. the announcement in: *Freies Deutschland* II/8 (Jul 1943), p. 2.

In spite of everything, we arrive on time, or, to be more precise, too early. Anna Seghers, scheduled to open the proceedings, has not yet arrived. I keep standing at the window. Like a web of shiny silvery threads the rain hangs over the city. Just occasionally a car is making its way through the floods. Anna still has not arrived. “She is surely coming”, the old Martin says, when someone suggests that perhaps the rain had held her back home, “otherwise she would have phoned. She does not let us just wait here.” [...] “Has Anna finally arrived?” [Egon Erwin] Kisch is slowly getting restless. Indeed the whole club is now assembled, only Anna Seghers, the president, is missing. “We cannot wait any longer, we have to start”, Bodo [Uhse] says. “The hall is full, and since the people have come in spite of the weather, we cannot keep them waiting indefinitely.” “That’s right.” [Alexander] Abusch agrees. “Seems as if Anna won’t come any more. Probably the rain kept her back.” [...] On Paseo de la Reforma, a broad boulevard flanked by high trees, the street lamps are swaying under the pounding rain. Few cars and even fewer people are hurrying through the wet darkness. Suddenly, a lone passer-by stumbles while crossing the road. He looks down. “My god, someone’s lying there!” The lone pedestrian, an emigrant from Poland, bends over and turns the figure lying [in the street]. He recoils in horror. No, on this evening, Anna Seghers was no longer able to attend the Heinrich-Heine-Club.<sup>369</sup>

Anna Seghers had been hit by a vehicle while crossing the Paseo de la Reforma after leaving her home in calle Río de la Plata no. 25 in the district of *Cuauhtémoc* (the same district where hours earlier the tragedy of the Rühles had occurred) on her way to the *Schiefersaal* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21. She suffered severe injuries to the head, was taken to a Red Cross hospital in calle Monterrey in the district of *Roma*, and remained in critical condition in a coma for weeks.<sup>370</sup> The circumstances of her accident have never been fully explained, but even though there exists no evidence to suggest anything other than a traffic accident, the city was soon abuzz with rumours of an underhand ploy to assassinate the author of “The Seventh Cross” who had achieved international fame which the Hollywood adaption (with Spencer Tracy in the lead) would further cement the following year. As unfounded as such suspicions were, the very fact that such a sinister scenario was considered possible reveals an atmosphere of heightened political tensions bordering on paranoia among the German-speaking community of exile.<sup>371</sup>

369 Lenka Reiner[ovà]: *Grenze geschlossen* (Berlin, 1958), pp. 305-6.

370 Cf. Wilhelm von Sternburg: *Anna Seghers – ein Portrait* (Berlin, 2012), p. 13; see also: Steffi Spira-Ruschin: *Trab der Schaukelpferde. Aufzeichnungen im Nachhinein* (Berlin/Weimar, 1984), pp. 231-2; cf. the doctor’s bulletin (13 Jul 1943): „Anna Seghers“, *Freies Deutschland* II/9 (Aug 1943), p. 2.; „Ana Seghers“, *Alemania Libre* II/14 (15 Jul 1943), p. 1.

371 Cf. Lenka Reiner[ovà]: *Grenze geschlossen* (Berlin, 1958), p. 307.

Other players of the transnational politics of exile were, indeed, followed and watched closely, as in the case of Helen Bryan who visited Mexico City during the fourth week of June 1943. Bryan was the administrative secretary of Edward K. Barsky, the leading figure of the US-American Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee (JAFRC) which since March 1942 raised funds in support of European political refugees in Europe, North Africa, and across the western hemisphere.<sup>372</sup> The organisation was suspected by the US-authorities to function as a communist front organisation, and Bryan's visits to Mexico City were duly observed by US intelligence officers of the US embassy. She usually stayed at the Hotel "Montejo" at Paseo de la Reforma no. 240 in the district of *Juárez* for a week at a time and had meetings with the relevant bodies of refugee relief in the city, above all the Mexican FOARE.<sup>373</sup> On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 1943 she visited the FOARE headquarters at calle Artes no. 50 in the *Tabacalera* and, the following day, also paid a visit to the building at calle Tamaulipas no. 127 in the district of *Condesa*.<sup>374</sup> It is possible that the US-American agents confused the house number with the neighbouring building of no. 129 (the entrance doors are located directly adjacent to one another) where Paul Merker, the leader of the German group of communists in Mexican exile, lived. Merker was known for handling the financial support provided by international aid organisations to the German communists with some degree of obscurity and obsessive personal control.<sup>375</sup> Such philanthropic aid for the European refugees would easily be construed as clandestine subversive work by a communist underground network, and both Barsky and Bryan later faced charges by the US House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1946.<sup>376</sup> On the 30<sup>th</sup> of June of 1943, the leadership of both *Alemania Libre* and the *Alianza Internacional "Giuseppe Garibaldi"* were placed by US authorities on a censorship watch list which meant that all cross-border communications that related to their political work were stopped by the US authorities, as were any payments made by money orders, cheques, or in cash in either direction.<sup>377</sup>

During the summer of 1943, the cause of the smaller nationalities in exile in Mexico was addressed by two events held at the prestigious location of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*: On the 6<sup>th</sup> of July, the *Asociación Checoslovaco-*

372 On the JAFRC, Barsky, and Bryan cf. Phillip Deery: *Communism and McCarthyism in Cold War New York* (New York, 2014), pp. 14-5.

373 See the memo by Gus T. Jones recording her stay in Mexico City during August 1942 (dated 23 Oct 1942) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800M-800Ref, s. fol.

374 See the report by Clarence W. Moore (28 Jul 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jun-Aug, s. fol.

375 See the statement by Johann Schmidt (i.e. László Radványi) of 19 Aug 1952 to the Zentrale Partei-Kontrollkommission (ZPKK) of the East-German SED at BAL, SAPMO, DY30 IV 2/4 117, fol. 265.

376 See Deery, *Communism and McCarthyism*, p. 17-8.

377 See the list and the accompanying letter by George A Gordon to Byron Price (30 June 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A-843C, s. fol.

*Mexicana*, represented by its president Theo Schwarz and Karel Wendl, the *Chargé d’Affairs* of the Czech legation in Mexico, joined the stage with José Altamirano representing the Mexican *Secretario de Gobernación* Miguel Alemán, Jaime Torres Bordet for the Mexican Foreign Ministry, Tomás Sánchez Hernández for the Mexican defence minister and former president Lázaro Cárdenas, sub-secretary of defence Ramón Rodríguez Familiar, the Soviet ambassador Konstantin Oumansky, the French representative of de Gaulle’s Free French movement, Maurice Garreau-Dombasle, Fidel Velázquez for the Mexican federation of trade unions CTM, Gabriel Leyva for the Mexican *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC), the editor of *El Popular* Alejandro Carrillo, and the governing party PRM’s press secretary Juan Manuel Carrillo who represented its president Antonio Villalobos. The occasion for this prominent public event was the commemoration of the first anniversary of the destruction of the Czech town of Lidice in 1942 to which several Mexican towns and villages had responded by taking up the name “Lidice” in addition to their Mexican place names. Under the slogan “Mexico and Czechoslovakia united in war and peace” the meeting was opened by the Mexican Navy’s orchestra with a rendition of Tchaikovsky’s “Overture 1812” before Oscar Stern, the vice-president of the *Asociación Checoslovaco-Mexicana*, celebrated the Czech-Mexican partnership in fighting for “a new world which we desire and for which we are fighting with the blood of our citizens; a world in which there will be unity and liberty.” He closed his remarks by assuring that “Lidice has not died, as neither has died the Potrero del Llano [one of the two Mexican tanker vessels sunk by German submarines in May 1942]; they are our guides and our symbols in this conflict.”<sup>378</sup> Juan Manuel Carrillo reaffirmed the solidarity of the Mexican government with the Czech people and expressed the hope that “before the second anniversary of the destruction of Lidice the republican flag will once again fly over the national palace in Prague.” Karel Wendl spoke about the way in which the suffering of Lidice had resulted in a wave of solidarity and anti-fascist mobilisation across the western hemisphere as well as in the USSR. Maurice Garreau-Dombasle promised in the name of the Free French that the post-war order would see the restoration of Czechoslovakia with all necessary international guarantees, and the Czech writer and journalist Lenka Reinerová called for the international solidarity of women against the subjugation of Czechoslovakia under Nazi rule. A speech by Alejandro Carrillo concluded the event linking the fight for Czech freedom to the global fight for the unconditional surrender of Nazism: “We will achieve the complete liberation of nations, and that of Czechoslovakia will transform Lidice, its hamlet of martyrs, into an altar where tomorrow people of all latitudes will gather to lay down at it their token of just and perennial gratitude.”<sup>379</sup>

378 „Homenaje a Lidice“, *El Checoslovaco en México* II/6-7 (Jun-Jul 1943), p. 1.

379 *Ibid.*, p. 4; further pictures of the event in Mexican newspaper clippings „Acto en Honor de Lidice“ (8 Jul 1943) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/4, s. fol.



The following day, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, the *Acción Democrática Internacional* (ADI) together with the Mexican governing state party PRM staged an “Homage to the heroic Chinese people” at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*. The occasion marked the sixth anniversary of the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937 at the Marco Polo Bridge. Again, the orchestra of the Mexican navy opened the event before Antonio Villalobos spoke for the PRM alongside the ADI’s secretary general Severin Ferandel expressing their wish for the restoration of China to a position corresponding to its major contribution to the Allied war effort against the Axis powers. The Chinese ambassador Ching Tien Ku responded (in English) with his profound gratitude for the expression of solidarity at such a prominent location. While the US ambassador and the representatives of the *Comité Israelita*, the *Acción Republicana Austriaca* (ARAM), the *Asociación Checoslovaco-Mexicana*, the Free French, and other organisations sent messages of support, the Soviet ambassador was evidently absent which may have had to do with the so far strictly neutral position of the Soviet government towards the western Allies’ war against the Japanese in Asia.<sup>380</sup>

The Soviet ambassador Konstantin Oumansky enjoyed increasing popularity among the diplomatic corps of the Mexican capital, but even more so among the circles of left-wing political refugees in Mexico City. Oumansky was universally described as charismatic, highly educated, and eloquent, even rivalling the commanding public image of the Mexican trade union leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano. On the occasion of a luncheon organised by the Mexican *Comité de Ayuda a Rusia a Guerra*, the Chinese ambassador attended while the US-American and the British counterparts let themselves be represented by minor embassy officials. The press was not invited, as the *Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra* did not wish this event, attended by about 60 persons, to be perceived as an official engagement. The US-American representatives recorded Oumansky’s remarks about the international situation and the progress of the war with evident reservations, particularly as the Soviet ambassador raised concerns and complaints about the anti-Hitler alliance which he portrayed as uneven: Before the news of the allied invasion of Sicily had reached Mexico, Oumansky “talked at considerable length as to the necessity of a Second Front in Europe.”

He stated that Russia is carrying on her shoulders a heavy burden which involves much more than her actual part in the war. Also that the war could be brought to an end much sooner if all the enemies of Germany would throw all their power into the fight now. He thanked the Comité [de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra] for the work they were doing, adding that the Russian people are suffering tremendously in this war with relatively little help from the outside because there

380 See the programme at AGN, Archivo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, exp. 550/12, s. fol., and under „Palacio de Bellas Artes“, *Libertad. Órgano de Acción Democrática Internacional* III/109 (5 Jul 1943), p. 4; the report on the meeting: „El Homenaje en Bellas Artes al heroico pueblo chino“, *ibid.* III/110 (12 Jul 1943), p. 7.

seems to be the general idea that the Russians can »take it« and in »certain« parts of the world there is the idea that it does not matter if »a Russian dies«.

The evening closed with a show of a documentary film on the battle of Stalingrad in the projection room of the Metro Goldwyn Mayer Studios on Paseo de la Reforma, and the US-American observers noted that president Ávila Camacho had been impressed by a similar film show and that the Soviet embassy relied heavily on this propaganda medium which stood out as superior to other productions, “specially in view of the present limited production of American films.”<sup>381</sup> Clearly, the diplomatic presence of the USSR in Mexico and its active public relations policies were regarded by the US diplomatic officials as a challenge to the US hegemony in the western hemisphere, particularly at a time when the victory at Stalingrad had equipped the Soviet leadership with a renewed sense of confidence in their victory over Nazi Germany and provided an enhanced international standing. In the context of the largely pro-Marxist orientation of the Mexican trade union movement still inspired by its former leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano, such a development within the diplomatic circles of Mexico City caused some concern among the US embassy staff.

At around the same time when the US embassy officials recorded their observations of the Soviet diplomatic activities in the Mexican capital, the Spanish community of exile in the city commemorated the seventh anniversary of the nationalist military revolt led by Francisco Franco against the Spanish Republic in 1936. The main event took place on Sunday, the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, in the *Teatro de los Electricistas* at calle Artes no. 45 in the *Tabacalera*. A broad spectrum of speakers addressed the audience for a variety of republican organisations: Serafin Aliaga spoke for the coordination committee of the socialist and libertarian youth organisations about the continuing struggle against the Franco regime, Abel Belilla paid homage to the historical legacy of the *Partido Federal* in the republican cause, Edmundo Lorenzo of the *Círculo “Jaime Vera”* represented the socialist negrinistas, recalled the funding campaign for an ambulance for the Red Army, and rejected any suggestions of a restoration of the Spanish monarchy (which was proposed at the time by the Spanish crown pretender Juan), Ángel Álvarez spoke for the Spanish communists and emphasised the importance of unity among the Spanish republicans as well as among the Allies of the anti-Hitler coalition. Álvaro Pascual Leone of the *Unión Republicana* added some critical remarks about errors committed by the Spanish republicans in the past, Luis Fernández Clérigo represented the *Unidad Republicana* and compared the Franco dictatorship to the Quisling regime in Norway and placed Spain alongside the European nations subjugated by the Nazi regime, Mariano Cardona Rosell spoke for the *Comité Nacional* of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist of the CNT and did not fail to mention the specific anarchist

381 Memorandum on „Diplomatic Mission of USSR in Mexico“ (20 Jul 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, pp. 4-5.

experience of the Spanish Civil War – which led the communist journal *España Popular* to characterise his speech as “rather unfortunate and inadequate for a celebration of unity.” Daniel Aguiano of the socialist union UGT demanded unity among the Spanish trade union movement, before Álvaro de Albornoz of the *Izquierda Republicana*, former president of the Spanish republican constitutional court, expressed his satisfaction with the event that had demonstrated the unity of the Spanish republican movement in exile and reminded the audience of the fate of the Spanish people under the Franco regime.<sup>382</sup>

On the same day, the *Hogar de la Juventud*, the socialist youth club of the Spanish community in exile in Mexico City located at calle Versailles no. 50 in the district of *Juárez*, staged a dinner to commemorate their veterans of the Spanish Civil War. Among the attendees were former members of the Spanish republican government such as Antonio Velao of the *Izquierda Republicana*, the Basque nationalist Tomás Bilbao, Vicente Uribe of the Spanish communists, Segundo Blanco of the socialist *Círculo Jaime Vera*”, José Moix, as well as Daniel Anguiano for the UGT, José Marlés for the Catalan communists of the PSUC, and José Ignacio Mantecón, ex-governor of Aragón and leading member of the *Comisión Española de Ayuda a la URSS*. After the president of the *Hogar de la Juventud*, Miguel Prieto, opened the proceedings of the festive dinner, Antonio Velao celebrated the contribution of the Spanish socialist youth movement to the republican war effort during the Spanish Civil War. Dr. Manuel Márquez, president of the *Ateneo Ramón y Cajal* of the Spanish medical profession in exile in Mexico, welcomed the occasion to associate with the Spanish youth in exile. Coronel Pedro Azcárate highlighted the opportunities provided by the *Asociación de Militares Profesionales* to train and prepare for the reconquest of Spain. Segundo Blanco declared the solidarity with the Spanish youth, the communist leader Vicente Uribe defended the legitimacy of the republican struggle against Franco, and Federico Melchor, leading functionary of the socialist youth, warned of disunity among the republican ranks which threatened to undermine the anti-fascist cause of Spanish republicanism in exile.<sup>383</sup>

Significantly, this ostensible public demonstration of unity among the pro-Soviet Spanish community in exile could not alter the fact that the Spanish community was far from united in their republican campaign. The representatives of the socialists *prietistas* of the *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”* did not attend any of the meetings, and the *Orfeó Català* chose the very same evening at their social

382 „El gran acto en qué se conmemoró la lucha del pueblo el 18 de Julio“, *España Popular* IV/147 (30 Jul 1943), p. 3; a picture of the audience at the *Teatro de los Electricistas* was printed on page 1.

383 „Los jóvenes ex-combatientes de la República conmemoran el 18 de Julio“, *España Popular* IV/146 (23 Jul 1943), p. 3; in August, the *Hogar de la Juventud* at calles Versailles no. 50 became the subject of a full report, including a list of its c. 270 affiliated members and organisations, by Clarence W. Moore of the intelligence unit of the US embassy, see the report: „Hogar de la Juventud Española“ (6 Aug 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) June-Aug, s. fols.

centre at calla República de Uruguay no. 49 in the historic city centre to commemorate the Catalan poet and artist Apeles Mestres who, by coincidence, had died in Barcelona during the very first hours of the Spanish Civil War at the age of 81. This cultural event stood in marked contrast to the political mobilisation of Spanish republicanism across the city and also demonstrated the reluctance of the Catalan ex-patriate community in the city to engage with the polarised ideological conflict over the legacy of the Civil War.<sup>384</sup> The following day, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July, the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50, on the other hand, held its own commemoration of the republican resistance to the nationalist coup of 1936, “unforgettable and glorious in the revolutionary history of Spain; a date which served to demonstrate to the entire world the revolutionary maturity and the deep longing for liberation on the part of the Spanish proletariat” and advertised a meeting “celebrating with healthy joy the victory [of the 19<sup>th</sup> of July], not ephemeral for being less glorious, of the workers over despotism...”.<sup>385</sup> This variety of events demonstrated the deep divisions and mutual exclusivity of the commemorative calendar of the Spanish community in exile which claimed notions of “unity” and “victory” against the dysfunctional reality of republican mobilisation in exile in Mexico City. The commemorations came to a close on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July of 1943 with a meeting attended by a group largely identical with the speakers of the public commemoration four days earlier at the *Teatro de los Electricistas*, also including Dr. Manuel Márquez and the president of the ADI, Raúl Cordero Amador. They directed a message to the US embassy congratulating the US forces on their successful invasion of Sicily and simultaneously reminding the US diplomats of the promises of the Atlantic Charter which proposed self-determination of all peoples in choosing the form of their government.<sup>386</sup> The intention was to claim the inclusion of Spanish republicanism in the anti-Hitler alliance to prevent the Franco regime from continuing to claim its neutrality in the current conflict which, foreseeably now, would end in defeat for the Axis powers.

This telegramme to the US embassy coincided with the launch of a public campaign on the part of the pro-Soviet Spanish Left in preparation of what was to become the biggest, most prominent, and best-documented public event of the exiled Left in Mexico City: the *Convención de Solidaridad*. The preparations for the event were accompanied by a special news bulletin which described this upcoming international congress as a continuation of the activities launched in February 1940 by the *Conferencia Panamericana de Ayuda a los Refugiados Españoles*. Guests from across the American hemisphere were expected to build on the

384 Orfeo Català, Biblioteca, Activitats de l’Orfeo Català de Mèxic, 1940-1959 (18 Jul 1943), s. fol.

385 „Acto de Confraternización Confederal“, *Solidaridad Obrera* II/30 (19 Jul 1943), p. 7.

386 Telegramme to the US embassy (for transmission to the US President, 22 Jul 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P-800PolishRefugees, s. fol.

activities and experiences which contribute to the continental solidarity in support of the Spanish people in order to engage successfully in new activities of solidarity and new forms of aid, above all in support of the millions of human beings who live under the Franco regime subjected to a most brutal regime and of the hundreds of thousands of men and women who suffer repression, incarceration and monstrous sentences of imprisonment in the Francoist and Nazi prisons and concentration camps in Spain and in France.

The organising body for this event was the Mexican FOARE which called for the congregation of “all solidarity and aid committees, Mexican or Spanish, Spanish nuclei, national free movements and personalities friendly to the Spanish people.” The executive committee of FOARE, José Mancisidor, the treasurer of the *Comité Anti-Sinarquista* Carlos Zapata Vela, their press secretary and co-initiator of the SAURSS César Garizurieta, captain Roberto Vega González, the FOARE’s treasurer Dr. Fernando H. Carmona, and executive secretary Luis P. Maya (reportedly an alias for the Basque communist Ricardo Castellote Lastra<sup>387</sup>), thereby announced three objectives for the proceedings of the *Convención de Solidaridad*: a stock-taking of past and existing activities of the solidarity movement for the Spanish republicans in the western hemisphere, the exploration of new forms of solidarity including “international co-militants”, and the establishment of “practical norms” for aid activities in support of the Spanish people and the campaign in support of the liberation of political prisoners in Spain.<sup>388</sup> This invitation was accompanied by an “Appeal of the Spaniards” in the American hemisphere to attend the *Convención de la Solidaridad*, signed by 80 former government ministers, political activists, republican diplomats, members of the Spanish ex-patriate community, and artists and intellectuals who represented a broad political spectrum from moderate republicans to the leadership of the Spanish communists. Among the representatives of the Spanish military in exile, however, the name of José Miaja, the defender of Madrid in 1936 and later insurrectionist against the government of Juan Negrín in 1939, stood out while the name of the prominent communist former chief of the republican air force Ignacio Hidalgo de Cisneros was conspicuously absent.<sup>389</sup> The “Appeal to the Spaniards”, thus, gave the impression of a national front against fascism which suited the wartime strategic policies of the pro-Soviet current of

387 Cf. personal memo on Ricardo Castellote Lastra (14 Sep 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.; cf. his leading article „La Convención de Solidaridad con el Pueblo Español“, *España Popular* IV/150 (20 Aug 1943), p. 1.

388 „Convocatoria“, *Boletín de la Convención de Solidaridad con los republicanos españoles refugiados y de ayuda al pueblo español*, no. 1 (22 Jul 1943), p. 1.

389 *Documento de adhesión y llamamiento de los españoles a la Gran Convención de Solidaridad con los Republicanos Españoles Refugiados y de Ayuda al Pueblo Español* (FOARE, México D.F., 1943) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, Archivo Tomás Bilbao, Impresos Suelos 1, fols. 101-2; cf. „Llamamiento a los Españoles“, *Boletín de la Convención de Solidaridad con los republicanos españoles refugiados y de ayuda al pueblo español*, no. 1 (22 Jul 1943), p. 4.

Spanish republicanism in exile and was promoted heavily by the communist paper *España Popular*. Three weeks later, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1943, the *Convención de la Solidaridad* was introduced to the public of the Mexican capital by an artistic charity matinee at the *Teatro "Iris"* at calle Donceles no. 36 in the historic city centre which featured Spanish and Mexican artists and was accompanied by a show of Soviet propaganda films covering the siege of Leningrad and the military campaigns of the Red Army at Stalingrad and at the Caucasus front.<sup>390</sup>

The inauguration of the *Convención de Solidaridad* took place from 8.30 pm on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 1943 at the *Teatro "Iris"* in calle Donceles and attracted an audience of about 1,500 delegates, guests, and visitors.<sup>391</sup> The event received wide and prominent press coverage among the Mexican press and in the communist journal *España Popular*. Among the first evening's speakers, presided over by the president of the Mexican CTM, Fidel Velázquez, and the former Spanish government ministers Tomás Bilbao, Segundo Blanco, Antonio Velao, and Ramón González Peña, were Gustavo Alderegui of the Anti-Fascist Front of Cuba, Dr. Edward Barsky as president of the US-American Joint Anti-Fascist Refugees Committee, and Álvaro de Albornoz, former president of the Spanish republican Constitutional Court. After some brief words of welcome by the president of FOARE, José Mancisidor, and a confirmation of solidarity to the Spanish republican cause by the Chilean trade union leader Salvador Ocampo,<sup>392</sup> Edward Barsky identified two challenges to the republican cause: the continuing terror of the Franco regime in Spain which he saw inextricably linked with a "persisting policy of appeasement" towards Franco, and the need for unity among the Spanish fascists in order to restore democracy and the independence of Spain. "No better place than Mexico – he added – to celebrate this *Convención*, because this country understood from the very beginning the true nature of the war of Spain against fascism, the overture of the second worldwide conflagration."<sup>393</sup> After a reiteration of American solidarity against totalitarian aggression by Gustavo Alderegui, Álvaro de Albornoz began with an expression of gratitude towards the Mexican nation and its government, celebrating the achievements of

390 See the advert „El Domingo: Gran Mantiné de beneficio de la Convención de Solidaridad con el pueblo español organizada por la F.O.A.R.E.“, *España Popular* IV/149 (13 Ag 1943), p. 3; see also the short report „Gran acto pro-convención“, *España Popular* IV/150 (20 Aug 1943), p. 4.

391 See the announcement of that evening's proceedings: „Gran Mitin de Masa de la inauguración de la Convención de Solidaridad con el Pueblo Español“, *España Popular* IV/150 (20 Ag 1943), p. 1; cf. strictly confidential report by Ralieg A. Gibson on the *Convención de Solidaridad* (30 Aug 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P-800PolishRefugees, p. 5.

392 See transcripts of the speeches by Gustavo Alderegui, Álvaro de Albornoz, and José Mancisidor at AGN, fondo Presidente Ávila Camacho, caja 1190, 710.1/101-55, s. fols.

393 See the report: „No podrá ganarse la guerra en tanto que España sea fascista“, press report (21 Aug 1943) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, Archivo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca España y el Mundo 1945 [sic!], fol. 65; cf. the report on the inauguration of the *Convención de Solidaridad*: „El Presidente Ramírez de la Argentina es, en lo político, el premier hijo legítimo de Francisco Franco en América“, *El Popular* (21 Aug 1943), p. 1 & 4.

the Red Army and the Free French Committee of Charles de Gaulle, before deploring the tragic results of the policy of appeasement towards European fascism and formulating the fundamental message that the *Convención de Solidaridad* meant to transmit to the world:

Just as in earlier days people were unwilling to understand that the world war began in Spain, today people are reluctant to admit that the struggle between fascism and democracy cannot be won without Spain. The victorious allied forces will be able to enter Rome, Berlin, Paris, and Vienna, but while a single prisoner remains in the Spanish prisons and a fascist rag can still be seen at the top of political power, the war will not be won, because the wars of liberation are not being won on the battlefield.<sup>394</sup>

The rhetorical climax of the evening was then a speech by Vicente Lombardo Toledano who highlighted, once again, the importance of the fate of Spain: “Why – asked the orator – did Franco, who had triumphed with the help of fascism, not fight against the Anglo-American forces in North Africa, and why do the United Nations, instead of striking against him, continue to send him valuable goods which, as all the world knows, may be destined for Germany?” Lombardo’s answer was as much an analysis of the character of Spanish fascism as it was a rhetorical masterpiece to direct the public’s attention towards Spain while the European war raged more violently than ever:

It is, indeed, a fascist regime, but not simply an appendix of Hitler; it is a corporative state not subjugated to Nazi Germany; it is a totalitarian regime of the ecclesiastic type, something like the conjunction of imperialism and the reactionary forces of feudalism. It looks similar to the German, Italian, and Portuguese regimes, but it is more complete than all those in the sense that they bring together the most reactionary forces of history. Franco’s regime is searching for specific forms to save him from the disaster into which the German and Italian fascisms have irredeemably sunk. Therefore, it is more dangerous, and holds such importance for us, because the Franco regime is trying to establish itself in Latin America. Its first-born son is Argentina.

He therefore called for the destruction of totalitarian regimes “wherever they are located”.<sup>395</sup> The inauguration of the *Convención de Solidaridad* was also notable

394 „No podrá ganarse la guerra en tanto que España sea fascista“, press report (21 Aug 1943) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, Archivo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca España y el Mundo 1945 [sic!], fol. 64; see the full text: [http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/juan\\_cervera/obra/alvaro-de-albornoz-intervencion-en-la-convencion-de-foare-848166/](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/juan_cervera/obra/alvaro-de-albornoz-intervencion-en-la-convencion-de-foare-848166/).

395 „No podrá ganarse la guerra en tanto que España sea fascista“, press report (21 Aug 1943) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, Archivo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca España y el Mundo 1945 [sic!],

for the presence of Konstantin Oumansky, the Soviet ambassador to Mexico, who was greeted with “great applause and cheers to the Red Army, to Spain, to Mexico, and to Lázaro Cárdenas.”<sup>396</sup> The organisers of the *Convención de Solidaridad* had invited the diplomatic corps of Mexico City, above all the representatives of the allied powers, to send a message of support, but the US embassy was, by now, in the habit of declining any such invitations – and watched the warm reception of Oumansky with all the more suspicion: “Neither Lic. Vicente Lombardo Toledano nor any speaker of the evening received the applause given the Soviet ambassador.”<sup>397</sup> The request for a message in support of the *Convención* had, in fact, been issued more than a month in advance<sup>398</sup>, so the US diplomats had been unable to decline on the grounds of their customary excuse of having received it too late. Nevertheless, the US embassy had no intention to be seen as approving of any part of the political activities of the pro-Soviet Spanish republicans in exile, as an internal memorandum of the embassy demonstrates:

I was on the point of answering the attached letter when I noted that the conference of which they speak and to which the embassy is invited will take place in August of this year. In view of that fact I think we will have to find some other reason for declining. Since this group does not raise the issue of prisoners in North Africa I hardly see how we can embark on this angle without provocation. As a matter of fact the organization does not ask us to do anything except to take note of their conference and to report the matter to Washington. This I suppose we could do and make a polite acknowledgement at the same time without alienating any affections.<sup>399</sup>

But the US embassy was not the only institution to keep their distance from the *Convención de Solidaridad*: Among the very few organisations of the Spanish community in exile which were not represented at the event were, once again, the *Orfeó Català* and the *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”* of the Spanish socialists loyal to

fol. 65; see the full text of his speech published as: „Argentina, primera plaza de América que cae ante la ofensiva totalitaria-clercial“, *El Popular* (24 Aug 1943), p. 4.

396 „No podrá ganarse la guerra en tanto que España sea fascista“, press report (21 Aug 1943) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, Archivo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca España y el Mundo 1945 [sic!], fols. 64-5.

397 Strictly confidential report by Raleigh A. Gibson on the *Convención de Solidaridad* (30 Aug 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P-800PolishRefugees, p. 5.

398 See the letter to the US embassy signed by FOARE president José Mancisidor and secretary general Luis Maya (12 Jul 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P-800PolishRefugees, s. fol.

399 Internal memo (22 Jul 1943) by „RGM“ at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P-800PolishRefugees, s. fol.; the US embassy did, however, collect verbatim reports of the speeches of the remarkably large number of US delegates at the *Convención* in order to trace the cross-border contacts of the transnational Left in Mexico City, see the full report by Birch D. O’Neal (2 Sep 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 Gibson (Sep-Dec), s. fols.



Indalecio Prieto.<sup>400</sup> Instead, the *Centro Republicano Español* at Calle Tacuba no. 15 – just a block or two away from the *Teatro “Iris”* in calle Donceles – held its own political event at exactly the same time of the inauguration of the *Convención de Solidaridad* in the evening of the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 1943. Since the *Convención* had been planned, scheduled, and publicised for weeks, this scheduling conflict can hardly be regarded as a coincidence. Much less so, when one takes into account the theme of the evening: Carlos Esplá, a Catalan journalist and leading member of the *Izquierda Republicana* who had served as secretary to the JARE and was therefore renowned for siding with Indalecio Prieto over the internal ideological conflict among the Spanish republicans, presented a lecture on “The international solidarity of the democracies” – evidently an attempt to refract the theme of “solidarity” back onto the anti-totalitarian persuasion of the Western Allies. Esplá first laid out the history of failed attempts at establishing an international democratic order at the end of the First World War, the unfulfilled promises of the high rhetoric of US president Wilson, and how a policy of recognition and appeasement, pursued by western democracies towards dictatorships around the world, had led to the rise of fascism and a new world war – he placed particular emphasis on the cases of Spain, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Rather than embracing the broadest-possible definition of democracy, the main fault of solidarity among democracies (namely: its absence) originated from priorities of self-interest and the rejection of the political Left. During the current war, he identified similar tendencies on the part of the Western Allies to associate themselves with conservative and authoritarian forces rather than supporting popular anti-fascism which he traced back to a deep-rooted fear of socialist and/or communist threats to the established capitalist order, and he referred to Harold J. Laski, the radical chairman of the British Labour Party, who had warned of the Allied military government of occupied territories as a potential danger to a true regeneration of democracy (in this case, in Italy).<sup>401</sup> Esplá, thus, drew his own conclusions:

[T]he democracies – at least their bureaucratic general staff – are being intimidated by the expansion of democratic ideals around the world, as if they feared the liberty of peoples. And, certainly, many are today intimidated by liberty, fearing that it would lead to revolution. Such social reactionary forces still act across the world whose demagogic expression was Hitlerism which has penetrated consciences seemingly dedicated to serving democracy. One does not avoid revolution if the only weapon to fight it is fear. One does not appease neither the revolution nor insatiable dictatorships.<sup>402</sup>

400 See the full list of delegates and organisations which sent messages of support: „¡Viva la solidaridad de los pueblos de América con la lucha del pueblo español!“, *España Popular* IV/150 (20 Aug 1943), pp. 3-5.

401 Cf. the critique of Allied government in Italy a few days earlier in the journal of the *Círculo „Pablo Iglesias“*: „Ha surgido un pequeño monstruo“, *Adelante* II/38 (15 Aug 1943), p. 1.

402 „Solidaridad internacional de las democracias“, lecture by Carlos Esplá at the *Centro*

The underlying reasoning for Esplá's warning against a continuing policy of appeasement at the height of the Second World War was his fear that Franco's regime in Spain would be accommodated in a post-war order of Europe designed around anti-revolutionary priorities rather than pro-democratic ones. Instead, he proposed a Latin European federation of Spain, France, Italy, and Portugal: "the France of de Gaulle and not that of Laval; the Portugal of Cortesão and Domínguez de Santos, not that of Oliveira Salazar; the Italy of Pacciardi and of the Garibaldi Brigades which covered themselves in glory in the republican fields of Spain, and not that of marshal Badoglio." His concept of a Latin-European federation included the north-African territories "opened up to the modern lifestyle by the common effort of Spaniards, French, and Italians, and which form the edge facing our common ocean"<sup>403</sup> Esplá's vision of a post-war order of South-Western Europe, thereby, was governed entirely by a confrontation of the Western Allies' policies with their own democratic promises (particularly in the form of the Atlantic Charter) in the interest of a renewed Spanish republic (including its African colonial interests) – without hardly ever mentioning communism or the Soviet Union and its role in the current conflict at all.<sup>404</sup> The contrast to the simultaneous, enthusiastic reception of Konstantin Oumansky at the *Teatro "Iris"* just a stone-throw away at calle Donceles no 36 could not have been any starker, as Esplá presented his definition of "solidarity" of the anti-communist Left of Spanish republicanism.

Meanwhile, the *Convención de la Solidaridad* embarked on three days of reports, deliberations, and debate at the *Frontón México* just opposite the *Monumento a la Revolución* at the heart of the district of *Tabacalera*. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, FOARE's president José Mancisidor, delivered a report on the activities of the organisation in support of Spanish republican refugees in North Africa, Vichy France, and elsewhere in the world, praising the Mexican government for its unfailing support, while the situation in North Africa and Southern France remained critical. Edward Barsky reported on the following day that the situation of the Joint Antifascist Refugee Committee in the USA was characterised by political and administrative hostility of the US authorities.<sup>405</sup>

*Republicano Español* (20 Aug 1943), Archivo General de la Guerra Civil Española (Salamanca), Archivo Carlos Esplá, sig. 10.2/6634, p. 32; online resource: [www.cervantesvirtual.com/downloadPdf/solidaridad-internacional-de-las-democracias-conferencia-pronunciada-en-el-centro-espanol-de-mexico-texto-mecanografiado-de-39-paginas-846453.pdf](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/downloadPdf/solidaridad-internacional-de-las-democracias-conferencia-pronunciada-en-el-centro-espanol-de-mexico-texto-mecanografiado-de-39-paginas-846453.pdf) [17 Mar 2018].

403 Ibid., pp. 35-6.

404 Cf. his earlier lecture at the *Centro Republicano Español* in July 1942 when he explicitly rejected any notion of a popular front with the communists: *¿Cuándo volvemos a España? Conferencia pronunciada en el Centro Republicano Español de México el 16 de Julio de 1942* (México D.F., 1942), online resource: <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/cuando-volvemos-a-espana-conferencia-de-espla-pronunciada-en-el-centro-republicano-espanol-y-editada-por-el-ateneo-salmeron-35-paginas-846597/> [17 Mar 2018].

405 Strictly confidential report by Raleigh A. Gibson on the *Convención de Solidaridad* (30 Aug 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P-800PolishRefugees, pp. 10-2.

Among the results of the *Convención de Solidaridad* were the continued commitment to the support of Spanish prisoners in North Africa and France, the communication of the contribution of Spanish refugees to the Mexican economy, and the reiterated call for unity among the anti-fascist Left.<sup>406</sup> The concrete charitable work was to be intensified by fund-raising campaigns, cooperation with other aid organisations, such as the Red Cross, and the continuing support for hospitals, childcare, and education. The *Convención de Solidaridad* set out concrete activities to provide protection and to seek the liberation of prisoners in different parts of the world with the help of the Mexican and other Latin American governments.<sup>407</sup> The *Convención* insisted on the non-recognition of the Franco regime by other powers, the interruption of all shipments of goods to Spain, the organisation of protests across the western hemisphere against the crimes of the Spanish regime, demanded the expulsion of *Falange* agents, planned to organise a commission of legal aid and to establish a service of aid payments to Spanish families without government interference, planned the transfer of leading Spanish republicans to Northern Africa, rejected proposals to restore the Spanish monarchy, and planned to mobilise international opinion in support of incarcerated women in Spain alongside a range of other, more specific campaigns.<sup>408</sup> The most significant result of the *Convención de Solidaridad* for the situation of European communities of exile in Mexico City, however, was that the organisation followed the initiative of Edward K. Barsky to adopt a transnational anti-fascist framework for its work which included European anti-fascists beyond the Spanish community. While preserving its acronym FOARE, the *Convención* passed the following resolution:

The name of the new aid movement in Mexico will be that of FEDERACIÓN DE ORGANISMOS DE AYUDA A LOS REFUGIADOS EUROPEOS (F.O.A.R.E.) The new Federación de Organismos de Ayuda a los Refugiados Europeos will strive to bring about solidarity with the Spanish republican refugees, with antifascist Italians, German refugees, Yugoslavians, Bulgarians, Poles, Hungarians, and all those European countries that are in need and which have to be saved from the claws of fascism and its vassals.<sup>409</sup>

This new transnational dimension of the aid and support of FOARE was finally recognised by the inclusion of the president of *Alemania Libre*, Ludwig Renn, into the executive board as elected vice-secretary of the organisation.<sup>410</sup> The *Convención* ended on the night of the 24<sup>th</sup> of August with a banquet for the foreign

406 *Resoluciones de la Convención de Solidaridad con el Pueblo Español: 20 al 25 de Agosto de 1943* (México D.F., FOARE, 1943), pp. 3-4.

407 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

408 *Ibid.*, pp. 11-5.

409 *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7; see also the press report: „La Foare impartirá auxilios a los Europeos en general“ (23 Aug 1943) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, Archivo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 1943/1, fols. 77-8.

delegates, attended by about 500 guests, including, once again, the Soviet ambassador Konstantin Oumansky.<sup>411</sup>

The observers of the US embassy reacted to the *Convención de Solidaridad* with some concern over the effect of this event by the pro-Soviet groups of political exile in Mexico City on the politics of the Spanish community of exile. They noted with some relief that “the leading Spanish republicans did not take an active part in the FOARE conference”, but did not hold out much hope for the broader Spanish republican community:

The reason for the possible effect of the Conference on the rank and file of the Spanish refugees is due to the fact that they have been the victims of propaganda, Many are discouraged over their belief that the United States and Great Britain are assisting General Franco and that the two countries are planning to restore the monarchy. The communists are organized with funds and are in a position to take advantage of these beliefs. The leading non-communist Spanish republicans are not organized and are without funds, so they are helpless in fighting an organized propaganda.<sup>412</sup>

The author of this report, Raleigh A. Gibson, referred to a statement drafted by a “Spanish republican writer” which Indalecio Prieto had allegedly agreed to sign, which denounced the principles of the *Convención de Solidaridad* as “an enthusiastic, unconditional eulogy of the policy of the Soviets, cutting criticisms, when not direct insults, for the democracies.”

We, a group of refugees who have systematically remained aloof from this type of confusing manifestations and who are sure that we interpret the wishes of the immense majority of Spaniards who sigh beneath the Franquist domination, address ourselves to the democratic opinion of the world to explain certain concepts and define certain attitudes. [...]

Spain wants to stay as far away from Fascism as from Communism – both political systems which she considers foreign to her essence. Spain aspires to regain her old democracy in order to realize her western and human destiny.

410 *Resoluciones de la Convención de Solidaridad con el Pueblo Español: 20 al 25 de Agosto de 1943* (México D.F., FOARE, 1943), p. 18: cf. strictly confidential report by Raleigh A. Gibson on the *Convención de Solidaridad* (30 Aug 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P-800PolishRefugees, p. 22; see also: Ludwig Renn: „Die FOARE als Hilfsorganisation fuer alle europaischen Fluechtlinge“, *Freies Deutschland* II/11 (Oct 1943), p. 34.

411 „Un banquete en honor de los delegados extranjeros“, *España Popular* IV/152 (3 Sep 1943), p. 4.

412 Strictly confidential report by Raleigh A. Gibson on the *Convención de Solidaridad* (30 Aug 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P-800PolishRefugees, p. 23.

No Spanish democrat can fail to admire the heroic conduct of the Red Army, but this admiration for the Russian soldier which has come to include all the inhabitants of that immense country cannot serve to introduce into Spain ideas and political procedures repugnant to her people.

In the coalition represented by the United Nations, the refugees who sign this document find themselves closer politically to such nations as England, the United States, China and Mexico, who share the democratic ideal and consider the human being as the fundamental call of the structure of civilisation.<sup>413</sup>

It remains unclear, if and where such a statement may have been published, and, given its unusually partisan tone, it may just have been a confidential indication by the anti-Soviet Spanish community in exile towards the US diplomats that within the Spanish republican fold there existed a strongly anti-communist and pro-western faction which did not enjoy as much publicity as the *Convención de Solidaridad*. It demonstrates, however, clear support for the politics of anti-totalitarianism which would inform the western ideological outlook of the Cold War. Gibson's conclusions, for the time being, remained cautious: "The FOARE took advantage of the divided opinions of the Spanish republican leaders in Mexico and the other American republics in holding its conference. It is too early to be able to prophesy as to what control has been gained."<sup>414</sup> As Gibson reported directly to the US Secretary of State in Washington, he may have used the anti-totalitarian statement as evidence for the need to provide financial support to the anti-Soviet groups among the Spanish community in exile in Mexico City.

Another reason for concern regarding the growing Soviet influence over the communities of exile in Mexico City was the visit of two representatives of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the Soviet Union who campaigned for support of the Soviet war effort and toured the North American continent in a fund raising effort: in August 1943, Salomon Mikhoels, actor and artistic director of the State Jewish Theatre in Moscow, and the poet Isaac Feffer arrived in Mexico City and were received by the Soviet diplomatic staff as well as by the German community of exile centred around the movement *Alemania Libre*. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of August, both had appeared in a meeting at the *Teatro "Iris"* in calle Donceles to speak about the role of the Jews in the Soviet Union as part of the war effort against Nazi Germany. Their statements were accompanied by Konstantin Oumansky who repeated his complaint about the fact that, in Europe, still only one military front existed against Nazi Germany. The German-speaking journal *Freies Deutschland* heralded Oumansky as the "representative of the country that is the most committed opponent to all forms of racial discrimination."<sup>415</sup> The visit

413 Ibid., pp. 23-4.

414 Ibid., p. 24.

415 „Zwei grosse Maenner aus der Sowjetunion in Mexiko“, *Freies Deutschland* II/10 (Sep 1943),

of Mikhoels and Feffer also coincided with the foundation of the Jewish-Mexican association *Hatikwah*, the representation of Zionism in Mexico.<sup>416</sup> The Soviet ambassador had, in fact, asked Arturo Wolfowitz, representing the Zionist group *Keren Hayesod* in the *Comité Central Israelita*, to make the necessary arrangements for the visit of Mikhoels and Feffer. In a conversation with an informant of the intelligence unit of the US embassy during August 1943, Wolfowitz characterised their visit as a Soviet propaganda effort which portrayed the Soviet Union as the sole adversary of Nazi Germany and that, on the other hand, it did not preclude any post-war settlements regarding the situation of the Middle East: “The only answer to this question, according to Wolfowitz, was the statement that »we should fight the war to win it and not consider post-war problems at this stage.«”<sup>417</sup> The US embassy monitored these developments around the Jewish community in Mexico closely.<sup>418</sup>

The month of August ended in a climate of ideological polarisation – and a farewell dinner: On the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1943, the *Frontón México*, the site of the *Convención de Solidaridad* just a few days earlier, witnessed an homage to the outgoing consul general of Chile in Mexico City, the poet Pablo Neruda. “Thousands of people”, so the Spanish communist journal *España Popular*, attended the occasion, ranging from Vicente Lombardo Toledano and the editor of the CTM’s journal *El Popular* Alejandro Carrillo to Mexican intellectuals such as Alfonso Reyes, government officials as Ignacio García Téllez, and Victor Manuel Villaseñor of the SAURSS. Messages of praise were sent in by former Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas, the Soviet ambassador Konstantin Oumansky, and the

p. 30; see also the picture taken during the visit of Mikhoels and Feffer, including Oumansky and Ludwig Renn, the president of *Alemania Libre*, in: Judit Bokser-Liwerant: *Imágenes de un encuentro: la presencia judía en México durante la primera mitad del siglo XX* (México D.F., 1993), p. 239.

416 See David Bankier: „Los exiliados alemanes en México y sus vinculos con la comunidad judía (1942-1945)”, *Judaica Latinoamericana. Estudios históricos-sociales* 1 (Jerusalem, 1988), pp. 79-89, esp. p. 83; see also: Fritz Pohle: *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986), p. 316.

417 Report on „Organización Sionista Unida“ (1 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 4.

418 See the note by Raleigh A. Gibson on a conversation with a member of the *Comité Central Israelita de México* (24 Aug 1943), although the accompanying memorandum on the content of that conversation does not survive in the files of the US embassy in Mexico: USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02 (1944), s. fol.; the missing memorandum, may, in fact, relate to Wolfowitz’ information mentioned above. The fact that the *Teatro „Iris“* was turning into a regular venue for pro-Soviet activities prompted the intelligence unit of the US embassy to investigate the background, trying to verify in January 1944 reports that the Soviet embassy had, in fact, signed a ten-year lease of the theatre for the purpose of staging Soviet propaganda activities while maintaining a certain number of regular theatre events: see the memorandum by Raleigh A. Gibson (8 Jan 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD3895, 820.02, s. fol.; such an agreement cannot be corroborated from the available files of VOKS (All-Union Society for Foreign Cultural Relations) at GARF, fond 5283, opis 14 (Department of American countries), delo 144, 204, 244.

former Spanish prime minister Juan Negrín in London.<sup>419</sup> To the US diplomats, Neruda was known simply as “one of the most important behind-the-scenes leaders of the Communist Party in Mexico. [...] Subject and his wife departed from Mexico City on August 30, 1943 via Pan American Airways destined for Chile.”<sup>420</sup> After months of intense, at times violent, polarisation on all sides of the internal political-ideological conflicts across the European communities in exile in Mexico City the competing camps of politics in exile appeared entrenched and bitterly opposed to one another more than ever.

How fragile any notion of an allied anti-Hitler coalition had become among the communities of political exile in Mexico can further be illustrated by a commemoration of the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the German attack on Poland staged by the movement *Alemania Libre* on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 1943 at the *Sala Mendelssohn* at the *Casa Schiefer*.<sup>421</sup> In his speech, Paul Merker, the political leader of the German communists in Mexico, turned against a “campaign organised against the Soviet Union by supporters of appeasement in England and America, a campaign like it has occurred in similar fashion after the victory of Stalingrad” – evidently alluding to the public commemorations of Alter and Erlich earlier that year. Merker warned against a “Darlanisation of Europe” and against a “block of nations as it is desired today by reactionary Polish circles. The danger of support for types such as Darlan and Franco exists with regard to Germany, too.” His remark referred to the agreement between the Western allies and the Vichy French forces in north Africa, under the command of navy admiral François Darlan, after the allied Operation “Torch” in autumn 1942. Darlan had been left in charge of the French forces in exchange for his willingness to switch sides and add his troops to the allied forces – an agreement that had caused widespread outrage among the anti-fascist public. By linking the Western allied powers to collaborators and allies of European fascism, the communists denounced a tacit cooperation between the Western allies and Axis forces willing to surrender while the Soviet leadership begged in vain for a substantial second front in Western Europe. Instead, Merker wished for a “democratic popular movement in Germany” which he predictably saw represented by the communist-dominated National Committee “Free Germany” which had come into existence in the Soviet Union.<sup>422</sup> Paul Mayer, on the other hand, tried to build bridges between the German and the Jewish communities in their “eternal dialogue” interrupted by the “madness of one tyrant”. When the crimes would be avenged which “the German people did not commit but has allowed to happen in a pathological state of mental

419 „Un acto emocionante: a la despedida al gran amigo de nuestro pueblo, Pablo Neruda, asisten miles de personas“, *España Popular* IV/152 (2 Sep 1943), p. 1.

420 Memorandum on „Ricardo Neftali Reyes“ (7 Oct 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Sep-Dec, s. fol.

421 „Vier Jahre Krieg“, *Freies Deutschland* II/10 (Sep 1943), p. 35; cf. „Das Lateinamerikanische Komitee zum vierten Jahrestag des Kriegsbeginns“, *ibid.*, p. 33.

422 Cf. Heike Bungert: *Das Nationalkomitee und der Westen: die Reaktion der Westalliierten auf das NKFD und die Freien Deutschen Bewegungen 1943-1948* (Stuttgart, 1997).

weakness” and the “last traces of nationalism and racial mania exterminated”, he foresaw a rebirth of the German-Jewish cohabitation in Germany.<sup>423</sup>

### e. Winning the War (Oct 1943 – 1945)

During the autumn of 1943, the German community of exile around the movement *Alemania Libre* established a permanent domicile for political activism, cultural events, and general sociability in a building at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 86 on the northern limits of the district of *Hidalgo*, just south of the *Ciudadela*. The house belonged to Herbert Hofmann-Isenburg, a German artist who had emigrated to Mexico in 1930 and owned several properties across the city.<sup>424</sup> In 1943, he decided to offer the building rent-free to Ludwig Renn, president of *Alemania Libre*, as a permanent location for the organisation’s activities.<sup>425</sup> During the late summer of 1943, the new venue was advertised among the German-speaking community of exile as “a house with six large rooms [...]. Two large rooms which each offer space for 80 persons are intended as club rooms for meetings.”<sup>426</sup> All doors and windows of the rooms faced a central court, and the building provided enough space to house the editorial offices of all German publications, the printing house “El Libro Libre”, and the German library “Biblion” which until then had been located at calle Michoacán no. 26 in the district of *Hipódromo* at the home of Günter Ruschin und Steffi Spira. The renovation and acquisition of furniture was financed by donations which totalled no more than 1,000 pesos, but was helped, in the words of Paul Merker, by the “distinctive modesty of the Mexicans and their passion for arts and crafts and friendly colours which helped [the commission for refurbishing the house] to design its home in a simple, but attractive manner without incurring excessive costs.”<sup>427</sup> The inauguration of the new domicile of *Alemania Libre* took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 1943 with an open-house feast: Ludwig Renn reminded those present of the role of the former *Casino Alemán* at calle de López no. 23 and, by contrast, outlined the function of the *Haus der Freien Deutschen* for the anti-fascist German-speaking community in Mexico City of ex-patriates and political refugees. Merker remembered the occasion as a resounding success: “The house could hardly contain the hundreds of people in attendance, although all rooms, the courtyard, and the garden had been equipped with chairs and tables. More

423 „Vier Jahre Krieg“, *Demokratische Post* I/2 (1 Sep 1943), p. 1.

424 Cf. the report on Nathaniel Wolf (13 Apr 1943), an occasional visitor to Hofmann from the US during 1942/3, at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, s. fol.

425 Cf. Fritz Pohle: *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 305-11.

426 „Ein Freies Deutsches Haus in Mexiko“, *Freies Deutschland* II/10 (Sep 1943), p. 34.

427 Paul Merker: *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika. Erinnerungen, Dokumentation und Berichte*, at BAL, NY 4102/6 (Nachlaß Paul Merker), fols. 237-8;



speeches were given, songs of liberation were sung and there was dancing.”<sup>428</sup> The journal *Freies Deutschland* summarised the occasion thus:

Wherever one went, a joyful and amicable mood prevailed: at the bar where Mr Wolter and his spouse were mixing drinks, in serious competition with the next-door coffee house with its excellent coffee and cakes; on the other side of the *patio* where the sausage parlour was located and strings of sausages with potato salad and beer were consumed; in the great salon which served as a dance floor and where dance music was played without interruption. The success of the raffle and the American-style auction demonstrated the willingness of the guests to contribute financially to the success of the occasion.

The pianist Egon Neumann and the Viennese trio of Philipp Mueller, Paul Hermann, and Dr. Schwarz contributed as musicians, and organisations such as the *Menorah*, the association of German-speaking Jews in Mexico, as well as the Zionist *Hatikwah* and *Hungria Libre* sent congratulatory messages.<sup>429</sup> “Hardly anyone of the hundreds [of guests] left before 3 am, hardly anyone without enquiring about the date of the upcoming festivities.”<sup>430</sup> The house did, indeed, turn into the most important venue for political activism, cultural and educational presentations, for festive sociability as well as the home for the German-speaking youth and women’s associations closely connected with the German communist group of exile in Mexico City.<sup>431</sup> It should be noted, however, that the location of the *Haus der Freien Deutschen* at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 86 made for delicate immediate neighbours in terms of the politics of the ex-patriate German community: the building was located just a few steps down the street from the *Cervecería Alemana “Fritz”*, a beer house and restaurant also known as “*La Palma*” and owned by Fritz Henninger at the corner of Avenida Chapultépec and calle Dr. Carmona y Valle. Henninger’s establishment counted among the preferred meeting places of Nazi supporters in Mexico City, and he himself was widely reported to be a long-standing Nazi follower (although he does not appear on the list of NSDAP members in Mexico compiled by the US State Department in 1946).<sup>432</sup> It may therefore be no coincidence that the German communists

428 Ibid., pp. 238-9.

429 „Einweihung des Hauses der Freien Deutschen in Mexiko“, *Freies Deutschland* II/12 (Nov 1943), p. 33.

430 „Unsere Einweihungsfeier“, *Demokratische Post* I /6 (1 Nov 1943), p. 4.

431 See Fritz Pohle: *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 308-11; see also Merker’s detailed report: *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika. Erinnerungen, Dokumentation und Berichte*, at BAL, NY 4102/6 (Nachlaß Paul Merker), fols. 239-44.

432 See the memorandum on the attackers of Pablo Neruda in Cuernavaca in December 1941 (undated) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fol. 30; see also the personal memorandum on Fred G. Ahns (14 Jun 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jun-Aug, s. fol.; *Nazi Party Membership Records*, part 2 (Washington D.C., 1946) at BAL, SAPMO, SgY14/16,

targeted the Nazi “fifth column” of German restaurant owners in Mexico City, among them Henninger, and their regular Thursday meetings at the restaurant “Renania” at calle de López 13-A in the same edition of their journal *Demokratische Post* as they reported the opening of their own new social centre at the *Haus der Freien Deutschen*.<sup>433</sup> Ideological tensions continued to shape the topography of politics between the European communities of exile and the European ex-patriate communities in the city.

The autumn of 1943 further enhanced the standing of the diplomatic representatives of the Soviet Union among the pro-Soviet Spanish republican Left in the city. But the commemorative season around the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, the anniversary of the Defence of Madrid in 1936, was kicked off by an event organised by their opponents in the *Centro Republicano Español* on the eve of the anniversary: Under the banners of Mexico and the Spanish Republic the presiding panel included the former multiple republican government minister José Giral, the former secretary of JARE Carlos Esplá, both of the *Izquierda Republicana*, former republican government minister Bernardo Giner de los Ríos of the *Unión Republicana*, Vicente Serrano presiding for the *Centro Republicano*, the writer Antonio Robles, and Jesús Bernárdez for the youth organisation *Juventud Republicana Española*. The main speaker of the event was the former government minister Mariano Ruiz Funes who reminded the audience of the fact that Madrid was never conquered by the Francoist forces but succumbed to a complete lack of supplies for the continuation of war in 1939 and that the Franco regime soon after had displayed hostility to the Western powers and had presented their German and Italian allies as part of their own forces. After the fall of Mussolini, he expected the Franco regime to fall alongside its counterparts of European “Quislings”.<sup>434</sup> The commemoration continued the following evening with a dinner at the Hotel “Mancera” at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 49 in the *Centro Histórico*, attended by more than 200 guests and organised by the cultural association of republican refugees from Madrid *Los Cuatro Gatos*. The presiding panel of the commemoration at the *Centro Republicano* was joined by the defender of Madrid, general José Miaja, and Antonio Robles spoke in humorous anecdotes about the events of Madrid in 1936 and commented sarcastically on attempts to restore the Spanish monarchy. On a more serious note, he dedicated the memory of the battle of Madrid to the dead and the prisoners of Franco and emphasised that the sacrifices of the Civil War would be in vain if a regime of “ancient reactionary oligarchies” were to be imposed upon Spain: “The battle of Madrid means this, the people that wants to continue living, that wants to be the people. The battle of Madrid means this: the republic, the Spanish Republic.”<sup>435</sup>

fols. 132-7.

433 „Scheinwerfer auf die 5. Kolonne“, *Demokratische Post* I/6 (1 Nov 1943), p. 1.

434 See the press report „El prólogo de la tragedia“ (7 Nov 1943) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 43/1, fols. 208-9.

435 See the press report „Fue conmemorada ayer la defensa de Madrid“ (8 Nov 1943) at AEM,

That same evening, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 1943, the Soviet embassy in Calzada de Tacubaya, just north of the Edificio Ermita, staged a celebration of the 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian October Revolution which was attended by the US ambassador George Messersmith, the British ambassador Charles Harold Bateman, and the representative of the Free French Committee of Liberation of Charles de Gaulle, Maurice Garreau-Dombasle. The Mexican government was represented by the foreign minister Ezequiel Padilla, the navy minister Heriberto Jara, the vice minister of defence Francisco Luis Urquizo Benavides, and the agricultural minister Marte Rodolfo Gómez Segura. A number of communist-dominated organisations of exile in Mexico presented themselves not just as loyal allies of the Soviet Union but also benefited from the high diplomatic profile of the event: Alexander Abusch, Erich Jungmann, Paul Merker, Ludwig Renn, and Anna Seghers represented the movement *Alemania Libre*, Josef Foscht, Carl Alwin and Rudolf Neuhaus were invited from among the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM), Dragutin Fodor (alias: Theodor Balk) and José List attended for *Yugoslavia Libre*, while Seghers' husband László Radványi and Aladar Tamás represented *Hungria Libre*. From among the *Asociación Checoslovaco-Mexicana* Egon-Erwin Kisch and Lenka Reinrová (the wife of Dragutin Fodor) were invited alongside the Czech journalist André Simone (alias: Otto Katz) and Severin Ferandel as representative of the *Acción Democrática Internacional*. In this way, the pro-Soviet Central European organisations of exile were able to enter the international diplomatic sphere of Mexico City on the coattails of their Soviet friends.<sup>436</sup> The US embassy suspected that this tactic was meant to set diplomatic precedents with regard to the future re-organisation of Central Europe after the Allied victory which, in the autumn of 1943, would only be a matter of time.<sup>437</sup> The following evening, the Soviet ambassador Konstantin Oumansky was the guest of honour at a public celebration of the Russian October Revolution at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* organised by the Mexican Society of Friends of the Soviet Union (SAURSS). Their president, José Mancisidor, presented Oumansky with a “book of friendship of the Mexican people towards the Soviet people” and Vicente Lombardo Toledano celebrated the rise of Russia since the days of Czarist rule and drew parallels with the development of Mexico. On the same day, Oumansky attended a special session of the Mexican House of Representatives where he stressed that “the claim that a foreign government would want to force Mexico under any political, economic, or social system is an insult to the glorious Mexican people.”<sup>438</sup> Clearly, the Soviet ambassador occupied a key position among the community of exile during the autumn of 1943.

Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 43/1, fol. 210.

436 „Mexiko feiert den 26. Jahrestag der UdSSR“, *Demokratische Post* I/7 (15 Nov 1943), p. 2.

437 See the report by W.K. Alshie (13 May 1943) with regard to *Alemania Libre* at BAL, SAPMO, SgY 14/20, fol. 43.

438 „Mexiko feiert den 26. Jahrestag der UdSSR“, *Demokratische Post* I/7 (15 Nov 1943), p. 2.

The week-long parallel celebrations of the October Revolution and the defence of Madrid culminated in a dinner, organised in honour of Oumansky by the SAURSS at the restaurant “Molino” at calle 16 de Septiembre no. 47 on the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1943. The occasion was attended by about 150 guests<sup>439</sup> from across the political, intellectual, military and the trade union sector, including representatives of “the anti-fascist centres and associations of several countries” as a demonstration, so the Spanish communist paper *España Popular* proudly stated, of the “warm feelings and admiration which the USSR evokes in Mexico and of the respectful sympathy which its diplomatic representative managed to attract.” Daniel Cosío Villegas, one of the initiators of the *Casa de España* and founder of the publishing house *Fondo de Cultura Económica*, provided the eulogy to Oumansky and to the Soviet Union “the only country which, after the previous war, managed to create a social and political system with a view towards the common good and the well-being of human beings. [...] Your country, mister ambassador, is not alone in this struggle. Allied with the great people and the invincible Red Army are the best women and the best men of Mexico and the entire world.”<sup>440</sup> Beside the leaders of the Mexican and Spanish communist party, Dinisio Encina and Antonio Mije, the dinner was attended by the former secretary for public education Luis Sánchez Pontón, and the governor of the state of México, Isidoro Fabela, the former representative of Mexico to the League of Nations.<sup>441</sup> Alongside Mije, the Spanish community in exile was represented by the former government minister Antonio Velao of the *Izquierda Republicana*, the former government minister and Basque nationalist Tomás Bilbao, the former director of CTARE José Puche, the socialist UGT leaders José Rodríguez Vega and Amaro del Rosal, Federico Melchor of the communist youth movement, the communist Ángel Álvarez, and the Catalan communists José Moix, José Marlés, and Wenceslao Colomer. The US embassy meticulously noted the sponsors of the dinner, among them the Mexican navy minister Heriberto Jara, the director general of the national Mexican oil company PEMEX Efraín Buenrostro, the representative of the Free French Committee Maurice Garreau-Dombasle, the leader of the CTAL Vicente Lombardo Toledano, the president of the *Colegio de México* Alfonso Reyes, the Mexican film actress Dolores del Río, the president of the *Comité Central Israelita de México* León Behar, and the Spanish writer and editor José Bergamín.<sup>442</sup> In his reponse, Oumansky reported the progress of the Soviet advance against the German forces, now beyond Kiev, “145 kilometres from our western border. [...] But I regard it as my obligation to

439 This number is taken from an internal report on the „Mexican Society of Friends of the Soviet Union (SAURSS)“ (11 Aug 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, p. 9.

440 „Banquete de homenaje a la URSS en la persona de su embajador Oumanski“, *España Popular* IV/163 (19 Nov 1943), p. 3.

441 Report on the „Mexican Society of Friends of the Soviet Union (SAURSS)“ (11 Aug 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, p. 9.

442 See the list „Sponsors for banquet given in honor of Soviet ambassador, Constantine Oumansky, at »Molino« restaurant on November 12, 1943“ (undated) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

inform you that we still have to cover 450 kilometres in the same direction in order to reach our border with Poland, that only after having achieved that stretch, we will have liberated the territory of the Soviet Ukraine from the yoke of nazi-fascism.”<sup>443</sup> In drastic words, he recounted Nazi atrocities in the Soviet Union and warned of “false humanitarian pretexts” and testified to the “feelings of pain, of hate, and the desire to punish the enemy which are universal in my country”. Any humanitarian scruples should not, in his words, “obscure the moral abyss which separates the two camps or protect the moral enemy of mankind.” He closed with the observation that “many believers in Russia also pray. They pray for the victory of our arms, they pray for the downfall and annihilation of the aggressors, they pray because God punishes the guilty. Those fervent prayers are, indeed, noble.” His speech was reportedly greeted with a standing ovation.<sup>444</sup>

Attempts to generate a greater sense of cross-party unity within the Spanish community in exile usually involved a public denunciation of the suppressive regime of Franco in Spain and a campaign in support of the political prisoners of his regime. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1943, the Coordinating Committee of Spanish Republican Organisations had staged its own meeting at the *Teatro “Hidalgo”* at calle Regina no. 52 in the *Centro Histórico* to commemorate the defence of Madrid. The meeting indeed attracted a broad range of representatives of organisations across the political spectrum, even if the strictly anti-communist faction of socialists loyal to Indalecio Prieto did not participate: the speakers included the Galician member of the republican *Cortes* García Becerra, Matías Guarro for the *Casal Català*, Ignacio Mantecón representing the *Unidad Republicana*, coronel Perea for the *Partido Federal*, Wenceslao Roces as member of the communist party, Serafín Aliaga for the anarcho-syndicalist CNT, and the Ramón González Peña for the UGT and the *negrinista* faction of the PSOE. What lent the occasion a broader than usual appeal for cross-party cooperation was the presence of prominent former members of the republican government who were able to reach across the otherwise strict ideological divide among the Spanish republicans in Mexico: the meeting was presided over by Manuel Márquez of the *Ateneo Ramón y Cajal*, former dean of the medical faculty and rector of the University of Madrid, while Bernardo Giner de los Ríos and Mariano Ruiz Funes represented the *Unión Republicana* and the *Izquierda Republicana*, respectively. Any cross-party contacts and prospects for cooperation depended to a large extent on the role played by former members of the republican Spanish government. The fact that the meeting was reported by the communist journal *España Popular* not only as an example of anti-Francoist unity

443 Oumansky echoed diplomatic efforts by the Soviet government to have the Ukraine treated as a quasi-independent entity in international law to increase the international weight of the Soviet Union and to invoke Soviet credentials as a champion of diverse national identities across Eastern Europe. In 1945, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic figured as a nominally independent founding member of the United Nations in San Francisco.

444 „Banquete de homenaje a la URSS en la persona de su embajador Oumanski“, *España Popular* IV/163 (19 Nov 1943), p. 3.

but also of enthusiastic support for the Soviet Union (which was represented at the event by the First Secretary of the Soviet embassy) did, however, not help the cause of republican unity.<sup>445</sup>

The month of November 1943 also figured prominently in the calendar of the Austrian community of exile in Mexico City. The reason for this was an event of international allied politics: the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers which had taken place during the second half of October and culminated in the Moscow Declaration of the 1<sup>st</sup> of November. Alongside the principles of rejecting any prospects of unilateral cease-fire or peace agreements with the Axis powers and the commitment to justice for war crimes committed by German military and security forces, the declaration contained the Allies' promise to restore an independent Austrian state as part of any future post-war settlement in Europe. This commitment fuelled the confidence and activity of the Austrian community which immediately returned to campaigning for the Austrian republican cause, preferably through their weekly broadcast via the airwaves of Mexican government broadcaster *Radio Gobernación* under the title "La Voz de Austria". Already on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November, Erwin Rubin had spoken in this way about the Moscow Declaration, before on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November Josef Foscht, secretary of the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México*, spoke under the title "Austria will rise again!".<sup>446</sup> On the 16<sup>th</sup> of November, in order to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Austrian Republic in 1918, the ARAM staged a press conference in the domicile of the Mexican *Ateneo Nacional de Ciencias y Artes* on the first floor of calle Bucareli no. 12 in the district of *Centro*.<sup>447</sup> Presided over by Félix F. Palavicini, the president of the *Ateneo Nacional*, Rudolf Neuhaus spoke about the birth and development of the Austrian Republic until the annexation by Nazi Germany in 1938 while the Austrian communist Bruno Frei dedicated his remarks to the role of Austria during the war and in the post-war period. These two presentations were not only widely published in the Mexican press, but the Austrian republicans also explicitly noted the presence of reporters of the Soviet news agency TASS and of representatives of the press office of the Soviet embassy in Mexico.<sup>448</sup> In his contribution, Frei elaborated on the implications of the Moscow Declaration for Austria: in his view, the geo-strategic position of Austria predestined the country as the preferred gateway for Allied troops approaching Central Europe via Ukraine and the Balkans or from the south via Italy, and therefore the promise of a restored Austria should encourage an Austrian uprising against the Nazi regime. Frei reminded the assembled press that Mexico had never acknowledged the German annexation of 1938. Frei also did his

445 „El acto de los republicanos españoles conmemorativo del 7 de Noviembre“, *España Popular* IV/162 (12 Nov 1943), p. 5.

446 „La Voz de Austria“, *Austria Libre* III/1 (Jan 1944), p. 2.

447 See the printed announcement at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 3637, s. fol.; USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843A-843FreeGermans, s. fol.

448 „La ARAM manifiesta su opinión acerca de la declaración de Moscú sobre Austria“, *Austria Libre* III/1 (Jan 1944), p. 4.

best to portray Austria as a country opposed to Nazi rule (he estimated a maximum of 15 percent of the population to support the Nazi regime) and its *Wehrmacht* army units as highly unreliable and on the brink of open mutiny. Finally, the provision of the Moscow Declaration that the extent to which Austria would be held responsible for the damage caused by the Nazi regime would depend on the contribution that Austrians would make towards their own liberation appeared to him as an invitation for the Austrian resistance to act against Nazi rule as soon as Allied troops would approach the Austrian borders. While generously overstating the Austrian opposition to the Nazi regime, Frei thus presented the Moscow Declaration as a welcome and important incentive for open insurrection.<sup>449</sup> He characterised the *Acción Republicana Austriaca* as part of that resistance and counted on the support of other central European exile movements (above all, the Czechoslovakian community in exile) for the restoration of a free and independent Austrian state.<sup>450</sup>

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of November 1943, the German movement *Alemania Libre* celebrated the second anniversary of its monthly journal *Freies Deutschland* with an evening of literary cabaret at their *Haus der Freien Deutschen* (House of Free Germans) at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 86 in the district of *Hidalgo*. The evening was meant to repeat the success of the inauguration of the German social centre and was announced as an event of “dance, music, café, sausage parlour, bar etc.”.<sup>451</sup> The literary and artistic side of the celebration was directed by Egon Erwin Kisch and included contributions by the actresses Brigitte Chatel (better known as Brigitte Alexander<sup>452</sup>), Luise Robicek-Rooner, Steffi Spira, and Rosi Volk, as well as Ludwig Renn, Günter Ruschin, and Kurt Stern.<sup>453</sup> The reason why this event did not receive the usual congratulatory reviews in the German-speaking exile press in Mexico City is to be found in its tragic ending: the communist journalist Alfred Miller (also known under his pseudonym Alfredo Forthmüller) had belonged to the first wave of German political refugees, first to the United States, and later as a Mexican correspondent for the *Daily Worker*<sup>454</sup>, a regular contributor to *El Popular*<sup>455</sup> and the German-speaking exile press in

449 See the text of his contribution (fragment) to the press conference of the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 1943 at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 20126/F19 (Nachlaß Bruno Frei), s. fol.

450 „La ARAM manifiesta su opinión acerca de la declaración de Moscú sobre Austria“, *Austria Libre* III/1 (Jan 1944), p. 4.

451 „Wovon man spricht“, *Demokratische Post* I /6 (1 Nov 1943), p. 4.

452 Cf. Ulrike Schütte: "Brigitte Alexander: Vivir entre dos mundos", in: Giovanni di Stefano and Michaela Peters (eds): *México con punto de fuga real o imaginario* (München, 2011), pp. 285-99.

453 „Wovon man spricht“, *Demokratische Post* I/8 (1 Dec 1943), p. 4; see also „Zweijahresfest der Zeitschrift Freies Deutschland“, *Freies Deutschland* III/1 (Dec 1943), p. 2.

454 See the report on „Communist Party of Mexico general“, memo on Owen Roach (13 Sep 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Sep-Dec, p. 3.

455 See the memorandum on *El Popular* (22 Aug 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

Mexico. During the late 1930s, Miller had been a key member of the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana* and had campaigned for the admission of German anti-fascist refugees to Mexico.<sup>456</sup> He had long suffered from a critical heart condition compounded by the atmospheric and climatic conditions of the high-altitude of the *Valle de México*. Only the day before the celebration at the *Haus der Freien Deutschen*, his doctor had warned him of his critical condition and urged him to leave Mexico City for lower altitudes and give up drinking.<sup>457</sup> His close friend Bodo Uhse, in his obituary to Miller, highlighted Miller's contributions to the political mobilisation against fascism across the North-American continent and recalled the "ironic" circumstances of his death during the festivities at the *Haus der Freien Deutschen*: "He, who carried within him the spirit of a fighter, collapsed while dancing struck down by a heart attack – at a time when thousands are dying daily while fighting for the same ideals that moved him. He, who was deeply lonely, died among his friends."<sup>458</sup> Miller had not been quite so lonely, as Uhse learned soon after his death, since Alma Agee (a US-American ex-patriate in Mexico and Uhse's partner and later wife), had maintained a secret love affair with Miller until the end. It was she who recalled the tragic events of that night in greater detail:

[...] I had just finished a dance with Bodo and was sitting at a small table with him and Egon [Erwin] Kisch when someone came over and said to us: "Please come to the bar, and try to get Alfred to stop drinking." Bodo and Egon were deep in conversation, and may not even have heard. Remembering the doctor's warning, I was horrified and ran to the bar in the next room. Alfred was standing at the bar, downing one straight whiskey after another. I went up to him, feeling something like terror, and saw his entire face dripping with sweat. He looked at me, and suddenly I didn't care that we were being watched, that no one was supposed to know that we were more than just friends. I took the handkerchief from his breast pocket and wiped the perspiration from his face while he, still looking at me, took my hand and raised it to his lips, also apparently not caring who was watching, and as he kissed my hand I heard him murmur, very softly, "Good-bye, my love." I was suddenly panic-stricken that we would be seen and heard, and I left the room. Minutes later, I was called again, this time with definite foreboding – I was too late. I saw Alfred sprawled on the floor, clearly dead, his face and hands a ghastly yellow, and only then did his good-bye register.<sup>459</sup>

456 See the memorandum on the LPC (31 Mar 1938) at AGN DGIPS, caja 205, exp. 6, fol. 2.

457 See Alma Neuman: *Always straight ahead. A Memoir* (Baton Rouge / London, 1993), p. 99.

458 Bodo Uhse: „Ein Leben. Zum Tode Alfred Millers“, *Freies Deutschland* III/2 (Jan 1944), p. 22.

459 Alma Neuman: *Always straight ahead. A Memoir* (Baton Rouge / London, 1993), p. 100.



Miller's funeral at the *Panteón Jardín* in the district of *San Ángel* on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 1943 demonstrated the transnational role he had played among the German-speaking community of exile and across the North-American network of left-wing journalism during those years: Alongside Alexander Abusch for the journal *Freies Deutschland*, Egon Erwin Kisch and André Simone offered a eulogy, as did Carlos Sánchez Cárdenas for the Mexican communist journal *Voz de México*, César Ortiz for the association of foreign journalists, Frederic Thomson for the *Joint-Antifascist Refugee Committee*, and Alejandro Carrillo as director of the CTM's periodical *El Popular*. Vicente Lombardo Toledano in his capacity as president of the CTAL sent a telegramme celebrating Miller as a representative of a "better Germany of tomorrow".<sup>460</sup> Two years later, the German community of exile dedicated a tombstone at his grave site.<sup>461</sup>

During these weeks of autumn 1943, the anti-communist Left of Spanish republican refugees in exile in Mexico City began to mobilise towards a united platform of political activism. Against the backdrop of increased public prominence of the Soviet ambassador Oumansky and his political allies from among the community of exile in Mexico City, these anti-communist forces gathered around the socialist and republican forces in conjunction with their Catalan counterparts. A first glimpse of this new cooperation became visible to the public eye at the annual commemoration of the former president of Catalonia Luis Companys which took place in the *Teatro "Hidalgo"* at calle Regina no. 52 in the *Centro Histórico* on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 1943. The organising committee was headed by José Andreu Abelló of the *Ezquerria Republicana Catalana*, and the meeting (which was also broadcast via radio) was presided over by Miguel Santaló of the same party affiliation. Among the speakers at the *Teatro "Hidalgo"* that Sunday morning at 10.30 were Antonio María Sbert, equally of the *Ezquerria Republicana*, Pedro Bosch Gimpera of the *Acció Catalana Republicana*, the former Mexican consul in Barcelona Antonio Gómez Maganda, the former president of the Spanish constitutional court Álvaro de Albornoz, the president of the Spanish *Cortes* Diego Martínez Barrio, and, most significantly, Indalecio Prieto of the anti-communist Spanish socialists who usually kept a low public profile outside the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"* and the *Centro Republicano Español*.<sup>462</sup> The event was important enough for the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"* to postpone its regular general assembly by one week to the following Sunday while printing and distributing Prieto's speech.<sup>463</sup>

460 „Alfred Millers letzter Weg“, *Freies Deutschland* III/2 (Jan 1944), p. 31.

461 „Am Grab von Alfred Miller“, *Neues Deutschland* V/1 (Jan 1946), p. 33.

462 See the press announcement „Un Acto Público: En Memoria de Luis Companys“, *Adelante* II/42 (15 Oct 1943), p. 1; „A la Memoria de Companys“ by Juan B. Climent at AEM, Archivo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 43/1, fols. 174-8.

463 „Círculo Cultural Pablo Iglesias“, *Adelante* II/42 (15 Oct 1943), p. 3; „Movimiento Juvenil Socialista: El último discurso de Prieto“, *Adelante* II/44 (1 Dec 1943), p. 4.

During the month of November 1943, an exchange of letters between the Catalan anti-communists and the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"* paved the way for a first meeting at the house of José Andreu Abelló and a basic agreement to forge a "pact of unity to restore the Spanish Republic" later that month.<sup>464</sup> That agreement was signed on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1943 at the *Centro Republicano Español* at calle Tacuba no. 15 and resulted in an organisation which became known as the *Junta Española de Liberación*. This pact of unity was signed by Carlos Esplá and Pedro Vargas for the Spanish *Izquierda Republicana*, Indalecio Prieto and Manuel Albar for the Spanish socialists of the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"*, Diego Martínez Barrio and Félix Gordón Ordaz for the *Unión Republicana*, and José Andreu Abelló for the *Ezquierda Republicana Catalana* and Pedro Bosch Gimpera for the *Acció Catalana Republicana*.<sup>465</sup> The first public declaration of the *Pacto de Unidad* explicitly referred to the Spanish constitution of December 1931, denounced the involvement of foreign powers that made the fascist dictatorship of Franco possible, rejected any suggestion of a restoration of the Spanish monarchy, and called for the restoration of the Spanish Republic as a "genuinely democratic government" according to the Atlantic Charter while stating the loyalty of the anti-communist Spanish republicans to the struggle of the United Nations "since the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September of 1939" and their victory "which will also be ours", since "we were the first to suffer the brutalities of Nazi-fascism and the first to spill torrents of blood in repelling it."<sup>466</sup> The emphasis on "genuine democracy", the reference to the provision of national self-determination contained in the Atlantic Charter, and to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1939, the date of the French and British declarations of war against Nazi Germany at a time when the Soviet Union observed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with the Hitler regime, thereby all served as markers of the anti-communist motivation behind this document.<sup>467</sup> The US embassy, for the time being, understood the formation of the *Junta Española de Liberación* as an attempt to establish a Spanish republican government in exile, challenging the position of Juan Negrín in London.<sup>468</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the Spanish communists and their Catalan allies, the *Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña*, were opposed to the new platform of anti-Soviet Spanish republicanism in Mexico City, but, in addition, other organisations also kept their distance from this attempt at creating a unified

464 „Historia de un Acuerdo: Pacto de Unidad para Restaurar la República Española“, *Adelante* II/44 (1 Dec 1943), pp. 1 & 4.

465 See the typoscript of the *Pacto de Unidad para Restaurar la República Española* at Archivo General de la Guerra Civil Española (Salamanca), sig.6.3/5329; published later as „Pacto de Unidad“, *Adelante* II/44 (1 Dec 1943), p. 1.

466 Ibid.

467 Cf. the commentary provided by Juan B. Climent: „Pacto de Unidad pro República Española“ (22 Nov 1943) at AEM, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 43/2, fols. 12-3.

468 See the memorandum „Formation of a Spanish Government in Exile or a Spanish Liberation Committee in Mexico“ (22 Nov 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Sep-Dec, s. fol.

republican front to influence any arrangements for the post-war order of Europe, such as the followers of the socialist *Círculo "Jaime Vera"*, parts of the *Izquierda Republicana*, the Basque nationalists, many trade unionists of the UGT and the anarcho-syndicalists of the CNT, the *Unidad Republicana* and the *Partido Republicano Federal*, the *Comisión Coordinadora de Entidades Republicanas Españolas*, or the regional representation of Galicians in exile.<sup>469</sup> The Mexican periodical *Últimas Noticias* also remarked that "there is no such unity of Spanish political parties in exile in agreement with the opinions of different sectors of immigrants which did not sign the already so-called »family pact« between socialists and Spanish republicans, leaving out other political groups »which do not wish to cooperate with the signatories of that pact«." The Basque nationalists and communists, in particular, objected to Prieto's initiative in their social centre of the *Centro Vasco* at Avenida Madero no. 6, only two blocks away from the *Centro Republicano Español* in the historic city centre.<sup>470</sup> Across the city the different political camps of Spanish republicanism held meetings to discuss their attitude towards this new republican initiative, and these activities were duly noted by the Mexican press, particularly the right-wing oppositional journals which, in principle, were always prepared to highlight any political alignments and disagreements among the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City that suggested a mobilisation of anti-communist forces.<sup>471</sup> One notable supporter, though, which Prieto's initiative of the *Junta Española de Liberación* succeeded to attract to their cause was the leader of the *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (POUM) in Mexico, Julián Gorkín, who applauded the progress towards Spanish republican democracy on the basis of the constitution of 1931 while he wished for a broadening of the support for the JEL "to all those who do not observe discipline from abroad" – a clear negative reference to the Spanish communists in exile.<sup>472</sup> The anarcho-syndicalist CNT, however, sharing its domicile at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50 with the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* of which Gorkín was cultural secretary, rejected the JEL while calling for a cross-party agreement based on mutual respect, "proportionality and cohabitation".<sup>473</sup>

469 See „Prieto, Darlan de España?“, *Así* (11 Dec 1943), p. 23, comparing Prieto with the French navy commander François Darlan (1881-1942), a Nazi collaborator and erstwhile minister of the Vichy government who in 1942 sided with the allied forces in north Africa.

470 „Sería mejor trabajar que firmar pactos políticos“, *Últimas Noticias* (23 Nov 1943).

471 See the press report „Efervescencia en la Emigración Española“ (23 Nov 1943) at AEM, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 43/2, fols. 15-6; „Un gran paso en la reconquista, para España, de un régimen liberal“, *Excélsior* (23 Nov 1943), noting the unwillingness of the Spanish republican military officers around José Miaja to join the JEL because of its openly partisan character; press report „Divergencias por el Pacto“ (25 Nov 1943) at AEM, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 43/2, fols. 31-2; „Manifestan su inconformidad con el reciente Pacto de Unidad de Españoles“ (2 Dec 1943), *ibid.*, fol. 75.

472 „Los Vascos y el Pacto de Unidad“, *Excélsior* (24 Nov 1943), p. 16.

473 „La CNT española no está de acuerdo con el reciente pacto para la unidad“, at AEM, Archivo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 43/2, fols. 45-6.

While the JEL established itself in a public ceremony at the *Centro Republicano Español* on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November 1943<sup>474</sup>, the clearest show of opposition occurred simultaneously at the *Teatro de los Electricistas* at calle Artes no. 45 in the *Tabacalera* that same evening<sup>475</sup>: representatives of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), the *Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña* (PSUC), the socialist *Círculo “Jaime Vera”* and the UGT, the *Alianza Nacional Gallega*, the left-wing youth organisations and military officers lead by air force general Hidalgo de Cisneros, the Basque nationalists, the *Casal Català*, and the *Centro Andaluz* gathered for a mass meeting that was broadcast live by *Radio Nacional*.<sup>476</sup> The main speaker of the evening was the leader of the Spanish communists, Antonio Mije, who sarcastically “congratulated” the constituent forces of the *Junta Española de Liberación* for finally documenting “their decision to fight against Franco, the Falange and for the reconquest of the republic.” Mije praised the sacrifices and achievements of the Red Army, reminded his audience that Prieto and his followers had been responsible for much of the political divisions among the socialists, the *Izquierda Republicana*, and the socialist trade union movement, and, instead of a pact of unity repeating the coalition of 1931, called for the unity of 1943 among the Spaniards in exile, reflecting the alliance of the United Nations. He therefore blamed anti-communism for the divisions of anti-fascist forces that had led the European continent into disaster:

The republican and socialists friends who follow that small conglomerate headed by Prieto and Martínez Barrio must keep in mind where anti-communism leads. We can remind them that many social-democratic leaders in Germany prepared with their anti-communism the terrain for Hitler. Unfortunately, it was not those wretches who paid for the consequences but the German people and all the subjugated peoples of Europe. In France, the anti-communism of Daladier and the fury of de Bonnet were one of the principle causes for the Nazi invasion and for Petain’s and Laval’s accession to power. Again, unfortunately, it was not the degenerate de Bonnet who suffered the consequences but the French people. In Spain, the anti-communism of Casado resulted in handing over the republican resistance to Franco and helped him in the horrendous massacre which the Falangistas committed.

474 „Constituvóse ayer la Junta Española de Liberación“, *Excélsior* (27 Nov 1943), pp. 1 & 6.

475 See the announcement of the event „El Partido Comunista de España opina“, *España Popular* IV/164 (26 Nov 1943), p. 1.

476 See press report „Más adhesiones y críticas al Pacto“, at AEM, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 43/2, fol. 42; „El gran acto del día 26 en México“, *España Popular* IV/165 (3 Dec 1943), pp. 1 & 2.

The confidence with which Mije argued against any attempts to isolate the communists from the project of unifying the anti-fascist forces of Spanish republicanism was not only the result of a political strategy but originated from an eschatological ideological belief system that went beyond party politics:

Our party is not the fruit of any specific, passing circumstances. Nor is it a party that formed for a specific electoral coalition, no. Our party is the consequence of a scientific doctrine. It is the fruit of the grandiose, unfading doctrine of Karl Marx. (Great applause.) It is the party which is fulfilling the most fundamental needs of the advanced class, of the class which is called upon to rule the destiny of mankind, the working class. For these major reasons, and many more which I do not explicate in order not to produce an endless lecture, therefore it is impossible to isolate the Communist Party, it is impossible to eradicate it.

Mije's lecture represented the peak of the communists influence and self-declared hegemony over anti-fascist politics in exile and also marked the enhanced position of communism fuelled by the advances of the Red Army on the Eastern front of the European war which cast its political shadow across the globe onto the politics of exile in Mexico City.<sup>477</sup>

In his response to the critical reaction to the creation of the JEL, Indalecio Prieto used the occasion of a dinner attended by about 300 persons at the Hotel "Mancera" in the evening of the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1943 organised by the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"* in honour of Tomás Serantes, who had escaped deportation from the United States to Spain, to outline his understanding of the role of the Spanish socialists as part of the JEL. Prieto placed great emphasis on the continuity of the republican coalition since the agreement of San Sebastián in 1930 and defended the principle of legality against the revolutionary aspirations of the anarcho-syndicalists<sup>478</sup> as well as against the separatism of the Basque nationalists. He went on to attack the communists for their alliance with Nazi Germany in 1939, one of the reasons for having taken on his anti-communist stance in Mexico ever since the inauguration of the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"* in 1940, and accused the communists of a tactical relationship with anti-fascism. The Spanish socialists

477 See the full text of Mije's speech: „Lo que opina el Partido Comunista de la situación actual en España y del pacto suscrito por algunos sectores de la emigración“, *España Popular* IV/165 (3 Dec 1943), pp. 3 & 4; cf. the protest against the JEL: „El acuerdo Prieto-Martínez Barrio no representa la unión de a fuerzas antifranquistas“, signed by Luis Fernández Clérigo and Antonio Velao for the *Unidad Republicana*, Juan Perea and Luis Cordero Bell for the *Partido Republicano Federal*, José Rodríguez Vega for the UGT, Antonio Mije for the PCE, Ramón González Peña and Ramón Lamonedá for the socialists of the *Círculo „Jaime Vera“*, and Juan Comorera for the PSUC, *ibid.*, p. 1.

478 This passage of his speech is particularly interesting for being pronounced in the Hotel „Mancera“, located at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 49, directly opposite the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* at no. 50, the domicile of the CNT.

would not, Prieto insisted, accept any interference in Spanish matters by outside powers, thereby reiterating his well-known republican nationalism. In this vein, Prieto also questioned the legitimacy of Basque nationalism.<sup>479</sup> Again, among the attendants of this dinner organised by the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"* at the Hotel "Mancera" was Julián Gorkín, POUM leader and the cultural secretary of the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* literally across the street.<sup>480</sup> Prieto's speech was immediately attacked by the Spanish communist journal *España Popular*: "His words of the 5<sup>th</sup> of December were not directed at the dinner guests, nor at the republican forces. They were directed at the Spanish reactionaries, even those who are still riding along with the Francoists [...] They were directed at them to tell them: I, INDALECIO PRIETO, am your man."<sup>481</sup> Ideological differences not only existed between the communists and Prieto's followers of the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"* but also right down the middle of organisations such as the *Izquierda Republicana* and the UGT.<sup>482</sup> In the light of such political strife across the political spectrum, a number of Basque political associations in exile, the Basque socialists represented by Tomás García, José María de Lasarte, and Julio de Jáuregui of the *Partido Nacionalista*, the *Acción Nacionalista Vasca* represented by Tomás de Etxabe and Martín Retuerto Loizaga, and José María de Aristegui for the CNT of Euzkadi, met in the building at calle Dinamarca no. 54 in the north of the district of Juárez on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1943 to pass a "joint declaration of the Basque organisations".<sup>483</sup> In their statement, these organisations called for the fight against the Franco regime, denounced any plans to restore the Spanish monarchy as "anti-popular and anti-democratic", demanded religious and cultural freedoms for the national minorities of Spain as well as social justice and pledged their loyalty to the Basque government in exile.<sup>484</sup> Antonio Ramos and Victor Salazar as president and secretary of the Spanish socialists of the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"* responded immediately that only the anarcho-syndicalists of the CNT had joined the cause of the Basque nationalists as they did not recognise the legitimacy of Tomás García to speak for the Basque socialists.<sup>485</sup> The anarcho-syndicalists, for their part, took some more time to explain their rejection of the *Junta Española de Liberación*.

479 *El Partido Socialista en el Pacto de Unidad para la liberación de España. Discurso de Indalecio Prieto* (México D.F., 1943), originally published in *Adelante* II/45 (15 Dec 1943), pp. 1 & 2.

480 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

481 „Lo que hay tras el discurso de Indalecio Prieto“, *España Popular* IV/167 (17 Dec 1943), p. 1.

482 See the press report „Agradacimiento de una Junta de Hispanos“ (12 Dec 1943) at AEM, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 43/2, fol. 116.

483 See „Firmaron un pacto de unidad todas las organizaciones de vascos de México“ (15 Dec 1943) at AEM, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 43/2, fols. 121-2; „Transcendental Pacto Firmaron los Grupos Políticos Vascos“ (15 Dec 1943), *ibid.*, fols. 123-4.

484 „Declaración conjunta de las organizaciones vascas“ (14 Dec 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800R-Ref, s. fol.; see also at Fundación Pablo Iglesias, Archivos Particulares, Eugenio Arauz Pallardo, AAVV-AEA-152-24.

485 Press report „Solo los Anarcosindicalistas están con los Nacionalistas“ (19 Dec 1943) at AEM, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 43/2, fol. 128.

Two months later, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 1944, they held a meeting at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50 which attracted much attention among the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City, as “a great number of emigrants of different political and unionist affiliation gathered for the event, which meant that more than fifty percent of those present were persons from outside our organisation. We were able to ensure that thousands of people interested in our problems heard the speeches via radio.”<sup>486</sup> First, Emilio Maldonado pointed out that little was known about the motivations and intentions of the JEL. The unity of the Spanish republican cause, in his view, required nothing more than loyalty and integrity of political ideas, and the CNT would not accept to play a secondary role within an organisation created by others: “We have an interest in declaring that no party or person from outside it will represent it!”<sup>487</sup> Joaquín Cortés turned directly against the JEL’s anti-communist rationale and added that the CNT would not “maintain a conduct of aggressive exclusionism but, on the contrary, what the confederate organisation [of the CNT] intends is to be in touch with the other anti-Francoist sectors about decent principles which will make possible the cooperation of all in the struggle for the liberation of the Spanish people.” He did not overlook the international dimension of the question of Spain:

Today, just as in the past of our war, international factors continue to play a role of primary importance for the liberation of our people. England and North America are following a policy of meagre concessions of bad shopkeepers, because of their fear of the establishment of a socialist regime, with regard to Italy, France, and the other European nations which directly fall into their zone of influence. This policy of appeasement, inaugurated in all affairs of pre-war politics by Chamberlain at the famous Cliveden set, has led those countries to lose their political and diplomatic compass while dividing the opinions among the Allies themselves to the point when Russia is the power to determine a number of possible solutions on the European continent. [...] It is, therefore, the duty of everyone of us to engage in the enormous work we need to accomplish in order to regroup the socialist and revolutionary forces in Europe and to place all the determination and will to work in the service of constructing a society for which we all have fought.

This aim, Cortés concluded, would be the “construction of socialism in its broadest free conception.”<sup>488</sup> Finally, Progreso Alfarache explained that the Spanish republican constitution of 1931 could no longer form the basis for antifascist cooperation but that a new consensus was needed “to create a powerful

486 „Impresión del Acto“, *Solidaridad Obrera* III/46 (26 Feb 1944), p. 1.

487 „CNT explica su posición ante la unidad antifranquista“, *Solidaridad Obrera* III/46 (26 Feb 1944), p. 1 (with a photograph of the speakers at the meeting).

488 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

block of proletarian organisations” and that the future of any anti-Francoist politics must not repeat “the disastrous policies which culminated in the treason of the worst elements that lived in Spain” and called for “the exaltation of the popular masses towards the realisation of socialism.”<sup>489</sup> As the European war entered its final phase, the community of Spanish republicans in exile in Mexico City could hardly have acted in a more irreconcilably divided manner: While, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 1943, the *Junta Española de Liberación* published their first manifesto, José Mancisidor addressed a meeting of the SAURSS at its domicile at calle Bolívar no. 57 to celebrate Stalin’s birthday.<sup>490</sup> Isolated from these ideological oppositions among the left-wing Spanish republicans, the ex-patriate Spanish business community, largely loyal to the nationalist regime of Franco, continued to socialise at the *Casino Español* at calle Isabel la Católica no. 29 where “one constantly talks about politics with principle reference to what is of greatest interest, the events which are closely related to the *Madre Patria*.”<sup>491</sup>

The German-speaking community of exile centred on the communist-dominated *Haus der Freien Deutschen* at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 86, on the other hand, used the Christmas season of December 1943 to create an unpolitical atmosphere of “homely-familiar” festivity for the children of the German community. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of December, the social centre of movement *Alemania Libre* was decked out with a Christmas tree to receive the children in their Sunday best. The programme included the Mexican custom of hitting *piñatas* for sweets, a punch-and-judy show about the hilariousness of the Mexican word “Popo” (short for “Popocatépetl”) which translates into the German word for “bum”, a fairy-tail shadow play, and, as the climax of the afternoon, the arrival of Egon Erwin Kisch dressed up as Santa Claus. The children’s event did not, however, fail to address the need for political mobilisation, in this case in the form of the German Democratic Women’s Movement which Martha Berg-André advertised to the others present.<sup>492</sup> The German Democratic Women’s movement had been founded during the congress of the Movement *Alemania Libre* in May 1943, participated in charitable activities in conjunction with the Mexican *Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra*<sup>493</sup>, and celebrated its first anniversary at the *Haus der Freien Deutschen* with a charity event under the motto “¡Viva México!” which included “Mexican

489 Ibid., p. 3.

490 „Manifiesto de la Junta Española de Liberación“, *Adelante* III/46 (1 Jan 1944), p. 4; the JEL finally established its governing board, the *Consejo Técnico*, at the *Centro Republicano Español* on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January 1944, „Se constituye el Consejo Técnico de la Junta Española de Liberación“, *Adelante* III/48 (1 Feb 1944), p. 3; memorandum on the „Sociedad de Amigos de la URSS“ (11 Aug 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, p. 11.

491 Report on the *Casino Español* by Miguel Girard Peniche to the *Secretaría de Gobernación* (20 Dec 1943) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 95, exp. 16, fol. 19.

492 „Der Weihnachtsmann im Hause der Freien Deutschen“, *Demokratische Post* I/10 (31 Dec 1943), p. 3; cf. „Kinderfest in Mexiko“, *Freies Deutschland* III/3 (Feb 1944), p. 34.

493 Hilde Abusch: „Ein Jahr Demokratische Frauenbewegung in Mexiko“, *Demokratische Post* I/19 (15 May 1944), p. 2.



decorations”, songs, artisan crafts, and food.<sup>494</sup> It was in this, seemingly unpolitical, sphere that the cultural politics of exile appeared to achieve at least relative success in creating transnational avenues of experience and social practice – even the invitations for the event, directed primarily at the German-speaking community, were printed in Spanish.<sup>495</sup> New Year’s Eve at the *Haus der Freien Deutschen* struck a more overtly political tone, when more than 200 guests gathered to celebrated the “new year of victory” until dawn.<sup>496</sup> Optimism was running high among the German community of exile during those days in Mexico City, as the president of *Alemania Libre*, Ludwig Renn, took to the microphone and talked about the “world problems to be solved during the next months” and expressed his conviction that “that solution will be achieved successfully”. The event was attended not only by the members of the German community in exile but also by “long-established ex-patriate democratic Germans as well as members of different European and American colonies in the capital city.”<sup>497</sup> Such political activities were now helped by the access which the German movement *Alemania Libre* enjoyed to the communication facilities of the Soviet embassy located on the Calzada de Tacubaya just north of the *Edificio Ermita* on the northern edge of the district of *Tacubaya*. In this way, the monthly journal *Freies Deutschland* in Mexico City was able to offer reprints of articles that had appeared in the journal of the same name edited by the National Committee Free Germany in Moscow containing reports of their work with German prisoners of war behind the Soviet front line and evidence for German crimes and atrocities encountered by the advancing Soviet troops.<sup>498</sup> The propagandistic value of these materials was of particular relevance in the ongoing attempts to win over the German ex-patriate community in the city when a German officer, lieutenant Heinrich Graf von Einsiedel (who also happened to be the great-grandson of the universally revered founder of the second German Empire, Otto von Bismarck), addressed the Germans in the name of the communist National Committee Free Germany from Moscow.<sup>499</sup> Such informations and political-ideological implications entered the social practice of exile in Mexico City at a time when the victory over Nazi Germany only seemed a matter of time and expectations for an anti-fascist post-war order in Europe occupied an ever-greater part of the minds and souls of the German-speaking community of exile in the Mexican capital. This close

494 I. S.: „»¡Viva México!« Das Fest der Deutschen Demokratischen Frauen“, *Demokratische Post* I/20 (1 Jun 1944), p. 2.

495 See the invitation at BAL, Sg Y 14/21, fols. 42-3.

496 Cf. e.g. the numerous greetings for the „New Year of Victory“ of the United Nations over „Nazi barbarism“, *Freies Deutschland* III/2 (Jan 1944), pp. 35-6.

497 „Aus der Bewegung“, *Demokratische Post* I/11 (15 Jan 1944), p. 4; cf. „Grosse Silvesterfeier“, *Freies Deutschland* III/2 (Jan 1944), p. 2.; „Ludwig Renn begruesst das Neue Jahr“, *Freies Deutschland* III/3 (Feb 1944), p. 33.

498 See e.g. „Der Kampf um das deutsche Heer“, *Freies Deutschland* II/2 (Jan 1944), pp. 18-9; „Der Todeswagen“, *ibid.*, p. 19.

499 „Bismarcks Urenkel an die Deutschen“, *Demokratische Post* I/11 (15 Jan 1944), p. 1.

relationship between the German communists at the *Haus der Freien Deutschen* in Mexico City and the Soviet embassy did not escape the attention of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* where their Department for Political and Social Studies (i.e. the domestic secret service) drew their own conclusions from the newly-forged alliances between communists and German *Wehrmacht* officers as prisoners of war in Moscow:

It is evident that the Kremlin's tolerance towards those Free Germans has its reasons, since the current war requires many difficult diplomatic manoeuvres, but as the group *Alemania Libre* in Mexico is an outlet of Moscow it is difficult to know how this policy is being translated and interpreted by the followers of this organisation in Mexico. There exist some indicators in the sense that they are disposed to enter pacts with their old political enemies, as they have invited many elements of the German colony in Mexico to join their group.<sup>500</sup>

During the festive season of 1943/44, the Austrian community of exile around the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México*, for their part, connected with the Hispanic custom of bringing gifts to children on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January at the orthopaedic station of a children's hospital in Mexico City where the women's section of the ARAM, represented by Elsa Volk, Fanni Luft, and Grete Horecky, offered sweet cake, festive songs, and gifts to the children. The event was covered by the Mexican journal *El Popular* and passed, in the words of the hospital's director Federico Gómez, as "a sign of the firm friendship between the two peoples represented at the fiesta", a feeling echoed by the words of Elsa Volk who reiterated in her response the "gratitude which the Austrians feel towards Mexico."<sup>501</sup> And two days later, the Spanish *Comité de Mujeres Antifascistas de España "María Pineda"* followed suit in these endeavours at the Hotel "Regis" neighbouring the *Alameda Central* with a cultural festival in solidarity with the republican prisoners in Spain: Mexican stars of stage and screen such as Andrea Palma, María Félix, and Mapy Cortés sponsored the event showcasing the Spanish singer "Angelillo" accompanied by the guitarist Pepe Hurtado, the dancer Salvador Bordes Mancel, and a recital by the actor Francisco de Valera.<sup>502</sup> Charity and practices of festive sociability could go a long way to transport the politics of exile by means of inconspicuous cultural activities, often spearheaded by the women's sections of the political associations of exile in Mexico City.

500 Report on *Alemania Libre* (24 Jan 1944) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 90, exp. 11, fol. 51.

501 „Los Niños del Hospital Infantil fueron agasajados el Día de Reyes“, *El Popular* (7 Jan 1944).

502 See the press notices „Festival de la Mujeres Españolas“ (6 Jan 1944) at AEM, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 44/1, fol. 3; „Festival Artístico“ (8 Jan 1944), *ibid.*, Hemeroteca España en el Mundo 44/1, fol. 7.

The season of politicised sociability continued on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 1944 at Avenida de México no. 103 in the district of *Hipódromo* when the Austrian organization ARAM staged the “Gschnasfest”, a celebration of Viennese carnival. To the music of the dance orchestra of Jesús Velázquez, the festivity featured a variety of arenas of amusements, a dance competition, a typically Viennese coffee house and a wine parlour, as well as a more conventional bar and a clairvoyant’s booth.<sup>503</sup> The cabaret stage was occupied by a variety show in the form of a “carnival newspaper” performed by Luise Robicek-Rooner, Brigitte Chatel (later known as Brigitte Alexander), Paul Hermann, Steffi Spira, Ernst Schmelz, and Inge Bill. Rosi Volk and Esperanza de Crespo sang Mexican and Austrian songs and Grisha Feldman, a leading figure in the Russian section of the *Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra*, performed Russian dances.<sup>504</sup> The journal *Austria Libre* proudly noted the presence of the renowned musical director Erich Kleiber, as well as of a number of foreign guests, among them the representative of General de Gaulle in Mexico, Maurice Garreau-Dombasle, and the first secretary of the French legation, the Chinese ambassador, the wife of the Czech *Chargé d’Affairs* Karel Wendl, the Dutch consul Hermann Ropens, the Yugoslavian consul general Savich, and the Honduran consul Oswaldo Schoen. The Soviet Union was represented by Yuri Dashkevich, director of the Soviet press agency TASS in Mexico, and a number of Mexican dignitaries of state and cultural offices attended.<sup>505</sup> The significance of such politicised forms of sociability was further promoted by a celebration of the rebellious tradition of carnival in Vienna, since “for the people, the time of masks, of freedom of speech, and even of thought, has often been a gathering of freedom-loving forces”:

That is how it is going to be today. Probably now, too, over waltzes and Prussian military marches, some code words of the popular struggle against the German oppressors are being whispered, some rendez-vous of the fighters is being agreed, flyers are being distributed and radio messages of the Allied nations are being passed on though listening to them entails the death penalty. A people that loves freedom turns every utterance of life into a form of struggle, including dance and the entertainment of carnival.<sup>506</sup>

Two weeks later, the Austrian republican community staged a more strictly political commemoration of the victims of the Austrian resistance at the *Sala de Conferencias* of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*. The evening before, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 1944, Josef Foscht had raised the topic in a lecture on *Radio Nacional*, and

503 See the invitations to the „Gschnasfest“ at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 03637, s. fol., and no. 12859, s. fol.

504 See the programme at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/1a, s. fol., and no. 12859, s. fol.; on Feldman see the confidential memorandum on the „Directors of the *Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra*“ (9 Mar 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 2.

505 „Tributo de Simpatía a Viena“, *Austria Libre* II/3 (Mar 1944), p. 1 & 7.

506 Maria Heim: „Fasching in Wien“, *ibid.*, p. 5.

on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March the public commemoration at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* saw the ARAM's president Franz Schalmoser deliver the main speech in honour of the victims of Nazi rule in Austria on the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the annexation of Austria. The hall was reported to be overflowing with spectators<sup>507</sup>, among them a delegation of the *Asociación Checoslovaco-Mexicana* headed by the Czech *Chargé d'Affairs*, Karel Wendl, and the association's president Theo Schwarz. Other guests included Theodor Balk (alias: Dragutin Fodor) for *Yugoslavia Libre*, Aladár Tamás in representation of *Hungria Libre*, Ludwig Renn for *Alemania Libre*, Dr. Olper in the name of the *Alianza Internacional "Giuseppe Garibaldi"*, and Maximiliano V. Mada for the Mexican *Comité Nacional Antifascista*. The ARAM proudly noted messages of solidarity and support from a number of diplomatic delegations, Mexican government ministries, and the Spanish republican organisations, among them the *Asociación de Militares Leales a la República Española*, the *Acción Republicana Española*, the *Centro Republicano Español*, and the Mexican FOARE.<sup>508</sup> In contrast to the commemoration of the previous year which featured four speakers under the presidency of Antonio Villalobos (the president of the PRM)<sup>509</sup>, in 1944 the public commemoration of the Austrian community in exile was accompanied by an extensive musical programme – in fact, the event had been advertised as a “great concert of homage to the Austrian patriots”, adding that “Austria will speak through its music”.<sup>510</sup> The band of the Mexican Navy performed the final set of Tchaikovsky's 4<sup>th</sup> symphony under the direction of Estanislao García Espinosa, while the Austrian conductor Carl Alwin directed Beethoven's “Egmont” overture. Dorothea Lang contributed songs by Mozart and Schubert, the violinist Vishka Korkowsky performed Goldmark, Kreisler, Mozart, and Schubert, while Ruth Schönthal played her own contemporary compositions.<sup>511</sup>

The ARAM had perfected the public presentation of their anti-fascist republican politics in the form of artistic and entertaining events which also related to their cultural activities within the German-speaking community. A central feature of the theatre schedule during this last phase of the European war were the works of Johann Nepomuk Nestroy, a popular 19<sup>th</sup>-century Viennese play write whose work combined the anti-romantic current of social realism with satire and musical pieces of popular entertainment. Already on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1943, the performance of his play “Judith and Holofernes” in the *Sala Schiefer* at calle Venustiano Caranza no. 21 in the historical city centre (combined with the

507 The event had been announced across the press in the Mexican capital, cf. the announcements in *Novedades*, *Universal Gráfico*, *Excelsior*, *El Nacional*, *Últimas Noticias*, and *El Popular* (all 11 Mar 1944) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 01065, s. fols.

508 „México y Austria contra el enemigo común“, *Austria Libre* II/4 (Apr 1944), p. 1.

509 See the invitation and programme at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/1a, s. fol.

510 See the announcement: „Gran concierto de homenaje a los patriotas austriacos“, at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/1a, s. fol.

511 „Wovon man spricht“, *Demokratische Post* I/15 (15 Mar 1944), p. 4.

performance of songs by Schubert, Mozart, Mahler, and Beethoven) had proved such a success among the German speaking colony in Mexico City that, by popular demand, it needed to be repeated the following week at the same venue.<sup>512</sup> The carnival cabaret at the “Gschnasfest” in February 1944 featured a text by Nestroy, so it came as no surprise when the theatrical programme of the Austrian community in exile featured Nestroy’s play “Frühere Verhältnisse” at the *Teatro de los Electricistas* at calle Artes no. 45 on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1944. Again, Austrian songs by Schubert and Johann Strauß were performed, on this occasion by Milizy Korjus, accompanied by Ernst Römer.<sup>513</sup> Encouraged by such popular success, the ARAM continued with yet another popular occasion of entertainment on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1944, the great Austrian feast “Danubio Azul” which took place in the hall of the *Rincón Colonial* at Plaza Santos Degollado no. 12 on Avenida Independencia in the district of *Centro*. A variety of performances and attractions was offered with artistic contributions by Josefina Aguilar, Margarita Maris, Raquel Rojas, and Rosi Volk, under the direction of Carl Alwin, Ernst Römer, and Egon Neumann.<sup>514</sup> Even though the Austrian republicans noted that “unfortunately, there have been a great number of feasts lately, which diminished the attendance and the financial result of our ball”, nevertheless, the attendance of the local diplomatic corps was duly noted, and the best part of the profits of 471 pesos was donated to the aid fund for the victims of recent floods in the southern state of Oaxaca.<sup>515</sup>

The relative lack of attendance at the feast of “Danubio Azul” had, however, little to do with the abundance of other festive occasions during the previous weeks – and became the focus of tensions between the Austrian republican group of exile in Mexico and the German-speaking Jewish community in Mexico City at the general meeting of the *Menorah* at their centre at Avenida Yucatán no. 15 in the north of the district of *Hipódromo* on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 1944. A considerable overlap in membership existed between both organisations. At the meeting, Marcel Rubin of the ARAM complained that the *Menorah* was in the habit of scheduling its activities in parallel to other political and social events in the city that were of importance to the German-speaking Jewish community of exile in Mexico, such as a lecture by Dr. F. Lachmann of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on the anniversary of the Russian October Revolution and another by a Mr. Woolman on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November just when the Austrian feast “Danubio Azul” had taken place. He even suggested that the *Menorah* owed the organisers

512 See the invitations and programmes at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/1a, s. fols.; cf. „Oesterreichische Musik – Oesterreichisches Theater. Kulturabend der Acción Republicana Austriaca“, *Demokratische Post* I/1 (15 Aug 1943).

513 See the programme at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/1a, s. fol.; cf. „Theaterabend der ARAM“, *Austria Libre* II/4 (Apr 1944), p. 5, and the review „Unser Theaterabend“, *Austria Libre* II/5 (May 1944), p. 4.

514 See the programme at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/1a, s. fol.; cf. the announcement of the „Nacht an der Schönen Blauen Donau“, *Austria Libre* II/10 (Oct 1944), p. 8.

515 „Una noche en las orillas del Danubio Azul“, *Austria Libre* II/11 (Nov 1944), p. 8.

of the ARAM a “written apology” for the double booking of the date. A “lively discussion” ensued during which Ricardo Warschauer (a board member of the *Menorah* who also contributed to the meetings of the anti-Soviet Union of German and Austrian Socialists (UDÖS) at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano*<sup>516</sup>) rejected any coordination of the work of the *Menorah* with the German-speaking exiles, such as *Alemania Libre* or the ARAM. He did not hide the reason for his hostile attitude which he expressed with bitter sarcasm:

He condemned strongly that there were Jews who during these days continue to organise festivities under mottos such as »The Beautiful Blue Danube« while a more appropriate one might be »In Green Theresienstadt« [...] He expressed his satisfaction with the fact that, according to his sources, this feast had failed to be a success.

Paul Drucker tried to explain that the clash of dates between the two organisations had not been intentional and, thus, rejected the idea of an apology by the *Menorah*. Others, such as Ludwig Stein, Rudolf Feistmann, and Leo Zuckermann tried to promote the idea of cooperation, including a common members’ register which, as Zuckermann insisted, was not meant to turn the *Menorah* into an instrument of communist propaganda, but their efforts were finally rebuked by board member Berthold Adler.<sup>517</sup> The meeting ended without reconciliation.<sup>518</sup> The public occasions of sociability in exile which the German-speaking community in exile staged were, thus, not only an instrument to foster anti-fascist politics among the foreign colonies and their Mexican friends Mexico City, but could also cause grave offence to those who began to realise the full extent of the National Socialist campaign of mass-extirpation of European Jewry and often feared for the lives of families and loved ones. This appears to have been a particularly virulent issue for the German-speaking community in the city, while the Italian community in exile quite successfully staged a well-frequented „Fiesta y Baile“, organised by the *Alianza Internacional "Giuseppe Garibaldi"* at the Mexican *Sindicato de Meseros, Restaurantes, Hoteles y similares* at calle Orozco y Berrano no. 80 in the district of *Guerrero* only three days after the Austrian feast of “Danubio Azul” on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 1944 which offered a „well-stocked bar”

516 See the reference to his lecture on the „Jewish question“ at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 1945, in: „Chronik von kulturellen und politischen Veranstaltungen verschiedener Exil-Organisationen in Mexiko“, in: *Österreicher im Exil, Mexiko 1938-1947. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Christian Kloyber and Marcus G. Patka (Wien, 2002), p. 634.

517 For the board membership of Warschauer and Adler at the *Menorah*, see: „Wovon man spricht“, *Demokratische Post* I/18 (1 May 1944), p. 4.

518 „Actividades de la »Menorah«, Asociación Antifascista de Israelitas de Habla Alemana“, *Revista Israelita de México* (Dec 1944?), at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/4, s. fol.; such conflicts continued into 1945 when the ARAM and the *Menorah* found themselves in a jealous and public dispute over the true meaning of anti-fascism and anti-racism, see: „Mitteilungen: Erklärung des Vorstandes“ (5 Mar 1945) on the back of the *Menorah*’s invitation to Paul Mayer’s poetry recital at the *Casa Schiefer*, calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21.

and a lottery and continued with „dancing inspired by a good orchestra that went on until 5 o'clock in the morning.“<sup>519</sup>

Indeed, the news arriving from Europe caused many to assume the worst for those caught up under German occupation, above all the European Jews. Already in July 1943, the German monthly journal *Freies Deutschland* had run an article by Leo Katz telling the desperate story of the failed uprising of the remaining Jewish population of Warsaw.<sup>520</sup> Simultaneously, the journal *Mundo* recorded the ongoing campaign of mass murder in occupied Poland and the tragic events in the Warsaw Ghetto.<sup>521</sup> On the 20<sup>th</sup> of April of the following year, the Jewish community in Mexico observed the first anniversary of the ghetto uprising with a one-hour walk-out which the *Haus der Freien Deutschen* of the movement *Alemanía Libre* at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 86 echoed with a one-hour closure of their own premises and the display of a statement in memory of the struggle of the Polish Jews including a “protest against the apathy of the civilised world in the face of the diabolical extermination of our brothers in Europe by Nazi barbarism.”<sup>522</sup> A more detailed chronicle of the ghetto uprising by the Polish resistance movement appeared in the very first edition of the periodical of the community of Polish socialists in exile, *Polonia Popular*, edited by Felix Gutman and mainly Jewish *Bund* socialists from offices at calle Medellín 128 in the north of the district of *Roma* who operated in conjunction with the Polish Labor Group in New York City.<sup>523</sup> A week later, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1944, the *Liga Israelita de Ayuda a la URSS* together with the pro-Soviet association of the *Amigos de la División “Tadeusz Kosciuszko”*, the Polish section of the *Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra*, initiated a public commemoration of the ghetto uprising in Warsaw at the *Teatro de los Electricistas* at calle Artes no. 45 in the *Tabacalera*.<sup>524</sup> Approximately 1000 persons attended the occasion, presided over by the former Mexican ambassador to Poland, Antonio Castro Leal. Jadwiga Kaminska spoke in

519 „Fiesta de la Alianza Garibaldi“, *Información Italiana. Publicación mensual de la Alianza Internacional „Giuseppe Garibaldi“ por la libertad de Italia* II/22 (Nov 1944), p. 8.

520 Leo Katz: „Aufstand des Ghettos“, *Freies Deutschland* II/8 (Jul 1943), p. 15.

521 „El Antisemitismo“, *Mundo, Socialismo y Libertad. Revista Mensual*, no. 1 (15 Jun 1943), p. 12; Moises Rubinstein: „Rebellión y suicidio colectivo en el Ghetto – barrio de la muerte – de Varsovia“, *ibid.*, no. 2 (15 Jul 1943), pp. 16-7.

522 „Zum Jahrestag der Schlacht im Warschauer Ghetto“, *Freies Deutschland* III/7 (Jun 1944), p. 34.

523 „La Lucha en el Ghetto de Varsovia“, *Polonia Popular* I/1 (Apr 1944), pp. 10-3; cf. Tadeusz Łepkowski: *La inmigración polaca en México* (Cuadernos de la Casa Chata, 1991), p. 60; the *Bund* group had already drawn attention to the National Socialist mass killings of 1942 since the winter of 1942/43, for example in an article by Simje Tzfaz in the January 1943 edition of the Bundist journal *Forois*, see: Tamara Gleason Freidberg: *Di Shvue, los bundistas en México y participación en la comunidad judía* (México D.F., 2007), pp. 90-1.

524 See the announcement in *España Popular* V/187 (28 Apr 1944), p. 2.; cf. also the invitation poster at: [http://fotos.eluniversal.com.mx/coleccion/muestra\\_fotogaleria.html?idgal=14029](http://fotos.eluniversal.com.mx/coleccion/muestra_fotogaleria.html?idgal=14029) [20 Sep 2018].

the name of the *Amigos de la División "Tadeusz Kosciuszko"* about the example that the Jews of Warsaw had set for the Jewish community everywhere and "stated that anti-Semitism in Poland had been implanted by reactionary forces in the country and that the Polish people were really not anti-Semitic."<sup>525</sup> Other speakers on this occasion included the former Mexican consul general in Marseille, Gilberto Bosques, who had only recently returned from German internment in Bad Godesberg and represented the National Teachers' Union, Gual Vidal of the PRM, Bernardo de los Cobos who represented the CTM, the Spanish communist Wenceslao Roces for the FOARE, André Simone (i.e. Otto Katz) for the *Asociación Checoslovaco-Mexicana*, and finally Moises Lisker as co-organiser from the *Liga Israelita de Ayuda a la URSS*. The event was, thus, firmly under pro-Soviet control under the guidance of the *Unión Democrática Polaco-Mexicana*, opposed to the *Federación Polaca en México*, dominated by the anti-Soviet *Bundists*.<sup>526</sup> The German pro-Soviet exile organisations do not seem to have participated directly in this event beyond expressing their solidarity in a letter to the *Menorah*<sup>527</sup>, as the Austrian members of the ARAM, for their part, gathered on that evening to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday of Robert Horecki.<sup>528</sup> It is also not clear whether the German-speaking community of exile in Mexico City participated in another commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising the following night of the 29<sup>th</sup> of April at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* which had been organised by the *Acción Democrática Internacional* where Pedro Gringoire, Julio Guzman, Severin Ferandel, and Raúl Cordero Amador were recorded as main speakers.<sup>529</sup>

Apart from the tragic fate of the Warsaw Ghetto, evidence for the atrocities of the National Socialist campaign of mass murder in Eastern Europe was, in fact, readily available to the communities of exile in Mexico City. While the Polish socialists commemorated the events of Warsaw, the communist-dominated German community of exile published the secret orders issued during the German advance into the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941 regarding the immediate liquidation of all communist functionaries and "unreliable elements" in the Soviet

525 Memorandum on the „Amigos de la División Tadeusz Kosciuszko del Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra“ (29 Sep 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, p. 2; Kaminska regularly represented the perspective of Soviet propaganda, even in the case of the massacre at Katyn when in February 1944 she had demanded from the Polish government in Exile in London a retraction of their accusations against the Soviet government, „because definite proof had been received from Russian sources that the 11,000 officials were killed by the Germans and not by the Russians.“, *ibid.*, p. 1.

526 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

527 „Beteiligung der Freien Deutschen an der Trauerkundgebung fuer die Opfer des Warschauer Ghetto“, *Demokratische Post* I/18 (1 May 1944), p. 2.

528 See the note on Horecki's birthday: „Wovon man spricht“, *Demokratische Post* I/18 (1 May 1944), p. 4; the report of the commemoration: „Ehrung der Warschauer Helden“, *Demokratische Post* I/19 (15 May 1944), p. 2.

529 Memorandum on „Acción Democrática Internacional“ (13 Sep 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, p. 6.



Union, the executive orders of the so-called “commissar order” of June 1941. The source of such informations was the *Buletín de Información*, edited by the Soviet embassy in Mexico which the *Demokratische Post* recommended to its readers.<sup>530</sup> Not only eye-witness accounts of the concentration camps of Dachau and Buchenwald became available already in September 1944<sup>531</sup>, but also the truth about the industrial character of the mass extermination of the European Jews at Lublin concentration camp (later to be known under the name Majdanek) shortly after its liberation by the Red Army.<sup>532</sup> When on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1944, the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* staged a screening at *Palacio de Bellas Artes* of the Soviet documentary film of the first public trial against German war criminals that had taken place in Charkov in December 1943, the leader of the German communist group in Mexico, Paul Merker, echoed its message with a declaration that did not leave any doubt as to the unwavering attitude in favour of harsh justice which he wanted to promote across the Mexican capital:

[...] in this case justice means: extermination of these murderers, robbers, and pillagers. No issued order may save these hangmen’s assistants from annihilation. What would humanity come to, if a bloodthirsty tyrant’s order should become law which would legitimise the murder of millions and exonerate those who put it into practice, be it out of dullness, sadism, or out of total infestation with Nazism. They all belong to the scum of the earth. They all are mortal enemies of human society and it must decide: either to exterminate those mortal enemies without mercy or see itself perish.<sup>533</sup>

Alexander Abusch echoed this sentiment when he argued that the historical responsibility which resulted from the unspeakable industrialised crimes of the German occupiers of Europe extended not only to the political leadership and the immediate group of perpetrators but also to the German “popular masses”: first, because of their incompetence to prevent the installation of Hitler’s regime, and second, because of their inability to prevent the war or to end it as soon as possible. He acknowledged that some warned that the idea of a collective German guilt for the Nazi crimes would obscure the tangible responsibility of the criminal leadership and their henchmen, but he extended the call for the “eradication of the leaders, beneficiaries, and the perpetrators of German fascism” to the “trust

530 „Die Geheimdokumente von Kiew“, *Demokratische Post* I/17 (15 Apr 1944), p. 2.

531 „Augenzeugen haben das Wort: Konzentrationslagerhäftling 9786“ by Sigmund Schoen, *Demokratische Post* II/2 (1 Sep 1944), p. 2; „Meine Erlebnisse in Dachau und Buchenwald“, *Demokratische Post* II/4 (1 Okt 1944), p. 4.

532 „Die Todesfabrik“, *Demokratische Post* II/2 (1 Sep 1944), p. 5; cf. „Zu Hitlers Todesfabriken“, *Freies Deutschland* III/11 (Oct 1944), p. 10; „Der Prozeß von Maidanek“, *Freies Deutschland* IV/3 (Feb 1945), pp. 18-9; „Ein deutscher General über Majdanek“, *Demokratische Post* II/17 (15 Apr 1945), p. 7.

533 „Ausrottung der Kriegsverbrecher! Eine Erklärung Paul Merkers zur Aufführung des Charkow-Films in Mexiko“, *Demokratische Post* II/7 (15 Nov 1944), p. 1.

holders and big landowners” – the “social backers of fascist bestiality and the profiteers from the crimes against the Jews and all peoples of Europe.”<sup>534</sup> Rudolf Fürth (i.e. Rudolf Feistmann) contributed a portrait of a “small Nazi beast”, the Higher SS and Police Commander in the General Government of occupied Poland, Friedrich Wilhelm Krüger, who had advanced to this position from his earlier employment with the garbage collection and incineration services of Berlin.<sup>535</sup> The German-speaking community of exile in Mexico City was, therefore, well-informed about the character and scale of National Socialist crimes which came to light during the final phase of the European war and engaged in a fundamental debate about issues of guilt and responsibility.

It is revealing, however, that the communist-dominated German-speaking community of exile exclusively used Soviet sources for their reports of Nazi atrocities in Europe while other sources would have been readily available in Mexico City: The journal *Polonia Popular*, edited by largely anti-Soviet Polish socialists, not only highlighted the tragic fate of the Warsaw Ghetto but also drew attention of the wider machinery of mass killing during the Nazi occupation. The group received its information from the Polish underground resistance movement via Polish exile organisations in London and New York and was, thus, able to report the horrors of Nazi crimes while they were still ongoing. A report of mass killings at Trawniki, Poniatov, Lwow, Bialystok, Treblinka, Sobibor, and Tarnow appeared in *Polonia Popular* in June 1944, while emphasising acts of Jewish resistance.<sup>536</sup> The first edition of *Fraternidad*, the journal of the *Comité Mexicano contra el Racismo*, had similar sources at its disposal and simultaneously dedicated its very first article to an eye-witness account of the murder of the Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto at the extermination camp of Belzec.<sup>537</sup> Finally, in July, *Polonia Popular* published an extensive and shockingly detailed report about the camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, covering the mixed character of labour and extermination camp, the numerical size of the daily operation of murder by poison gas, the procedure of “selection” at the infamous “ramp”, the gas chambers, and the crematoria.<sup>538</sup> This report was soon available to the Mexican public as a separate booklet for the price of one peso.<sup>539</sup> Towards the end of the European war,

534 Alexander Abusch: „Hitlers Todesfabriken und die Verantwortung der Deutschen“, *Freies Deutschland* III/12 (Nov 1944), pp. 13-5; cf. Lion Feuchtwanger: „Die Zukunft Deutschlands“, *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

535 Rudolf Fürth (i.e. Rudolf Feistmann): „Von der Müllabfuhr zur Todesfabrik, Kleines Portrait einer Nazi-Bestie“, *ibid.*, p. 18.

536 “Lucha heroica de los judíos en Polonia”, *Polonia Popular* I/3 (Jun 1944), pp. 6-7.

537 „La Matanza de los Judíos en Polonia”, *Fraternidad. Órgano del Comité Mexicano contra el Racismo* I/1 (Jun 1944), p. 2, at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

538 „Oswiecim, campo de la muerte“, *Polonia Popular* I/4 (15 Jul 1944), p. 12-3; cf. the earlier publication of key passages as „Oswiecim. Campo de Terror y de Muerte“, *Mundo. Socialismo y Libertad* 8 (Apr/May 1944), pp. 16-8.

539 See the announcement “Oswiecim. Campo de Muerte”, *Polonia Popular* I/8 (15 Nov 1944), p. 2.

a similar booklet published by Yankel Wiernik was available covering the horrors of Treblinka which the Spanish socialist leader Indalecio Prieto reviewed in *Excelsior*.<sup>540</sup> Without doubt, ample information about the Nazi mass murder of the European Jews was available and evidently crossed the lines of the national sub-communities of exile in Mexico City. However, when the Czech communist writer Lenka Reinerová recalled her experiences of the spring of 1945, she claimed that learning the truth about the mass extermination campaign under the Nazi occupation of Europe had come as a shock only after the end of the war, “[...] when the first letters arrived from Europe, the first messages, slowly one learned what »Auschwitz« was, since one did not know this for the time being, all those extermination camps.”<sup>541</sup> A number of reasons for the dissonance between her memory (50 years after her exile in Mexico) and the wide publicity that information about the mass extermination of the European Jews had evidently enjoyed in Mexico before May 1945 can be contemplated: It is possible that after such a long time her memory simply failed her. More likely, Reinerová may later have dissociated herself from her earlier, abstract knowledge of the *Shoah* at the time when her own family was being killed in Europe and only allowed it to reconnect with her personal memory at the point when she herself was forced to make the connection with the fate of her own family. However, given that none of the information published in *Polonia Popular* from sources within the Polish anti-Soviet resistance made its way into the pro-communist journals of the German-speaking communities of exile, there exists the possibility that Reinerová’s memory did not fail her entirely – which would have profound implications for the topography of information in exile in Mexico City: the journal *Polonia Popular* was edited from offices at calle Medellín no. 128 in the north-west of the district of *Roma*, the very same building where Reinerová had her own office editing the journal of the Czech community in exile, *El Checoslovaco en México*. If it is true that the most shocking reports from Europe, such as the truth about Auschwitz-Birkenau, did not even cross between offices in one and the same building (and the pro-communist faction of central-Europeans exiles in Mexico did not even admit to reading the press of their anti-Soviet neighbours, such as *Polonia Popular* or *Mundo*), then this would shine a revealing light on the extent to which the political polarisation between communist and anti-Soviet political groups in exile impacted upon the very fabric of information and knowledge that was available to the exiled communities in Mexico City.<sup>542</sup>

Throughout 1944, the growing anticipation by the European communities of exile of Allied victory in Europe was closely connected to the advance of the Red Army on the Eastern front and began to show on the public stages of Mexico

540 „Un artículo de Indalecio Prieto“, *Polonia Popular* II/12 (1 Apr 1945), p. 10; cf. “Tremblinka”, *ibid*, II/14 (15 Jun 1945), p. 14;

541 Interview with Lenka Reinerová in *Flucht ins Exil. Deutsche in Mexiko*, documentary film by Gerlinde Boehm (SFB/Goethe-Institut, 1995), hour 1:13:39 – 1:13:57.

542 Cf. the much later report „Die Massenmorde von Oswiecim“, *Demokratische Post* II/23 (15 Jul 1945), p. 5.

City. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1944, the *Asociación Checoslovaco-Mexicana* staged a press conference to mark the crossing of the Czech border by the first units of the Red Army and affiliated Czech military units. On this occasion, the journalist André Simone (i.e. Otto Katz) offered the main briefing to the assembled Mexican press, international news agencies (among them the Soviet TASS), and press secretaries of the diplomatic missions in Mexico City.<sup>543</sup> One month later, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 1944, the Mexican Committee in support of the Yugoslav Partisans, which raised money and recruited personnel for the medical services of the Yugoslavian *guerilla* units, had organised a celebration of Josep Tito at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*. The committee's president general Alberto Zuno Hernández headed the list of speakers which included Gilberto Bosques, Mexican senator and general Celetino Gasca, the press secretary of the French movement *Francia Libre* Jacques Vertail, the Yugoslavian writer Theodor Balk (i.e. Dragutin Fodor), general Antonio Villareal, and one of the voluntary nurses for Yugoslavia, Anita Bravo Gómez. The occasion was attended by the Soviet ambassador Konstantin Oumansky, the first secretary of the British embassy, a member of the American Association, and the representatives of Greece and Czechoslovakia. The celebration was accompanied by Mexican actors and singers, as well as the dance company of Waldeen von Falkenstein.<sup>544</sup> The fund-raising activities in favour of the *Comité de Ayuda al Ejército Libertador y Guerilleros de Yugoslavia* even involved a military display at the *Campo Militar* of Chapultépec on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May.<sup>545</sup> The German *Heinrich-Heine-Club*, in turn, honoured the Czech president in exile Edvard Beneš with an artistic evening of personal eulogies by the vice-president of the *Asociación Checoslovaco-Mexicana*, Oscar Stern, and the editor of the German journal *Freies Deutschland*, Alexander Abusch, accompanied by musical and literary homages to Czech culture.<sup>546</sup> The subsequent dinner in honour of Beneš at the *Restaurante Chapultépec* on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May united most of the diplomatic corps in the Mexican capital, among the Soviet ambassador Konstantin Oumansky, the British ambassador Charles Harold Bateman, the French representative Maurice Garreau-Dombasle, and the first secretary of the US-Embassy Guy W. Ray. The Czech representative in Mexico, Karel Wendl reiterated the personal homage to Beneš.<sup>547</sup>

The landing of the Western Allies on the beaches of Normandy was duly celebrated by the press of the transnational community of exile in Mexico<sup>548</sup>, and the pro-Soviet supporters of the *Junta Suprema de la Unión Nacional Española*,

543 „Los Checoslovacos en México – conferencia de prensa“, *El Checoslovaco en México* III/4 (Apr 1944), p. 4.

544 „Se tributó un homenaje al Mariscal Tito, anoche“, *El Popular* (14 May 1944); cf. the report on „Free Yugoslavia Movement“ (11 Oct 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, p. 3.

545 „Ehrung der unterdrückten Völker – Mexiko ehrt Marschall Tito“, *Demokratische Post* I/20 (1 Jun 1944), p. 2.

546 „Huldigung für die Tschechoslowakei“, *Freies Deutschland* II/8 (Jul 1944), p. 31.

547 „Ehrung der unterdrückten Völker – Heineklub-Feier für den Präsidenten Benes“, *Demokratische Post* I/20 (1 Jun 1944), p. 2.

led by their president Pedro Carrasco, the secretary Wenceslao Roces, and general Francisco Matz sent congratulations on the successful landing operations in France to the US embassy<sup>549</sup>, but the public manifestations of the pro-Soviet groups of exile remained focussed on the Eastern front. The third anniversary of the German attack on the Soviet Union was marked by a smaller, separate meeting at the “House of the Free Germans” at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 86 by the movement *Alemania Libre* on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June<sup>550</sup>, and a grand commemoration at the *Teatro de Electricistas* at calle Artes no. 45 in the *Tabacalera* on the following day of 27<sup>th</sup> of June. The meeting was attended by representatives of the pro-Soviet Left from across the Spanish community of exile in Mexico, of the Mexican government, and by some revolutionary veterans, as well as representatives of the exile organisations *Francia Libre*, *Hungria Libre*, and the *Asociación Checoslovaco-Mexicana*. After Antonio Mije from the PCE had led a standing ovation to the Western Allies for their successful landing in Normandy, speakers who praised the achievements of the Soviet Union and its military forces included former under-secretary of the Spanish republican air force Carlos Nuñez Mazas, Luiz Azcárate for the newly-formed *Jovenes Patriotas Españolas*, Vicente Gaspar in the name of the *Unidad Republicana*, the socialist Veneranda García Manzano for the UGT, Dr. Manuel Márquez of the *Ateneo Ramón y Cajal*, again Antonio Mije in the name of the Spanish communists, and Pedro Carrasco, Dean of the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Madrid. Though the Soviet ambassador Oumansky was unable to attend personally, his message to the celebratory meeting met with an “impressive ovation.”<sup>551</sup> In August, however, Oumansky was greeted in person by “rapturous applause” when the *Unión Democrática Polaco-Mexicana* “*Tadeusz Koszciuszko*” held a meeting at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* in celebration of the Polish people on the occasion of the Red Army reaching the Vistula while the national-Polish Warsaw uprising was decimated by the German occupying forces. Yadwiga Kaminska as president of the pro-Soviet Polish community in Mexico demanded the recognition of the Polish National Council in exile as the only legitimate representation of the Polish people, Vicente Lombardo Toledano recalled the recent suffering and heroism of the Polish people, and Marcos Corona, president of the pro-Soviet *Liga Israelita pro-Ayuda a Rusia*, communicated greetings to the Polish community in exile.<sup>552</sup> A fund-raising event

548 „Das Hitler-Regime vor dem Abgrund – Die Landung in Nordfrankreich – Der dritte Jahrestag des deutsch-russischen Krieges“, *Demokratische Post* I/21 (15 Jun 1944), p. 1; „Vienen los Libertadores“, *Austria Libre* II/6-7 (Jun/Jul 1944), p. 1; „Desembarco sin precedente en la historia“, *España Popular* V/196 (30 Jun 1944), p. 3.

549 See the telegramme (10 Jun 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800R-Ref, s. fol.

550 „Sympathie-Kundgebung für die UdSSR im Haus der Freien Deutschen“, *Demokratische Post* I/22 (1 Jul 1944), p. 2; cf. Paul Merker: *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika. Erinnerungen, Dokumentation und Berichte*, at BAL, NY 4102/6 (Nachlaß Paul Merker), fol. 241.

551 „Gran Acto de los Republicanos Españoles en homenaje a la Unión Soviética“, *España Popular* V/196 (30 Jun 1944), pp. 1 & 4.

552 „Eine Ehrung des polnischen Volkes“, *Demokratische Post* II/1 (15 Aug 1944), p. 5; cf. „Zur

in favour of the Czechoslovakian Red Cross was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1944 at the University Club on Paseo de la Reforma. Konstantin Oumansky, the Free French representative Maurice Garreau-Dombasle, the Czech *Chargé d’Affairs* Karel Wendl, and other diplomats, including representatives of the exile organisations of *Yugoslavia Libre*, the *ARAM*, the *Asociación Checoslovaco-Mexicana*, and *Hungria Libre* were present, unlike any diplomatic representatives of Britain or the United States.<sup>553</sup> Such celebrations of the progress of the liberation of Europe continued into the New Year when the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* invited Gilberto Bosques as the main speaker of an homage to the Austrian resistance at the *Schiefersaal* of calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21 on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 1945. Presided over by the *ARAM*’s president Franz Schalmoser, Bruno Frei presented the Austrian experience of Nazi rule as directly related to that of other occupied European nations. Bosques praised the spirit and the sacrifice of the Austrians while emphasising the official Mexican position of regarding Austria as an independent, occupied country. He closed with the following words to the Austrians:

May this serve as an enthusiastic and warm homage to all of you; to those who gave their lives and to those who fought and continue to fight in a thousand different ways on French soil with the spirit, thought, and hope placed on the martyred fatherland, to the borders of which approaches the liberation enveloped in the red flags of the Soviet Union.”<sup>554</sup>

The pro-Soviet organisations evidently ruled the public stages of Mexico City as the Allied advances in Europe during the summer of 1944 heralded in a celebratory mood of imminent victory. The Soviet diplomatic presence in the Mexican capital was, thus, capitalising on the show of public confidence among the central-European communities of exile which resulted in a political hegemony of the communist groups.

Meanwhile, the Spanish community of exile observed their, by now, customary diary of regular commemorative events in much the same way as they had done the previous years. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1944, the thirteenth anniversary of the Spanish Republic, the pro-Soviet faction of the Spanish community in exile chose one of the largest venues in the city, the *Frontón México* in the *Tabacalera*, for a commemorative meeting that was attended, according to the communist paper *España Poplar*, by about 1,500 people. A special standing ovation was offered to Gilberto Bosques for his efforts as Mexican consul general in Marseille

Ehrung des polnischen Volkes“, *Freies Deutschland* III/10 (Sep 1944), p. 30; on the *Liga Popular Israelita*, the successor of the *Liga Israelita pro-Ayuda a Rusia*, and Corona’s role see the memorandum on „Organización Sionista Unida“ (1 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 10.

553 „Wovon man spricht“, *Demokratische Post* II/4 (1 Oct 1944), p. 6.

554 „Homenaje a los Luchadores Antinazifascistas Austriacos“, *El Nacional* (28 Feb 1945).

to facilitate the emigration of thousands of Spanish republican refugees. Under the presidency of Dr. Manuel Márquez the presiding panel included the representatives of FOARE, Mancisidor, Arreguín, and Castellote, as well as the first secretary of the Soviet embassy, Vassili, and the first secretary of the US embassy, Raleigh A. Gibson. The audience consisted of the assembled leadership of all political, military, and union organisations loyal to the national front policies of the *Unión Democrática Española* and also included Severin Ferandel of the *Acción Democrática Internacional* and representatives of the Mexican CTM. Among the speakers were Salvador Echeverría Brañas, former diplomat and governor of León, Joaquín Abella for the united libertarian and socialist youth organisations, Luis García Lago in the name of the Catalan communists of the PSUC, José Jiménez for the workers of the *Vulcano* works, and Luis Kalianov as a former member of the International Brigades. The Spanish communist Luis Soto saw the Spain of Franco in danger of sharing the fate of Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria as subaltern nationalities in the orbit of Nazi Germany and called for the Soviet Union to serve as the example for the national liberation struggle. The socialist Ángel Galarza of the *Comisión Española de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra*, rejected any suggestion of a restoration of the Spanish monarchy, before Dr. Manuel Márquez closed the event with the customary call for unity among the Spanish republicans in exile.<sup>555</sup>

The rival faction of Spanish republicanism in exile in Mexico City, the followers of the *Junta Española de Liberación*, congregated two days later on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 1944 to lay flowers at the Spanish cemetery and at the monument of the *Ángel de la Independencia* on Paseo de la Reforma before continuing on to the *Casino Militar* north of the park of *Chapultépec*.<sup>556</sup> Among the guests were representatives of the Mexican state and military, such as the navy secretary Heriberto Jara, and members of the diplomatic corps: Raleigh A. Gibson (who, on this occasion, evidently made a point of representing the United States at Spanish republican meetings on both ideological sides) as first secretary of the US embassy, and the ambassadors of Columbia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay, and Chile. The purpose of this celebration of the Spanish Republic appears to have been to demonstrate international esteem for the Spanish republicans, even in the absence of a Spanish republican government in exile. For the Spanish community in exile, eminent politicians, judges, and academics completed this display of republican respectability: Pedro Bosch Gimpera attended as the former rector of the University of Barcelona, the republican judiciary was represented by Pedro Vargas, former president of the constitutional court, Gabriel Bonilla attended as president of the *Comité Técnico* of the JEL and first vice president of the state council. Mariano Granados was present as the former president of the Supreme Tribunal, as was Jose Andreu Abelló as former president of the cassation tribunal of Barcelona. The military presence included

555 „La conmemoración del 14 de Abril fue un acto de unidad y de fé en la lucha y en la victoria del pueblo español“, *España Popular* V/186 (21 Apr 1944), pp. 3-4.

556 See the announcement „Homenaje a la República“, *Adelante* III/53 (15 Apr 1944), p. 4.

counter-admiral Ángel Rizo and general Llano de la Encomienda. Ex-ministers of the republican government Ricardo Begoña, Antonio Lara, and Bernardo Giner de los Ríos were present alongside former members of the councillors of the *Generalitat de Catalunya*, Artemio Aguadé, and Martí Rouret. The leading figure of the JEL, Indalecio Prieto, had left Mexico for Cuba where he attended the commemorations of the Spanish Republic of 1931 among the Spanish community of exile in La Habana.<sup>557</sup> In his absence, the after-lunch speakers at the *Casino Militar* included Gilberto Bosques (one of very few personalities who frequented events across the ideological fault lines of the exile communities in Mexico City) who responded to the display of gratitude by the Spanish refugees by characterising the Mexican offer of asylum to the Spanish republicans as a “direct expression of the revolutionary soul of Mexico which reaches out for sacred freedom.” Diego Martínez Barrio, president of the JEL, made the political message of the meeting very clear: “The republic, the legitimate political order of our country, possesses today the same legal and moral quality as in the bright hours of 1931 when representatives of the whole world greeted its flag.” He acknowledged the achievements of all Allies, the Soviet Union, Britain, and the United States, before referring to “our Spanish brothers who, on the sacred soil [of Spain], await the hour of liberation”, an attempt to present the Spanish republicans as allies in the current war which, as they hoped, would bring an end to the Francoist dictatorship in Spain.<sup>558</sup> The internal divisions of the Spanish republicans in Mexico City were further illustrated by the fact that on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April a third public commemoration of the anniversary of the Spanish Republic, presided over by Dr. Manuel Márquez, was held at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* which united the pro-Soviet Left of the Spanish republicans and representatives of the Mexican governing party PRM the corporatist trade union organisations of the CTM, and the pan-American CTAL. The PRM’s president Antonio Villalobos assured the Spanish republicans of the continued support of Mexico for the republican cause. Julio Luelmo represented the *Círculo “Jaime Vera”* and praised the solidarity of the Soviet Union which he contrasted sharply with the Western policy of “demoralising” non-intervention during the Spanish Civil War. For the communist faction of the UGT, Pedro Martínez Cartón demanded republican unity in the fight against the Spanish Falange, before Serafin Aliaga spoke in the name of the *Alianza de Jóvenes Socialistas y Libertarios* and urged the Spanish republicans to cast aside all internal divisions in favour of a united front of anti-Francoism. Ángel Álvarez of the Spanish communists warned of the possibility that although European fascism looked destined to be defeated in war, it might still win the peace. He therefore emphasised the duty of the Spanish republicans in exile to unite with the Spanish resistance, “so that tomorrow our people may not be forced to throw our disunity and our want of solidarity back into our faces!

557 See the report on Prieto’s activities in La Habana (19 Jun 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

558 „La comemoración del XIII aniversario de la proclamación de la República“, *Adelante* III/54 (1 May 1944), p. 3.



This is the task for all Spaniards while commemorating the 14<sup>th</sup> of April.”<sup>559</sup> The republican ex-minister Antonio Velao concluded the meeting with an attack against the *Junta Española de Liberación*, organised by Indalecio Prieto, for its “divisive and reactionary character” and rejected all considerations of a restoration of the Spanish monarchy.<sup>560</sup>

While, in the case of the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City, the political camps appeared more solidified and entrenched in the spring of 1944, one piece of news from across the Atlantic landed among the politics of Spanish republican exile like a bombshell at the end of May. In a speech on foreign policy before the House of Commons, the British prime minister Winston Churchill had laid out a general approach and perspective of the future of British-Spanish relations which was diametrically opposed the first principles of Spanish republicanism in exile. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of May he declared to have “no sympathy with those who think it clever, and even funny, to insult and abuse the Government of Spain [by which he referred to Franco’s dictatorship and not to the presence of the last Spanish prime minister Juan Negrín in London] whenever occasion serves. [...] I hope she [i.e. Spain] will be a strong influence for the peace of the Mediterranean after the war. Internal political problems in Spain are a matter for the Spaniards themselves. It is not for us – that is, the Government – to meddle in such affairs.” Churchill openly elaborated on the economic and strategic reasons for constructive relations with the Franco regime and responded to challenges that were raised against his position by drawing “a very clear line of distinction [...] between nations we go to war with, and nations who leave us alone.” A veiled reference to the Soviet Union can be detected when Churchill continued: “I presume we do not include in our programme of world renovation any forcible action against any Government whose internal form of administration does not come up to our own ideas, and any remarks I have made on that subject referred only to enemy Powers and their satellites who will have been struck down by force of arms.” The conclusion of his deliberations on the current relationship between Britain and Spain dealt a heavy blow to all Spanish republicans who had relied on Britain as an ally in the future democratisation of Spain after the war:

Well, I say we speak the same words to the Spaniards in the hour of our strength as we did in the hour of our weakness. I look forward to increasingly good relations with Spain and to an extremely fertile trade between Spain and this country which will, I trust, grow even during the war and will expand after the peace.<sup>561</sup>

559 „Mitin de conmemoración del 14 del Abril“, *España Popular* V/187 (28 Apr 1944), p. 6.

560 Ibid.

561 *Hansard, House of Commons*, vol. 400 (24 May 1944), pp. 770-2; cf. Richard Wigg: *Churchill and Spain. The survival of the Franco regime, 1940-45* (London / New York, 2005), p. 128.

Given the timing of his remarks just two weeks before the Allied landing operations in Normandy, there can be little doubt that Churchill's words were aimed at reassuring the Franco regime in Madrid that the allied advance through France (including a second landing in the south of France) would not be directed in any way against Spain and that tacit compliance on the part of the Spanish government (Churchill explicitly mentioned the Spanish inaction during Operation "Torch") would guarantee the survival of fascism in Spain after the war. It was not difficult to see that the strategically important situation of Gibraltar (and its importance for an Allied invasion of Southern France) figured prominently in the minds of military planners in London. Such considerations were, indeed, not lost on the Spanish republicans in Mexico City who reacted with fury and bitterness to Churchill's speech.<sup>562</sup> The Spanish *Comisión Coordinadora de Entidades Republicanas Españolas*, largely identical with the pro-Soviet Spanish republican alliance in Mexico, responded with a lengthy statement reaffirming the position of Spanish republicanism towards the allied war aims in Europe. The text claimed the cause of Spanish republicanism to be identical with the cause of the United Nations and objected to Churchill's understanding of the position of the Franco regime as a neutral power. The statement continued to agree with Churchill that the situation in Spain should be regarded as a matter for the Spanish people to resolve, but noted that his speech resulted in diplomatic support for a regime which, in their view, had continuously violated its supposed neutrality in terms of economic and military aid to the Axis powers. Above all, his remarks were seen as an open contradiction to the Atlantic Charter of 1941, and the *Comisión Coordinadora* called upon the support of the governments of the American continent. The betrayal of the Spanish republican cause should therefore, the document concluded, result in renewed efforts to unite the political forces of the Spanish republicanism in exile in order to counteract Churchill's position *vis-à-vis* the Spanish regime.<sup>563</sup> These sentiments were also echoed by the Mexican FOARE.<sup>564</sup> Vicente Uribe, the leader of the Spanish communists in exile in Mexico, expressed the sentiment of betrayal prevailing among the Spanish republicans over Churchill's speech in the House of Commons in a manner that reignited past ideological conflicts of the 1930s:

In this speech, positions reappear which we had indeed believed to be buried forever. Old encouragements of the style which was

562 See e.g. „Churchill y Franco. Explicación de lo inexplicable“, *España – Órgano de la Junta Española de la Liberación* V/18 (3 Jun 1944), p. 1.

563 „La Comisión Coordinadora de Entidades Republicanas Españolas ante el último discurso del Sr. Winston Churchill“, press statement (3 Jun 1944) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 1944/2, fol. 9.

564 Cf. „Las primeras reacciones ante el discurso de Churchill“, *España Popular* V/192 (2 Jun 1944), p. 3.

applied years ago towards the fascist regimes of Mussolini and Hitler; one is reminded that back then, too, and under the pretext of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of nations, those slogans received indeed considerable support from reactionary circles of English conservatism. Today, unfortunately, a similar phenomenon returns with regard to the fascist regime of Franco and, what is more surprising, its exponent is a man who, on other occasions, had denounced that same policy as ultimately harmful to England.

Uribe closed his remarks in dialectical fashion: “If Mr. Churchill’s speech contains the virtue of bringing down the obstacles which until today block the way towards a close and fruitful union of the republican forces which exist on foreign soil and that we put that union wholly at the service of an ever more united struggle of our people, we can say that the speech by Mr. Churchill has been well-understood and received the response that it deserves.”<sup>565</sup> Such rejection of any notion of appeasement towards the Franco regime was, indeed, echoed by the republican and socialist editors of the new periodical *República Española*, supporters of the last Spanish republican prime minister Juan Negrín, and the editors of *El Socialista*.<sup>566</sup>

By far the most lively response, however, originated from the anti-communist Left of Spanish republicanism in exile in Mexico City, represented by the *Junta Española de Liberación* housed at the *Centro Republicano Español* and the socialist followers of Indalecio Prieto. For months after Churchill’s speech, their journal *Adelante* continued to denounce his friendly words towards the Franco regime and commented under headlines such as: “Such are the English Imperialists”:

[...] the *cri-de-guerre* of Mr. Churchill in the name of the sacred liberties of the world appears to me as yet another whim of the celebrated English irony. [...] Nazi-fascism needs to be exterminated and a world-wide system of liberty and democracy established. Well: let us assume that Mr. Churchill considers Spain to be within the world, at least the cartographical genius of the English has produced a new world order by cutting Spain off at the Pyrenees and setting it apart as some invisible entity.<sup>567</sup>

565 „Franco y sus secuaces pagarán muy pronto los crímenes cometidos. Declaración de Vicente Uribe, en nombre del Partido Comunista de España, sobre el discurso de Churchill“, *España Popular* V/192 (2 Jun 1944), pp. 1 & 2.

566 „¿Apaciguamiento? El discurso de W. Churchill“, *República Española* I/2 (31 May 1944), p. 4; „El Discurso de Churchill“, *El Socialista* III/22 (Jul 1944), p. 1.

567 „Después de un discurso: así son los Imperialistas Ingleses“, *Adelante* III/57 (1 Jun 1944), p. 3.

The Spanish socialists also quoted the opposition of the British Labour Party to Churchill's position in order to prove their credentials among the Left in the West.<sup>568</sup> Finally, the *prietistas* were encouraged to view the British position as an attempt to treat Spain as an imperial dominion.<sup>569</sup> Such noises from the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City were being monitored carefully by the US embassy which maintained a close surveillance of the activities of Spanish organisations in Mexico, such as the communist-dominated *Unión de Jóvenes Patriotas Españoles* which constituted itself on the occasion of a congress held at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* between the 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of May 1944.<sup>570</sup> Already in April, the embassy staff had produced a detailed and comprehensive survey of all Spanish organisations in Mexico, always suspicious of "totalitarian" leanings among the Spanish community, and these intelligence activities intensified, especially with regard to any organisations that could be regarded as sympathetic towards the Soviet Union.<sup>571</sup>

In this context, two internal confidential reports by the US embassy staff are of interest which seem to illustrate the US-American suspicions of the political attitudes of the Spanish republicans in exile in Mexico City months before the public outrage over Churchill's remarks in the House of Commons at the end of May. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 1944, the first secretary of the US embassy, Raleigh A. Gibson, filed a memorandum on information he claimed to have obtained from a general Santiago Ibarra, "a naturalized Mexican of Spanish birth", about the leadership of the *Junta Española de Liberación*. According to Gibson's memorandum, Ibarra was "convinced that the Spanish Republicans are turning in great part to the Soviet Embassy in Mexico City for help. The Spanish Republicans wanted the backing of the United States and Great Britain, but now feel that they did not secure it." The JEL's president Diego Martínez Barrio, generals José Miaja, Sebastian Pozas Perea, and the secretary of the JEL Indalecio Prieto were mentioned by name as "turning to the Soviet Embassy for advice." Gibson's memorandum closed by referring to Ibarra: "He states that Oumansky, the Soviet Ambassador, is recognized as an exceptionally clever man, and that he

568 „La replica laborista al discurso de Churchill“, *Adelante* III/58 (1 Jul 1944), p. 1; „El consejo nacional laborista condena el discurso de Churchill“, *ibid.*, p. 3.

569 M. Millares Vázquez: „España, dominion Inglés“, *Adelante* III/59 (1 Aug 1944), p. 4; cf. the conversation which Prieto had with US diplomats in La Habana in April 1944, when he explicitly favoured a US-American economic hegemony over Spain to limit the British influence: memorandum on „Statements made by Indalecio Prieto during his conversation with the Ambassador and Messrs. Dawson, Adam and Duran of the Embassy staff, April 20, 1944“ (21 Apr 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

570 Memorandum on „Jóvenes Patriotas Españoles“ (22 Jul 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

571 See the report by the military attaché „Spanish Political Organizations in Mexico“ (19 Apr 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fols.; cf. the memorandum on the „Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra“ (26 Jun 1944), *ibid.*, s. fols.; report „Communist activities in Mexico“ (19 Jul 1944), *ibid.*, s. fols.

will take advantage of the Spanish Republican refugees in Mexico.”<sup>572</sup> Even though Gibson added an “Evaluation: Believed correct”, the content of this information must be regarded as highly implausible, mainly because of the timing of this information which reached the US diplomats just a week before the JEL was about to establish its *Comité Técnico* (its governing board) as a platform to rally the divergent Spanish republican political forces against the growing influence of the communist party and its allies around the *Unión Nacional Española*.<sup>573</sup> It is possible that a deliberate piece of disinformation was offered to the US diplomats to emphasise the danger of Soviet influence over the Spanish republican politics in exile and the corresponding need for the US diplomacy to engage actively with the anti-communist faction of the Spanish republicans.<sup>574</sup> A similar background may have been at work with regard to suspicions against the former president of the Spanish constitutional court and leader of the *Izquierda Republicana* in Mexico City, Álvaro de Albornoz, which were filed by the US naval attaché in Mexico City and communicated to the US State Department by Raleigh A. Gibson at the end of March. Albornoz was among the initiators of the JEL, served as president of the *Centro Republicano Español* which had affiliated itself with the JEL in January 1944, and offered its venue and offices to the JEL.<sup>575</sup> It is certainly true that Albornoz represented less of an ardent anti-communist than Indalecio Prieto and had actively participated in the FOARE’s *Convención de Solidaridad* in August 1943<sup>576</sup>, but the suspicions raised against him in the internal memorandum of the US diplomatic services must be regarded as doubtful: allegedly, Albornoz (to whom the naval attaché referred as a “communist”) had told a “trusted informant of this office that he has been working for Russian Ambassador Oumansky and that Oumansky has instructed him to make a tour of Central and South America for the purposes of visiting all Spanish refugee organizations in those countries.”<sup>577</sup> In fact, Albornoz’s plans for a pan-American

572 Memorandum (24 Jan 1944) by Raleigh A. Gibson at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

573 „Junta Española de Liberación – Constitución del Consejo Técnico“, *Adelante* III/49 (15 Feb 1944), p. 3; see also: „Constitución del Consejo Técnico de la Junta Española de Liberación“, *España – Órgano de la Junta Española de la Liberación* I/2 (5 Feb 1944), p. 2; cf. Luis C. Hernando Noguera: „Complejas Alianzas. La experiencia de la Junta Española de Liberación“, in: Mari Carmen Serra Puche, José Franciso Mejía Flores, and Carlos Sola Ayape (eds): *1945, entre la euforia y la esperanza: el México posrevolucionario y el exilio republicano español* (México, D.F., 2014), pp. 49-76, esp. pp. 59-60.

574 Cf. the initial US embassy’s reaction to the initiative of the JEL in the memorandum „Formation of a Spanish Government in Exile or a Spanish Liberation Committee in Mexico“ (22 Nov 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Sep-Dec, s. fol.

575 „El Centro Republicano Español de México se adhiere a la Junta Española de Liberación“, *España – Órgano de la Junta Española de la Liberación* I/1 (29 Jan 1944), p. 8.

576 „No podrá ganarse la guerra en tanto que España sea fascista“, press report (21 Aug 1943) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca España y el Mundo 1945 [sic!], fol. 64; full text of his speech: [http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/juan\\_cervera/obra/alvaro-de-albornoz-intervencion-en-la-convencion-de-foare-848166/](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/juan_cervera/obra/alvaro-de-albornoz-intervencion-en-la-convencion-de-foare-848166/).

577 Confidential report by Raleigh A. Gibson to Joseph F. McGurk (Chief of Division of Mexican

tour trying to encourage support for the JEL across the Western hemisphere were, at the time, hardly a secret and publicised in the Spanish exile press in Mexico City.<sup>578</sup> Given that Albornoz was characterised as a “very mediocre politician” and an “opportunist” by another US embassy informer, Marino Gamboa (a US citizen of Filipino origin with contacts to the Basque republican community in Mexico City)<sup>579</sup>, it is possible that the information directed against the Spanish leaders of the JEL was primarily intended to highlight the role of Konstantin Oumansky, the Soviet ambassador, and the considerable influence he enjoyed among the European communities of exile in Mexico City. In any case, the relationship between the Spanish republican community in Mexico City and the British and US American diplomats deteriorated as the Allied forces closed in on the remnants of Italian and German fascism in Europe while it became clear that the removal of the Franco regime in Spain was no priority for the advancing anti-Hitler coalition, as far as the Western powers were concerned.<sup>580</sup>

The commemoration of the eighth anniversary of Franco’s military coup against the Spanish Republic in July did nothing to reconcile the ideologically opposed factions of the Spanish community in exile in Mexico City. While the socialist journal *Adelante* continued to berate Churchill’s speech of late May, the members of the *Centro Republicano Español* first rallied around their political mentor, Indalecio Prieto, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July with a celebratory dinner “completely devoid of any special political character”. However, the members of the JEL were present, as were “numerous members of parliament and representatives of the different political parties which constitute it.” José Andreu spoke for the Catalan section of the *Izquierda Republicana*, the writer Daniel de Tapia belonged to the *Consejo Técnico* of the JEL, and Juan Maciá offered a speech as did the writer

Affairs, Department of State, Washington D.C.) (31 Mar 1944), at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.; see also the personal memorandum on Álvaro de Albornoz (13 May 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fol.

578 „Don Álvaro de Albornoz irá a Montevideo“, *España – Órgano de la Junta Española de la Liberación* I/1 (29 Jan 1944), p. 7; cf. „Opiniones de Don Álvaro de Albornoz“, *ibid.* I/2 (5 Feb 1944), p. 6; see also the reports on his pan-American tour: „Los republicanos españoles de Montevideo rinden homenaje a México“, *ibid.* I/24 (15 Jul 1944), pp. 2-3; „Don Álvaro de Albornoz en Chile“, *ibid.*, p. 6; „Don Álvaro de Albornoz en Chile“, *ibid.* I/25 (22 Jul 1944), p. 3; cf. Luis C. Hernando Noguera: „Complejas Alianzas. La experiencia de la Junta Española de Liberación“, in: Mari Carmen Serra Puche, José Francisco Mejía Flores, and Carlos Sola Ayape (eds): *1945, entre la euforia y la esperanza: el México posrevolucionario y el exilio republicano español* (México, D.F., 2014), pp. 49-76, esp. p. 61.

579 Confidential report by Raleigh A. Gibson to Joseph F. McGurk (Chief of Division of Mexican Affairs, Department of State, Washington D.C.) (31 Mar 1944), at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, pp. 2-3; cf. Gamboa’s information on the impossibility of any political union of the Spanish republicans in exile and growing resentment against the US government: report by US ambassador George S. Messersmith to Philip Bonzal (US Department of State, Washington D. C.) (9 Dec 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2894, 800P-800PolishRefugees, s. fols.

580 The anti-communist Spanish socialists in Mexico commented on the diplomatic position of the Soviet ambassador Oumansky towards the question of Spain in no less critical terms: „Dijo el embajador, pero no dijo; cartas y respuestas...“, *Adelante* III/59 (15 Jul 1944), p. 4.

Antonio Robles who had just finished his novel about the Spanish Civil War and the experience of exile: “El Refugiado Centauro Flores”.<sup>581</sup> While the composition of attendees certainly resulted in a highly politicised group, the general mood of the occasion was personal and jocular, and in his homage to Prieto, Carlos Esplá started out by describing him as a paradoxical character not unlike a “Sancho-Quijote”, the creation of outward impressions and malevolent denunciations by his detractors which would not, however, conceal the true nature of his character:

In this game between appearance and reality, between physiognomy and character, between being and appearance, Prieto is not an active protagonist but a passive victim. If today we could ask a prisoner or a Spanish guerrillero, those who do not usually frequent the coffee tables of the Distrito Federal, if we could ask them how is Prieto, who is Prieto – from afar one can better recognise reality – how little would they fail to characterise him, to outline his authentic moral silhouette, his true political and human figure!<sup>582</sup>

Such highly personalised celebrations of republican virtue and political honour at the *Centro Republicano* was followed ten days later by the main commemoration of the military coup of 1936. The event of the 18<sup>th</sup> of July was organised by the socialist and republican youth organisations and presided over by Eulalio Ferrer, secretary of the *Juventud Socialista*. Antonio Llana spoke about the historical circumstances of the Fascist uprising against the Spanish Republic in 1936, José Piñol represented the *Federación Unniversitaria Española* and paid homage to the dedication of the academic youth to the republican cause before Carlos Romero Ortega expressed the hope of the *Juventudes Republicanas* that the next anniversary of the 18<sup>th</sup> of July could again be commemorated in Spain.<sup>583</sup> Simultaneously, the FOARE staged a commemorative meeting in support of Spanish republicanism at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*.<sup>584</sup> The meeting produced a public statement re-emphasising the republican cause and placed the Spanish contribution to international anti-fascism at the centre of the international effort of the liberation of Europe:

During almost three years of glorious war, the Spanish Republic fought under the colours of anti-fascism which today the invincible forces of the United Nations and all progressive forces of humanity carry. On Spanish soil and with the heroism of the Spanish people, the first great honourable battle for the liberty of Europe took place. No

581 „En el Centro Republicano Español - Comida a Indalecio Prieto“, *España – Órgano de la Junta Española de la Liberación* I/24 (15 Jul 1944), p. 1.

582 Carlos Esplá: „Entre Amigos de Prieto“, *Adelante* III/60 (1 Aug 1944), p. 1.

583 „En el Centro Republicano Español: Acto conmemorativo de la resistencia republicana“, *España – Órgano de la Junta Española de Liberación* I/25 (22 Jul 1944), p. 1.

584 „Algunos de los actos que se celebrarán en la jornada del 18 de julio“, *España Popular* V/198 (14 Jul 1944), p. 3.

democratic government, no anti-Francoist can forget this at a time when the power of the weapons and the bravery of the soldiers against Hitler arrive in the suppressed cities, joining in with their own struggle, the longed-for liberation.

The message continued to express solidarity with the *guerilleros* of the Spanish resistance and aimed for the inclusion of the Spanish republican cause in the larger aim of the liberation of Europe. Signatories included a broad range of representatives of the Spanish colony of exile in Mexico, among them the leadership of the Spanish communists, the Catalanian PSUC, and the *Casal Catalá*, of the socialist trade unions, veteran republican generals and officers, writers, intellectuals, former public functionaries and diplomats, and leaders of the communist-dominated youth organisations and regional organisations.<sup>585</sup> Two days later, the FOARE staged a press conference on the roof garden of the Hotel “Majestic” adjacent to the central plaza of the *Zócalo* to communicate the message of communist-inspired unity against Franco in Spain. The main speakers at this event were Dr. Francisco Comesaña and Emilia Araujo, both recently arrived in Mexico, who reported on the fascist terror regime in Spain.<sup>586</sup> Yet another meeting in support of the Spanish resistance was organised by the communist-dominated *Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional* at the *Teatro de los Electricistas* at calles Artes no. 45 in the *Tabacalera* on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 1944, featuring Comesaña and Lombardo Toledano as the main speakers.<sup>587</sup> Finally, the Spanish anarchists of the CNT staged their own commemorative meeting of the Francoist uprising of 1936 in their domicile at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July. Among the speakers here were Genaro de la Colina on the historical significance of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Feliciano Subero on the Spanish resistance movement, the journalist Eusebio C. Carbó on the broader Spanish and international implications of the republican resistance, and Progreso Alfarache, the editor of *Soliaridad Obrera* in Mexico.<sup>588</sup> All these commemorative

585 „Vibrante mensaje a la Junta Suprema den Unión Nacional“, *España Popular* V/199 (21 Jul 1944), p. 3.; „Emocionada expresión de solidaridad a los heroicos luchadores españoles“, *ibid.*

586 See the transcript of the press statements at AGN, fondo Manuel Ávila Camacho, 710.1/101-55, s. fols., and the published texts of their statements: „Impresionantes testimonios de la ferocidad franquista y de la lucha heroica de nuestro pueblo“, *España Popular* V/200 (28 Jul 1944), p 3; Comesaña also spoke at the *Casal Catalá* at calle República de Uruguay no. 5 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Aug 1944, the *Ateneo Ramón y Cajal* on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, and both were invited on that evening for a celebratory dinner at the Hotel „Mancera“ at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 49 in the *Centro Histórico* just opposite of the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexico*, see the report on the activities of FOARE (9 Oct 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, pp. 4-6; „Homenaje al Dr. Comesaña y a la Sra. Araujo“, *España Popular* V/203 (18 Aug 1944), p. 6.

587 „Grandioso mitin de homenaje a la lucha de nuestro pueblo y a su Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional“, *España Popular* V/204 (26 Aug 1944), p. 3; cf. also in the extensive memorandum on the *Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional* (15 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 6; see the full transcript of Lombardo Toledano’s speech at AGN, fondo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1190, 710.1/101-55, s. fols.

588 „Gran acto de confraternidad confederal“, *Solidaridad Obrera* III/56 (19 Jul 1944), p. 1.



events were transmitted on Mexican radio stations across the city and beyond, while they followed a well-established pattern of ideological strife within the community of exile in locations physically detached from one another. Contacts with the Mexican political elite and trade unions, as well as the FOARE, could offer access to the more prestigious locations of public life in the city for the pro-Soviet faction of the Spanish community in exile, such as the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* and the *Teatro de los Electricistas*. The now foreseeable end of the European war and the increasingly precarious international standing of Spanish republicanism had little, if any effect on these patterns of the sectarian practice of Spanish politics in exile in Mexico City.

#### f. Victory (1944/5)

As the news of the progress of the liberation of Europe started to arrive in Mexico following the successful landing of Allied troops in Normandy in June and the Soviet *Operation Bagration* between late June and August of 1944, the communities of exile in Mexico City entered a phase of national celebrations across the city. While the Red Army had temporarily stopped short of Warsaw on the eastern banks of the river Vistula in August, free French forces (including a small contingent of Spanish republicans) had led the liberation of Paris with the support of the 4<sup>th</sup> US-American infantry division on the 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> of August. The meeting in celebration of the Warsaw uprising of the Polish Home Army organised by the *Unión Democrática Polaco-Mexicana "Tadeusz Koszciuszko"* at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1944 saw representatives of the Mexican government and political elite, as well as the Mexican trade unions and leading members of the German-speaking community of exile in attendance. The main speakers were Jadwiga Kaminska and Vicente Lombardo Toledano who under the approving gaze of the guest of honour, the Soviet ambassador Konstantin Oumansky, praised the heroism of the Polish insurgents in Warsaw who, in Lombardo's words, fought alongside the Red Army for the liberation of Poland.<sup>589</sup> Such an homage to the Polish nation occurred against the competing ambitions of the Polish nationalists of the Home Army and the recently established pro-Soviet Lublin Committee and promptly provoked fundamental conflicts over the legitimacy of any future international representation of Poland. Lombardo's critique of previous mistakes committed by the Polish leadership with regard to domestic social policies and relations to the Soviet Union were immediately rebuked by the Polish socialists in exile in Mexico City who claimed to represent "the working masses, peasants, and democratic intellectuals of Poland." The committee of the journal *Polonia Popular*, published in Mexico City by the Polish Labor Group of New York, defended the legitimacy of the Polish

589 „Eine Ehrung des polnischen Volkes“, *Demokratische Post* II/1 (15 Aug 1944), p. 5; cf. „Zur Ehrung des polnischen Volkes“, *Freies Deutschland* III/10 (Sep 1944), p. 30; „Chronik von kulturellen und politischen Veranstaltungen verschiedener Exil-Organisationen in Mexiko“, in: *Österreicher im Exil, Mexiko 1938-1947. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Christian Kloyber and Marcus G. Patka (Wien, 2002), p. 625.

government in exile, rejected any suggestion of establishing the Curzon Line as a new frontier between Poland and the Soviet Union, and pointed out that Poland was not a society dominated by late-feudal large-scale land-owners and, thus, not in need of any form of Sovietisation.<sup>590</sup> Clearly, the impending liberation of Poland had turned into the most contentious issue of European politics that profoundly polarised the transnational community of political exile in Mexico City into a pro-Soviet and an anti-Soviet camp.

When the news of the liberation of Paris reached Mexico, the international community of European refugees housed in the *Edificio Ermita* in the district of *Tacubaya* “together organised a feast in the hall of the building, and we ate and drank until daybreak”, as Concha Méndez remembered.<sup>591</sup> Already in July, the *Acción Democrática Internacional* and further Mexican associations of friendship and solidarity with the French people had used the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* for an homage to the 155<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Storming of the Bastille during the French Revolution as an occasion of celebration of the ongoing liberation of France.<sup>592</sup> In August, the German-speaking movement *Alemania Libre* used the occasion of the liberation of Paris to express towards the Free French representative in Mexico City, Maurice Garreau Dombasle, their gratitude for their initial rescue from fascist persecution during the 1930s and the support by the French resistance after the German invasion of 1940: “Therefore, as Paris is being forced out of the hands of the Nazi invaders and the liberation of the whole territory of the republic is near, the day of today has the same significance for us as it has for the French people.” Ludwig Renn and Erich Jungmann closed with the promise of the German communists in Mexico City, “to use all our powers towards the complete annihilation of fascism and German imperialism and to erect a truly democratic popular regime, thereby securing a firm base for the mutual and peaceful reconciliation between our two nations.”<sup>593</sup> The main public event in honour of the French nation that took place in Mexico City was a gathering at one of the largest venues in the capital city, the *Frontón México* in the *Tabacalera* in the shadow of the *Monumento a la Revolución*, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1944. The organising committee consisted of the leading members of the faction of *negrinistas* among the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City, expressing their “absolute confidence that the French people are with us and will be with all their might and heart when the great struggle begins which destroys the fascist regime of Franco

590 „Restableciendo la Verdad Histórica“, 4-page pamphlet in: *Polonia Popular* I/5 (15 Aug 1944).

591 Concha Méndez: *Memorias habladas, Memorias armadas* (Madrid, 1990), p. 120.

592 See the advertisement of the event „Gran Festival con motivo de la Fiesta Nacional Francesa“ at Orfeó Català, Biblioteca, Activitats de L’Orfeó Català de Mèxic 1940-1959, s. fol.

593 „Glückwunsch zur Befreiung von Paris“, *Demokratische Post* II/2 (1 Sep 1944), p. 1; the periodical also reprinted a chapter from Ilya Ehrenburg’s novel „The Fall of Paris“ which had been „awarded the Stalin Prize of 1942“ to honour the Parisian spirit of resistance during „four years and 72 days of blood-soaked Nazi rule“, *ibid.*, p. 3.

and the Falange.”<sup>594</sup> At the event, Maurice Garreau-Dombasle as representative of the Free French resistance took the place of honour at the centre of the presidency alongside Dr. Manuel Márquez for the Spanish organising committee and the Soviet ambassador Konstantin Oumansky. Other attendees included Fernando Casas Alemán, sub-secretary of *Secretaría de Gobernación* representing the Mexican president, the ambassadors of Colombia, Chile, as well as representatives of the exile governments of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, general José Miaja and Luis Fernández Clérigo for the *Izquierda Republicana*, the former Spanish republican ministers Vicente Uribe, José Moix, Valas, Ramón González Peña, Tomás Bilbao, and Segundo Blanco González. The organisations represented at the event included the socialist UGT, the PCE, and the *negrinistas* of the PSOE in Mexico, as well as the Spanish social centres in the city associated with the pro-Soviet camp of exile, the Mexican unions CTM and CNOEP, the governing party PRM, and distinguished individuals such as the former Mexican consul in Marseille Gilberto Bosques, the former Mexican ambassador in Paris Reyes Espíndola, and Víctor Manuel Villaseñor for the *Comité de Ayuda a Rusia en Guerra*. The celebration was accompanied by the *Banda Madrid* which played the national anthems of Mexico, the Spanish Republic, the Soviet Union, and the Marseillaise, as well as popular Spanish and Mexican tunes.<sup>595</sup> Dr. Manuel Márquez addressed the meeting in the name of the Spanish community and praised the spirit of the French resistance under Charles de Gaulle. His words were echoed by Fernando Casas Alemán, the Colombian ambassador Jorge Zalamea, and Konstantin Oumansky, before Maurice Garreau-Dombasle responded:

Spain and France, in spite of the Pyrenees which were sometimes a barrier, and thanks to the Pyrenees which today are a shared good, are forming a mighty breakwater advancing across the Atlantic Ocean to meet Latin America. The moral and intellectual brilliance of one would mean nothing here without the brilliance of the other. Their community is manifest in an evident way in the political aspirations of its people. Neither one nor the other are able to live under oppression, and if, occasionally, tyranny succeeded in putting them in chains, their love for freedom did not fail to provide them with the strength to leave them behind. Their slavery is, for one as well as for the other, nothing but temporal, and simultaneously a painful but glorious occasion for steadying themselves with increased vigour as free nations. The democratic ideals which general de Gaulle never ceases to affirm by words and deeds are equally yours.<sup>596</sup>

594 „Homenaje al pueblo francés“, *España Popular* V/209 (29 Sep 1944), p. 1.

595 „España y Francia unidas en la lucha por un futuro común de libertad“, *España Popular* V/210 (6 Oct 1944), p. 6, including photographs of the occasion.

596 „»Ni el uno ni el otro pueden vivir bajo la opresión«, dijo, refiriéndose a los pueblos de Francia y España, el Sr. Embajador Garreau Dombasle“, *España Popular* V/210 (6 Oct 1944), p. 5.

Equally remarkable as this conspicuous declaration of republican solidarity by de Gaulle's representative in Mexico was the fact that the German-speaking community of exile seems to have been absent from this celebration of the liberation of France and did not participate alongside the other national sub-groups of exile in Mexico City. Coincidence or not, a theatre performance of the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* was scheduled for the same evening of the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1944 at the *Teatro de los Electricistas* which certainly attracted the attendance of virtually all of the anti-fascist German-speaking colony in Mexico City<sup>597</sup>: the club's theatre ensemble performed a contemporary play by Ferdinand Bruckner, "Denn seine Zeit ist kurz", which treated the anti-fascist resistance in Norway as a moral conflict played out between Christian morality and Nazi terror.<sup>598</sup> Both events must have been planned in advance, and evidently no efforts were made to avoid the conflict of schedules between the German-speaking community of exile and the other European groups in exile in Mexico City. As much as the German-speaking publications edited by the political refugees in Mexico City honoured and celebrated the progress of liberation in the European theatres of war, on this occasion they failed to achieve public recognition of their anti-fascist solidarity with the liberated French Republic.<sup>599</sup> From the German-speaking community of exile, critical voices could be heard which deplored the marginalisation of social-revolutionary impulses of the French resistance after the liberation.<sup>600</sup> Such cautious criticism of the reconstruction of the French Republic also seems to have informed a meeting at *Palacio de Bellas Artes* on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1944 organised by the *Acción Democrática Internacional* in honour of the French resistance forces.<sup>601</sup>

By contrast, a few weeks later the liberation of Belgrade was greeted by a celebration in the "Salón Azul" of the restaurant "Sans Souci" on Paseo de la Reforma close to the intersection with the Avenida de los Insurgentes in the district of *Juárez*, publicly promoted and reported especially by the German-speaking press in Mexico City.<sup>602</sup> The location belonged to the most up-market hot-spots of nightlife in the Mexican capital which regularly attracted an

597 See the announcement: „Heinrich-Heine-Klub“, *Demokratische Post* II/3 (15 Sep 1944), p. 5.

598 See the review by Bruno Frei: „Denn seine Zeit ist kurz – zur Bruckner-Uraufführung des Heine-Klubs“, *Demokratische Post* II/5 (15 Oct 1944), p. 3; cf. also a scene from Bruckner's play, „Begegnung zweier Welten“, published in: *Freies Deutschland* III/11 (Oct 1944), pp. 18-9.

599 Cf. e.g. Kurt Stern: „Die Vierte Republik“, *Freies Deutschland* III/11 (Oct 1944), p. 11.

600 See: Joss Fritz: „Paris und Warschau“, *Freies Deutschland* III/11 (Oct 1944), p. 13-4.

601 See the invitation by Raúl Cordero Amador and Severino Ferandel to the US embassy (13 Oct 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 843, s. fol.; this event was apparently not attended by the German-speaking community of exile in the city either.

602 See the invitation by the *Comité de Ayuda al Ejército Libertador y Guerrilleros de Yugoslavia* (23 Oct 1944) at AGN, Archivo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 844, exp. 550/44-42, s. fol.; cf. „Mexiko feiert die Befreiung Belgrads“, *Demokratische Post* II/6 (1 Nov 1944), p. 5.

international *clientèle* of the elegant well-to-do social elite.<sup>603</sup> The event on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October 1944 placed explicit emphasis on the fact that the liberation of Belgrade had been achieved by a joint effort of the regular troops of the Red Army and the partisan resistance forces led by Marshal Josep Tito. The president of the Mexican *Comité de Ayuda al Ejército Libertador y Guerrilleros de Yugoestavia*, general Alberto Zuno Hernández, opened the proceedings and presented medical drugs and equipment to the president of the movement *Yugoestavia Libre*, José Z. List. Both organisations held their offices at calle Medellín no. 128 in the district of *Juárez* and were closely interconnected on a personal level, for example by Dragutin Fodor (alias: Theodor Balk) who acted as secretary for both organisations and also played an active role among the German-speaking community of exile in Mexico City. Though relatively small in terms of membership, the Yugoslavian colony in the Mexican capital achieved a disproportionately high public profile in the city, particularly during 1944.<sup>604</sup> On this occasion, the press of the German-speaking community of political exile highlighted the attendance of members of the German movement *Alemania Libre* and its associated cultural organisation, the *Heinrich-Heine-Club*, the presence of general Cristóbal Guzmán Cárdenas, chief of staff of the Mexican defence ministry, Theodor Balk and Dr. Arpad Weissmann as representatives of *Yugoslavia Libre*, and the Soviet ambassador Konstantin Oumansky, as well as members of the diplomatic corps in Mexico, including the military attachés of the Allied nations.<sup>605</sup> The pro-Soviet German-speaking community centred around the movement *Alemania Libre* showed its public presence preferably to mark victories in the eastern theatre of the European war. Thus, prominence was given by the German-speaking press in Mexico City to the imminent liberation of Budapest.<sup>606</sup> On the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 1944 the clothing committee of the exile organisation *Hungria Libre* staged a charitable dinner at the restaurant “Mignon”, owned by Julius Vescei and located at Avenida Álvaro Obregón no. 255 to the north of the district of *Hipódromo*. The intelligence unit of the US embassy noted in particular the presence of prominent leading members of *Alemania Libre* and the *Heinrich-Heine-Club*: Anna Seghers, Ludwig Renn, Paul Merker, Erich Jungmann, and Alexander Abusch, as well as the secretary general of the *Acción Democrática Internacional*, Severin Ferandel, alongside representatives of the Russian aid committees and the Spanish pro-communist *Unión Democrática Española*.<sup>607</sup>

603 See, e.g., „Fun in Mexico. The City is gaudy“, *Life Magazine* (28 Feb 1944), pp. 77-83.

604 See the memorandum on the „Free Yugoslavia Movement“ (11 Oct 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fols.

605 „Mexiko feiert die Befreiung Belgrads“, *Demokratische Post* II/6 (1 Nov 1944), p. 5.

606 Guillermo Weinstock: „Die Befreiung von Budapest“, *Demokratische Post* II/9 (15 Dec 1944), pp. 1-2.

607 Report on „Hungria Libre“ (4 May 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

A special place in the transnational context of the German-speaking movement *Alemania Libre* was reserved for its relation with Zionism and those Jewish members of the organisation who had adopted Zionist politics. In December 1944, the secretary of the pan-American Committee of Free Germans, Paul Merker, explained the organisation's political position in this regard during an internal meeting of the *Alemania Libre* leadership in Mexico City. He emphasised that the responsibility of the German people included that for the rise of anti-Semitism and its horrific consequences across Europe and that the political movements of the German Weimar Republic had to accept their share of responsibility, too, for not having recognised the dangers of the rise of anti-Semitism. He expressed his sympathy with the reaction of those German-speaking Jews who had by now rejected German society and culture altogether in favour of their newly-found Zionist loyalties and stated that such issues were for the Jewish community alone to debate and decide while the movement *Alemania Libre* remained committed to eradicating all traces of anti-Semitism, even to "the total extirpation of the German anti-Semites." He espoused the right of surviving Jews and relatives of victims to full compensation for all damages they had suffered, to dual citizenship, and their right to emigrate to Palestine if they so wished. He added that German-Jewish Zionists continued to be welcome among the membership of the movement *Alemania Libre*, and the ensuing discussion resulted, according to Leo Zuckermann, "in complete agreement by the committee members with Paul Merker's discourse."<sup>608</sup> On the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, Leo Katz and the Soviet ambassador Oumansky spoke at a *Hanukkah* celebration in Mexico City organised by the *Liga Israelita pro-Ayuda a la Unión Soviética*.<sup>609</sup> The year ended for the German-speaking community of exile with a New Year's Eve party at their social centre at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 86 in the north of the city district of *Hidalgo*, and the journal *Demokratische Post* emphasised the transnational composition of the guests: "apart from the numerous Mexicans and Americans in attendance there was hardly any European colony that was not represented."<sup>610</sup>

When, finally, the time came to mark the liberation of Poland, the *Unión Democrática Polaco-Mexicana "Tadeusz Kosciuszko"*, in turn, chose the luxurious restaurant "Sans Souci" on Paseo de la Reforma as the venue for a celebration of the liberation of Warsaw. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 1945, alongside Yadwiga Kaminska, the president of the *Unión Democrática Polaco-Mexicana*, the meeting saw in attendance leading Mexican military officers, representatives of the Soviet, French, and Czech diplomatic missions, the former rector of the UNAM Antonio Castro Leal, Antonio Villalobos as president of the Mexican governing party PRM, the former Mexican consul in Marseille Gilberto Bosques, José Mancisidor

608 „Die Freien Deutschen und der Zionismus“, *Demokratische Post* II/10 (31 Dec 1944), p. 1.

609 „Chronik von kulturellen und politischen Veranstaltungen verschiedener Exil-Organisationen in Mexiko“, in: *Österreicher im Exil, Mexiko 1938-1947. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Christian Kloyber and Marcus G. Patka (Wien, 2002), p. 628.

610 „Silvesterfeier im Hause der Freien Deutschen“, *Demokratische Post* II/11 (15 Jan 1945), p. 2.

a president of the SAURSS, Víctor Manuel Villaseñor and José Iturriaga of the *Instituto Mexicano-Ruso de Intercambio Cultural*, as well as representatives of the pro-Soviet organisations of European communities in exile in Mexico City: Theo Schwarz for the *Asociación Czechoslovak-Mexicana*, Draggutin Fodor and Juan Gabelich for *Yugoslavia Libre*, the Spanish communists Vicente Uribe and Antonio Mije, Francesco Frola of the *Alianza Internacional "Giuseppe Garibaldi"*, Paul Merker for *Alemania Libre*, Franz Schalmoser for the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM), Anna Seghers as president of the *Heinrich-Heine-Club*, and representatives of *Hungria Libre* and the Spanish *Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional*.<sup>611</sup> Among the main speakers of the evening was the Soviet ambassador Konstantin Oumansky who congratulated the Polish colony of Mexico City on the occasion of the liberation of their home country and the "brilliant feats of the Polish Army, brothers-in-arms of the Red Army, in conjunction with which the hated invader is being hurled forever from Polish territory." He quoted Kosciuszko's motto: "»For our liberty and for yours«, a motto that symbolises the friendship of our nations, sealed today in the blood spilt in the liberation struggle against our common enemy." The memory of the Polish war hero during the period of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century partition of Poland served Oumansky as a model for the rebirth of Poland in 1945:

With this glorious name on their banners the Polish patriots march today on a wide and straight road toward a Poland, free, democratic, independent, and strong, a Poland that occupies a place of honour in the great family of the United Nations. I drink to the liberation and independence, to the glory and prosperity of a reborn Poland. I drink to its noble people, martyred and heroic. Long live Poland! Long live the victory!<sup>612</sup>

Given the USSR's complicity in the Molotov-Ribbentrop-Agreement of 1939 and the lack of the Red Army's military support for the nationalist Warsaw uprising in August 1944, Oumansky's words may have sounded outright cynical to any outside observer. They were, in fact, also his last words spoken in public. The next morning, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 1945, the Mexican capital woke to the news that shortly before 6 o'clock in the morning a Lockheed C-60 transport plane of the Mexican air force had crashed in the city district of *Balbuena* just seconds after taking off from the airport of Mexico City. On board were Oumansky, his wife, and the First Secretary of the Soviet embassy, Lev Troynitsky, as well as other Soviet diplomatic staff *en route* to Costa Rica where Oumansky was due to present his credentials as Soviet ambassador – an additional position he had recently been assigned to by the Soviet government. All crew and passengers,

611 Memorandum on „Unión Democrática Polaco-Mexicana Tadeusz Kosciuszko“ (25 Jul 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), pp. 1-2.

612 Report „Celebration of the Fall of Warsaw“ (1 Feb 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.: cf. „La Liberación de Varsovia“, *Austria Libre* III/2 (Feb 1945), p. 8; „Die letzte Rede des Botschafters Oumansky“, *Demokratische Post* II/12 (1 Feb 1945), p. 2.

except for the flight engineer and Troynitzky's wife, were killed instantly in the crash.<sup>613</sup> During the day, the leadership of the Mexican Republic, led by president Manuel Ávila Camacho, the Mexican trade unions, the diplomatic corps, and the intellectual elite of the city paid their respects at the Soviet embassy on Calzada de Tacubaya. The representatives of pro-Soviet organisations of anti-fascist Europeans in Mexico City – who had dined with Oumansky only the night before – joined as a guard of honour, such as Luis Eibenschütz, Joseph Forgacs, Julius Vescei (the owner of the restaurant “Mignon”), and Aladár Tamas in the name of *Hungria Libre*, or Lenka Reinerová and Egon Erwin Kisch for the *Asociación Czechoslovaco-Mexicana*, and Dragutin Fodor for *Yugoslavia Libre*.<sup>614</sup> At 5 o'clock in the afternoon, the funeral procession left the embassy attended by thousands of mourners.<sup>615</sup>

Even though the cause of the crash remains undetermined, no conclusive evidence of foul-play was ever established. This did not, however, prevent the rapid proliferation of rumours about the possibility of sabotage of the plane for which a wide range of potential culprits were considered responsible. Lenka Reinerová recounted the mood of the city thus:

People are trying to figure out in vain, how such a disaster could have occurred under clearest weather conditions just above the airfield. Given that the defence secretary, [former Mexican president] Lázaro Cárdenas, one of the most distinguished Mexican revolutionaries and a trusted friend of the Soviet Union, provided his best crew for this flight, and they, too, the best pilots of Mexico, are now dead. The word is, last night a secret meeting of the Falange, the Spanish fascists, had taken place. Dark as the flags of mourning on the white houses are the thoughts of many Mexicans.<sup>616</sup>

Ludwig Renn included a chapter in his Mexican memoir under the title “The assassination of the Soviet ambassador” and recounted the alleged mood among the Mexican population who quickly blamed the US-American “gringos”. During the commemoration at the Soviet embassy, Renn claims: “The word »murder« is

613 See the confidential report „Crash of C-60 type aircraft, M.A.F.“ (30 Jan 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

614 See the memorandum on „Hungria Libre“ (4 May 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 3; Lenka Reiner[ová]: *Grenze geschlossen* (Berlin, 1958), p. 312; Ludwig Renn: *In Mexiko* (Berlin, 1979), p. 29.

615 *Boletín de Información. Embajada de la Unión de Repúblicas Socialistas Soviéticas* II/4 (27 Jan 1945), p. 1. The mourning for Oumansky was not, however, universal – illustrated by the fact that the Spanish anarchist journal *Solidaridad Obrera* did not even mention his death; see , by contrast: „Constantino Oumansky, gran patriota soviético y gran amigo del pueblo español“, *España Popular* V/227 (2 Feb 1945), p. 5.

616 Lenka Reiner: *Grenze geschlossen* (Berlin, 1958), p. 312; cf. also the short literary account of popular speculations surrounding Oumansky's death in: Gustav Regler: „Stolz und Mitleid“, in: Id., *Vulkanisches Land* (Göttingen, 1987), pp. 63-5.



carefully avoided, but the unspoken accusation fills the room.”<sup>617</sup> The US embassy in Mexico City monitored such rumours and allegations closely:

The Departamento del Distrito Federal has been rife with the rumour of sabotage, the blame being placed on reactionary Mexican elements at first, although Polish agents and US agents were mentioned as possible perpetrators of the suspected sabotage. At this writing, the belief that the Poles loyal to the London Polish government sabotaged the plane has grown and, it is reported, the movements of various Poles the day before the ship [recte: the plane] took off are being carefully investigated.<sup>618</sup>

Suspicious about a possible sabotage plot by Polish nationalists may have arisen from the time of the plane crash just hours after Oumansky’s speech at the celebration of the liberation of Poland at the restaurant “Sans Souci” and the fact that the circumstances of the accident closely resembled those of the accident that had killed the prime minister of the Polish government in exile, Władysław Sikorski, just off the coast of Gibraltar in July 1943 – a fatal crash that had also quickly been rumoured to have been the result of (possibly Soviet) sabotage. The Soviet diplomats themselves, as the US intelligence unit observed, soon appeared to have “become reserved on this point”:

At this writing, the Staff of the Soviet Embassy takes the attitude that there may well have been sabotage, that in any case Mexican carelessness has cost them the best of the Soviet diplomats and that no Mexican whitewashing investigation was going to satisfy the Soviet Government. In the Soviet Embassy the tendency is to blame a Nazi plot for any possible sabotage but in circles close to the Embassy the theory that the plane was sabotaged by United States agents had definitely been put forward.<sup>619</sup>

Generally, the US diplomats expected the official Soviet attitude to accept the version of an accident “since any other attitude would risk the loss of all of Oumansky’s work in Latin America [...] Good as he was, Oumansky can scarcely have been worth that.”<sup>620</sup> Meanwhile, an episode connected to the news of

617 Ludwig Renn: *In Mexiko* (Berlin, 1979), p. 29. Renn’s memoirs, however, display numerous inaccuracies and rather far-fetched speculations and need to be consulted with great care: He mistakenly dates the death of Oumansky as in January 1946, claims he had been on his way to Guatemala, and reports the plane had exploded in mid-air, when, in fact, it had crash-landed a few hundred yards from the runway before bursting into flames.

618 Memorandum on „Reaction to the Death of Constantine Oumansky“ (31 Jan 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

619 Memorandum on „Reaction to the Death of Constantine Oumansky“ (31 Jan 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

620 Military Attaché’s comment accompanying memorandum on „Reaction to the Death of

Oumansky' death attracted the attention of the US intelligence when Yuri Dashkevich, the local head of the Soviet TASS news agency, was unsuccessful in getting his dispatches cabled to Moscow and reportedly protested in vain before he "lost his temper completely in the Western Union office and made the following interesting statements:"

"The Mexican Government is responsible for the fact that individuals belonging to the Axis stroll freely about the streets of Mexico, responsible for permitting fascists and falangists to have organised here a fifth column without counterpart elsewhere in the world, and responsible for letting Germans run loose in the capital when they should be in Perote [the Mexican internment camp for enemy aliens] instead of living tranquilly in the houses!" Continuing, he said, "The day of the accident everyone said: »Was it sabotage?« and the answer was; »No, it was murder.« These happenings will be got to the Soviet Foreign Ministry and to Marshall Stalin himself, despite the difficulties that have been placed in the way of the stories already sent to Moscow! Every possible method will be used to see that the happenings of 25<sup>th</sup> of January become known to the heads of the Soviet Government."

Allegedly, Dashkevich accused "a certain allied power" which maintained "an extensive intelligence service" in Mexico of orchestrating difficulties in communication for the Soviet embassy and was "closely watching the movements and acts of the functionaries of that Embassy."<sup>621</sup> His outburst, the US military attaché believed, "seems to reflect accurately the feeling of local communists although all are much more cautious in expressing opinions now than in the first few days after the accident."<sup>622</sup> Dashkevich's outburst may also well have been an attempt to disguise the fact that the Soviet embassy possessed an independent, secret, and encoded channel of communication with Moscow which – in turn – US intelligence was monitoring and beginning to decipher through an intelligence project code-named "Venona" since February 1943.<sup>623</sup> Oumansky's legacy was later immortalised when the political and cultural elite of Mexico paid tribute to

Constantine Oumansky" (31 Jan 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

621 Memorandum „Further reactions to the death of Contantine Oumansky“ (26 Feb 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), pp. 1-2.

622 Military Attaché's comment to Memorandum „Further reactions to the death of Contantine Oumansky“ (26 Feb 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 3; this disptach about Dashkevich's fury over clandestine surveillance may, in addition, have served the purpose of proudly illustrating the effectiveness of US-American intelligence activities in Mexico City to the US State Department.

623 Cf. *The Venona Story*, ed. by Centre for Cryptologic History (NSA) (Fort George G. Meade, MD, 2001), online resource: [https://www.nsa.gov/Portals/70/documents/about/cryptologic-heritage/historical-figures-publications/publications/coldwar/venona\\_story.pdf](https://www.nsa.gov/Portals/70/documents/about/cryptologic-heritage/historical-figures-publications/publications/coldwar/venona_story.pdf) [4.10.2012], pp. 40-1.

him in a public act of commemoration organised by the *Instituto de Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Ruso* at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February 1945, and the Russian cultural centre on the second floor of Paseo de la Reforma no. 503 was named in his memory.<sup>624</sup>

As Allied troops were closing in on the remnants of the Third Reich in central Europe, the German community of exile around the movement *Alemania Libre* held a public meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1945 in the so-called *Schiefersaal* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21 to contemplate the implications of the imminent defeat of Nazi Germany. Presided over by Wilhelm Moellmann, the meeting was opened by Erich Jungmann with a commemoration of the victims of political persecution in Europe. The leader of the German communist party group, Paul Merker, then outlined the immediate and future tasks for a political reorganisation of a liberated Germany: Quoting the agreements of the Yalta conference of the three major Allied powers, he emphasised that the purpose of victory would not be the eradication of the German people but of Nazism, and warned of a repeat of the past mistakes of Weimar democracy. Calling for a ruthless purge of Nazi sympathisers from public life and the unity of the anti-Hitler alliance, Merker presented the project of the broadest possible political alliance of all anti-fascist political currents including the communist party – thereby echoing the communist ideological guide line of a “national front” which implied communist leadership. However, Merker went to great lengths to portray the movement of Free Germany as anything but communist, and called for “the most radical measures to eradicate Nazism, militarism, and imperialism in Germany.” Only after the completion of “necessary political, pedagogical, and economic measures towards a fundamental democratisation” would it be advisable to hold elections to avoid the “experiment” of swift democratic elections in January 1919 after the revolution of 1918. Merker went as far as to state:

It would be beneficial, if the fall of Berlin would result in the establishment of a provisional government. Such a step would be of decisive importance. Thereby, Hitler and his Nazi gang would be placed outside the law overnight, and the resistance against Hitler in areas not yet occupied by Allied forces would certainly receive a tremendous boost to hasten the end of Hitler.<sup>625</sup>

Given the geographical realities of the last phase of the Allied advance into Germany, this could only mean that Merker hoped for the quick establishment of a

624 „Homenaje del pueblo mexicano a la memoria de Constantino Oumansky“ (26 Feb 1945) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, Imprentos Suelos 4, fols. 40-9; report on „Opening of the Centro Cultural Ruso Constantin Oumansky“ (28 Feb 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD 2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

625 „Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland und der bevorstehende Zusammenbruch der Nazis“, *Freies Deutschland* IV/5 (Apr 1945), pp. 31-2; see also his column „Wie wir es sehen“, *Demokratische Post* II/14 (1 Mar 1945), pp. 1-2.

provisional German government without elections under Soviet control in Berlin even before the German capitulation.

Three days later on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* used the same venue of the *Schiefersaal* to stage a cultural soirée of solidarity with the Spanish republicans in exile in Mexico City. Presided over by the German writer and president of *Alemanía Libre*, Ludwig Renn, alongside the Spanish writer and director of the *Editorial Séneca*, José Bergamín, the German author Anna Seghers as president of the *Heinrich-Heine-Club*, Kurt Stern, Theodor Balk (i.e. Dragutin Fodor), and Egon Erwin Kisch paid homage to the memory of comradeship during the Spanish Civil War and declared their solidarity with the republican underground *guerillas* in Spain. The German choir performed songs of the International Brigades, and poetry recitals from the works of García Lorca and Paul Mayer were presented by the actresses Asunción Casals and Steffi Spira, while José Herrera Petere recited from his own works. Among the Spanish guests of honour were the former Spanish republican government minister José Moix, Juan Comorera of the Catalan PSUC, Dr. Manuel Márquez, and Francisco Comesaña, recently arrived in Mexico, who reported about the activities of the underground resistance movement in Spain. André Simone (i.e. Otto Katz) closed the proceedings with the statement that “there can be no free Europe as long as Spain remains unfree.”<sup>626</sup> That same evening, the committee of *Polonia Popular*, the journal of anti-Soviet Polish socialists, held a press conference which was, as the organisers proudly noted, attended by virtually all Mexican newspapers, alongside Abelardo Iglesias, Progreso Alfarache, and Emilio Maldonado of the Spanish anarchist journal *Solidaridad Obrera*, Enrique Gironella of the independent socialist journal *Mundo*, Walter Lepen of the *Revista Israelita de México*, and Abraham Rubinstein of *La Voz Israelita*. The organisers of *Polonia Popular* had also invited the leading mind of the Spanish *Círculo Cultural “Pablo Iglesias”*, Indalecio Prieto, and the editorial board members of *Adelante*, Manuel Albar and Víctor Salazar, but all three declined the invitation.<sup>627</sup> Julián Gorkín and Marceau Pivert represented a group named as *Comisión Socialista Internacional*. Both also featured among the main speakers at this press conference; Gorkín deplored and denounced the agreements of Yalta as a “second Munich” and spoke of the fifth partition of Poland. He protested in sharp terms against the territorial concessions to the Soviet Union, agreed to by the governments of Britain and the US, and stated that the meaning of the words of the Atlantic Charter had fundamentally changed. He reminded the assembled press of the Polish contributions to liberalism, socialism, and anarchism and to the independence movements in the Americas. Marceau Pivert likened the meeting of Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt to the appeasement conferences of the 1930s and ended his

626 „Spaniens Himmel breitet seine Sterne“, *Freies Deutschland* IV/5 (Apr 1945), p. 33.

627 Two months earlier, the editor of *Polonia Popular*, Felix Gutmann, had been invited by the Spanish socialists of the *Círculo Cultural Pablo Iglesias* to present his views on the future of Poland in an interview: „Con el director de la revista Polonia Popular“, *Adelante* IV/71 (1 Jan 1945), p. 4.

remarks with the words of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century French journalist to the Russian Tsar: “Long live Poland, Sir!”<sup>628</sup> Thus, the Polish socialists – evidently in close cooperation with the group *Socialismo y Libertad* around Gorkín, Pivert, and Victor Serge – tried to raise their objections to the new European order that began to take shape during the spring of 1945.<sup>629</sup> It is likely that the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50, housing the offices of the Spanish anarchists and the transnational group *Socialismo y Libertad*, served as the venue for this press conference.

While the Polish socialists and their transnational network of supporters protested against the Soviet hegemony over eastern central Europe and the German communists demanded an end to the Franco dictatorship in Spain, the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City continued to display publicly its internal ideological rift and discord. During the closing months of the European war two political currents dominated the political practice of the Spanish community in exile in Mexico City: on the one hand, the campaign in support of the resistance movement through the *Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional*, dominated by the national front policies of the Spanish communists in a coalition with the Catalan and parts of the Spanish socialists, the *Izquierda Republicana*, and the Basque nationalists, and, on the other hand, concrete steps to establish a new Spanish republican government in exile to replace Juan Negrín, a course favoured by the anti-communist coalition of the *Junta Española de Liberación* under the political guidance of Indalecio Prieto. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1944, the president of the *Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional*, Pedro Carrasco, addressed a large meeting of followers about possible ways forward towards re-establishing the republican order in Spain. The venue of the event bears some significance, as it was the headquarters of the Mexican *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC) at calle de López no. 23 south of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*. Until shortly after the Mexican entry into the war against Nazi Germany the building had housed the *Casino Alemán* (*Deutsches Haus*), the social and cultural centre of the German business colony in Mexico City before being expropriated and handed over to the Mexican national peasants’ union. Since 1944, the Spanish communists were occasionally hosted by the CNC in the large hall on the first floor.<sup>630</sup> The meeting united the leadership of the pro-Soviet coalition of Spanish exile politics in Mexico City, many intellectuals associated with their politics, and included a representative of the Mexican defence minister and former president Lázaro Cárdenas, commander Leopoldo Parra, who was greeted with “a tremendous standing ovation by the audience”. Carrasco then was

628 „Importante Conferencia de Prensa“, *Polonia Popular* II/12 (1 Apr 1945), pp. 4,5 & 12.

629 Cf. „Documentos de la Comisión Socialista Internacional“, *Mundo. Socialismo y Libertad*, no. 11/12 (Mar 1945), pp. 39-43.

630 See for example: „Asamblea informativa: situación en España y los deberes de los comunistas“ by Vicente Uribe on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1944, *España Popular* V/190 (19 May 1944), p. 3, and the „asamblea general“ of the PCE on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 1944, *España Popular* V/218 (1 Dec 1944), p. 5.

careful to insist that the *Junta Suprema* as a coordinating body of the Spanish resistance movement should not be labelled as communist but rather represented a broad alliance of national unity – just as Paul Merker would try to establish the political-ideological identity of the movement *Alemania Libre* three months later in March. Evidently, any initiative by political organisations in exile felt the need to distance themselves, at least in public, from any identification with communism in order to maintain some degree of influence over the redesign of the post-war order in western and central Europe. Carrasco then went on to lay out three possible roads toward the toppling of the Franco regime and the liberation of Spain. The first would be the establishment of a new Spanish republican government in exile – a step which Carrasco rejected as ineffective and akin to capitulation to the status quo, and probably also because it denied the legitimacy of Juan Negrín’s leadership –, second, an internal popular uprising against the regime which Carrasco found depended on too many international variables of isolating Franco from outside support by “the democratic powers” while maintaining the clandestine support for the *guerilla*, and third, the combination of mobilising international support for the republican cause and internal subversion of the Franco regime, an option which Carrasco favoured over the other two.<sup>631</sup>

Meanwhile, since early November 1944, the largely anti-communist camp of the Spanish political elite in exile in Mexico had been in the process of reconvening the Spanish republican parliament, the *Cortes*, which had not met since February 1939.<sup>632</sup> Of the 470 members of the *Cortes* elected in 1936, about a quarter had perished during the Civil War, those supportive of Franco’s regime had stayed in Spain, and about 190 had fled into exile. More than 100 had managed to flee Europe and reach the Americas, the vast majority of whom, a little under a hundred, had found asylum in Mexico. Convening the *Cortes* fell within the responsibility of the *Deputación Permanente*, a committee of twenty-two members of parliament presided over by Diego Martínez Barrio who also headed the *Junta Española de Liberación* in coalition with Indalecio Prieto’s socialists. The group of 15 members of the *Deputación* who remained in 1945 was dominated by representatives of the *Unión Republicana*, *Izquierda Republicana*, and the Socialists alongside two Catalan and one Basque nationalist while Antonio

631 „Gran acto de la Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema en México“, *España Popular* V/220 (15 Dec 1944), p. 4; see also „La Gran Asamblea Informativa de la Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema“, *Reconquista de España* I/1 (20 Dec 1944), pp. 7-8; Carrasco’s full speech was published as: *Un Solo Frente de Lucha contra el Fascismo. Unión Nacional y Gobierno de la República* (Reconquista de España, México D.F., 1945); cf. the transcript at AGN, Archivo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1190, 710.1/101-55, s. fols.; see also a short surveillance report of the meeting as part of a memorandum on „Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional“ (15 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), pp. 6-7.

632 On the following, the see extensive report on the run-up to the meeting of the Spanish republican *Cortes* in Mexico City: „Spanish republican government in exile“ (9 Jan 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fols.; cf. „La Reunión de Cortes“, *Adelante* IV/71 (1 Jan 1945), p. 1.

Mije was the only communist among them. Martínez Barrio had unsuccessfully sought the authorisation of a meeting of the *Cortes* in Mexico during a meeting with Mexican president Ávila Camacho who stated his support for the Spanish republican cause but, revealingly, hesitated to authorise such a meeting without consent from the US government. He told Martínez Barrio that he had briefly discussed the case of Spain with president Roosevelt during their meeting in Monterrey in April 1943, but Roosevelt had offered nothing more than general sympathy with the Spanish republican cause, particularly in light of the British position towards the Franco government. After Ávila Camacho's suggestion to let the Spanish *Cortes* meet in liberated France was deemed impractical he only went so far as to promise that no obstacles would be placed in the way of a meeting of the Spanish *Cortes* in Mexico City. However, permission to use an official building in the Mexican capital was denied, and the *Cortes* meeting therefore took place at the *Club de France* at calle Río Nazas no. 43 in the district of *Cuauhtémoc* on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 1945. This choice of venue may also have reflected the fact that liberated France quickly developed into the most important geographical base for Spanish republican politics in exile where first meetings were already being held in Paris and Toulouse. The decision to reconvene the *Cortes* in Mexico City remained, however, highly controversial as both Juan Negrín in London and the Spanish communists strictly opposed such an assembly on formal grounds, and both Negrín's claim to act as prime minister in exile as well as Martínez Barrio's claim to the presidency of the *Cortes* were called into question by their ideological rivals. In addition, the Basque, Catalan, and Galician nationalists upheld reservations against the convocation of the *Cortes*.

At the assembly of the *Cortes* on 10<sup>th</sup> of January 1945 at the *Club de France*, only the representatives of the *Unión Republicana* under Diego Martínez Barrio, the *Izquierda Republicana* around the former government minister José Giral, the Spanish socialists following Indalecio Prieto and Ángel Galarza, the Spanish Federal Party headed by Luis Cordero, and the *Ezquerria Republicana de Catalunya* of Miguel Santaló attended while the communists, the republicans around former government minister Antonio Velao, and the Basque, Catalan, and Galician nationalists did not attend. As a result, the necessary *quorum* of 100 members of the *Cortes* necessary to conduct any meaningful business was not achieved and the assembly of the Spanish *Cortes* in Mexico City did little else than commemorate the 127 members of parliament who had died since the last meeting in Spain.<sup>633</sup> In the eyes of the US intelligence officials who monitored the Spanish politics in exile in Mexico City, this inconsequential meeting of the *Cortes* had strengthened the position of the supporters of Negrín and constituted a tactical advantage for the Spanish communists. Their report, clearly inspired by deep-rooted fears of communist control over any future Spanish republican government in exile (facilitated, it seemed, by the Soviet ambassador Oumansky,

633 „La Reunión de las Cortes. Homenaje a los diputados asesinados por el franquismo“, *Adelante* IV/72 (15 Jan 1945), p. 3; see a transcript of the proceedings of the meeting at AGN, Archivo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1190, 710.1/101-55, s. fols.

Lombardo Toledano, and even the Mexican *Secretario de Gobernación* Miguel Alemán Valdez) went as far as to list among the likely outcomes for Spanish exile politics nothing less than: “Prieto will be finished as a Spanish political figure.”<sup>634</sup>

If the Mexican government had been reluctant to welcome officially the reconstitution of the Spanish republican *Cortes* in Mexico City, the same cannot be said about its attitude towards a mass meeting organised on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 1945 – in the wake of Oumansky’s death just days before – by the Spanish republican political forces promoting the *Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional*, the Spanish communists, the *negrenista* socialists, the PSUC, the allied elements of the *Izquierda Republicana*, and the Basque communist party.<sup>635</sup> In fact, the Mexican president Ávila Camacho decided to let the *Sub-Secretario de Gobernación* Fernando Casas Alemán address the meeting on his behalf. “Welcomed by long and intense applause”<sup>636</sup> from a crowd of about 3.000-3.500 in the *Arena México*, a sports arena and also one of the biggest indoor venues for political meetings in the city at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 94 to the north of the district of *Hidalgo*, Casas Alemán reassured the assembled Spanish republicans: “For Mexico, you embody the true Spain, the genuine and free, which will unite one day in vigorous community with the ideas of its American siblings in order to turn all nations which think and speak in the Spanish language into positive homesteads of human liberties.”<sup>637</sup> Presided over by Ramón Lamonedá for the Spanish *negrenista* socialists, the list of speakers included the Spanish socialist Julio Álvarez del Vayo, former government minister Antonio Velao, and the communist Vicente Uribe.<sup>638</sup> The latter reaffirmed the principles of the communist-led alliance: a) that the republican constitution of 1931 was still valid, b) that the government of Negrín was still legitimate, and c) that there existed an urgent need for rallying international support behind the republican cause in order to isolate the Franco regime while simultaneously supporting the resistance guerrilla in Spain.<sup>639</sup> It appeared that the *Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema*

634 See the report „Reunion of the Spanish Cortes“ (26 Jan 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), esp. pp. 3-4; cf. „Actitud del Grupo Parlamentario Socialista sobre la Reunión de la Cortes Españolas en México“, *Adelante* IV/73 (22 Jan 1945), pp. 1-2.

635 „Grandioso Mitin Español de afirmación y unidad republicanas y de lucha antifranquista“ at AGN, DGIPS, caja 18, exp. 11, fol. 2.; see also the report on „Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional“ (15 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 7.

636 Surveillance report on the meeting (30 Jan 1945) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 18, exp. 11, fol. 3.

637 „Espléndido y genroso discurso del Lic. Casas Alemán en nombre del Sr. Presidente de la República“, *España Popular* V/227 (2 Feb 1945), pp. 1 & 4.

638 Cf. the surveillance report on the meeting (30 Jan 1945) by Inspector PS-20 (Jesús González Valencia) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 18, exp. 11, fols. 3-6; see the full transcript of the meeting at AGN, Archivo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1190, 710.1/101-55, s. fols.

639 See Uribe’s speech: „Grandioso éxito del itin unitario“, *España Popular* V/227 (2 Feb 1945), pp. 1-2; see also „Mitin de Afirmación Republicana“, *El Socialista* IV/24 (Feb 1945), pp. 2 & 5; Uribe’s speech was also distributed in several editions as a separate pamphlet: Vicente



could count on the official support of the Mexican government while the attempts to reconstitute the Spanish republican *Cortes* had been relegated to a far less prominent location at the *Club de France* and, for the time being, yielded little to no results. This excellent support network enjoyed by the Spanish *negrinistas* also found expression in the formation of a Mexican committee in support of the Spanish guerillas. This committee had been established on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1944 with headquarters at calle Tacuba no. 18, just a stone throw from the *Centro Republicano Español* and celebrated the anniversary of the election victory of the Spanish *Frente Popular* in 1936 on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 1945 at the headquarters of the *Sindicato de Meseros* at calle Orozco y Berra no. 80. About 300 persons were in attendance, among them the leading figures of Mexican solidarity with the Spanish republic such as the writer Andrés Henestrosa and José Mancisidor of the FOARE. The transnational community of exile in Mexico City was represented by Erich Jungmann for *Alemania Libre*, Francesco Frola for the *Alianza Internacional "Giuseppe Garibaldi"*, Vicente Uribe for the Spanish communists, as well as Veneranda G. Manzano, Manuel Márquez, Ramón Lamonedá, alongside some "employees of the Russian Embassy."<sup>640</sup> At this event, a first draft of a petition to the delegations of the pan-American Conference of Chapultépec which was held in Mexico City during February/March 1945 was presented calling for the international isolation of the Franco regime.<sup>641</sup> Other such meetings reiterated the point of the *Junta Suprema* during the early months of 1945, such as the mass meeting against the terror of the Franco regime organised by FOARE in the *Anfiteatro Bolívar* of the *Universidad Obrera* at calle Justo Sierra no. 16 in the historic city centre on the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> of March.<sup>642</sup> Among the Spanish community of exile in Mexico, activities evidently intensified over the international recognition of the Spanish Republic in exile as in April the constitutive assembly of the United Nations met in San Francisco. For their part, Álvaro de Albornoz and Indalecio Prieto as president and secretary of the *Junta Española de Liberación* alongside Félix Gordón Ordás, Antonio Sbert, Carlos

Uribe: *Por la Unidad ¡Viva la República! Discurso pronunciado el el Mitin de la „Arena México“ el día 29 de enero de 1945* (México D.F., 1945); Vicente Uribe: *Todos Unidos por la Reconquista de la Republica* (Ediciones España Popular, 1945).

640 „Gran Acto de Unidad Republicana“, *España Popular* V/230 (23 Feb 1945), pp. 5-4; Memorandum on the „Comité Mexicano de Ayuda a las Guerillas Españolas“ (1 Jun 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 4.

641 Report on „Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional“ (15 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 7; see also: „El problema español ante la Conferencia de Cancilleres“, *España Popular* V/230 (23 Feb 1945), pp. 1-2; for a detailed account of the conference cf. Carlos Sola Ayape: „En busca del apoyo de América. El exilio español ante la Conferencia de Cancilleres de Chapultepec (febrero-marzo 1945)“, *Revista de El Colegio de San Luis*, nueva época VII/14 (julio-diciembre 2017), pp. 105-39.

642 „¡Salvemos al Pueblo Español del Terror Franquista!“, *España Popular* VI/235 (30 Mar 1945), p. 8; see also the extensive surveillance report on „Anti-Franco Meeting of FAORE March 20 and 21, 1945“ (3 Apr 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fols.; cf. the transcript of Lombardo Toledano's speech at AGN, Archivo Presidente Manuel Ávila Camacho, caja 1190, 710.1/101-55, s. fols.

Esplá, Bernardo Giner de los Ríos, and Alejandro Otero issued a lengthy petition to the United Nations in San Francisco to further the case against the Franco regime which elaborated at length on the fascist character of Franco's regime in Spain and concluded:

An authentic Spain, democratic, would be another element of peace in the world, given its geographic situation opposite America and in the Mediterranean, the expansion of its race and the powerful influence of its culture, its customs, and its language. A Spain which on the American continent only desires brotherly and cultural cooperation, without ridiculous notions of Empire or supercilious posturings of a false Spanishness. That Spain responds to the call of the words of the declaration of Tehran: "We will be welcoming you into the family of democratic nations of the world as soon as you see fit." The authentic Spain, the democratic one, the only one which in this world can live, is awaiting the promised day of Tehran, a world in which all men can live a life of liberty safe from tyranny and in accordance with their desires and their own conscience. And it only asks that its people be given the possibility, which was taken away from them, of placing itself as a democratic nation into the community of nations in the immediate future. They cannot comprehend that the benefits of liberty, promised to other nations, should, because of trivial reservations, be denied to them as they were the first to confront the common enemy.<sup>643</sup>

Any such attempts to win the support of the international community were, however, hindered by the fundamental fragmentation of the Spanish community in exile into irreconcilable ideological camps which made it difficult, if not impossible, for some international actors to establish any working relationship with the relevant forces of Spanish politics in exile. Even the US embassy officials who closely monitored these developments in Mexico City had to concede that their own assessments appeared "somewhat incoherent and difficult to follow but this quality is inherent in any exposition of Spanish politics."<sup>644</sup>

As Allied forces completed the liberation of central Europe, further public celebrations greeted the news of victory. The small organisation of *Hungria Libre* regularly commemorated the revolution of March 1848, and in 1945 their meeting at the restaurant "Mignon" at Avenida Álvaro Obregon no. 255 just north of the district of *Hipódromo* turned into a celebration of liberation.<sup>645</sup> Joining the

643 *Conferencia de San Francisco de California*, ed. by Junta Española de Liberación (México D.F., 1945), p. 21.

644 Military attaché's comment on report „Reunion of the Spanish Cortes“ (26 Jan 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), esp. p. 4.

645 See „Március 15-ike“, *Szabad Magyarorság / Hungria Libre* IV/4 (Apr 1945), p. 100; cf. „Chronik von kulturellen und politischen Veranstaltungen verschiedener Exil-Organisationen

president of *Hungria Libre*, Guillermo Weinstock and its secretary Aladár Tamás were representative of other exile organisations, such as Theodor Balk (i.e. Dragutin Fodor) of *Yugoslavia Libre*, Francesco Frola of the *Alianza Internacional "Giuseppe Garibaldi"*, as well as Luis Sánchez Pontón of the Mexican foreign ministry and the first secretary of the Soviet embassy, Andrej H. Glebsky. Vigilant as ever, the US embassy intelligence also noted the presence of Antonio Villalobos, president of the Mexican governing party PRM, who acted as sponsor of the meeting, and even the Mexican minister for national defence, former president Lázaro Cárdenas. The celebratory tone of the meeting of the Hungarian colony met with reservations by the US-American observers: "On this occasion homage was paid to the Red Army »which at great sacrifice liberated Hungary from German and Hungarian Fascists«."646 In April it was the turn of the Austrian community in exile in Mexico City to mark the liberation of Vienna. In the evening of the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1945, the *Acción Republicana Austriaca de México* (ARAM) hosted its membership and Mexican mentors, alongside representatives of the exile organisations in Mexico City and the international diplomatic corps, at the restaurant "Chapultépec" just below the Chapultépec Castle for a celebration of the liberation of Vienna and homage to the Red Army. The invitation coincided with the news of the death of US president Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the Austrian music professor Carl Alwin made a personal effort to convince US ambassador George S. Messersmith to attend the occasion: "This act will have a absolute [sic] serious character, in regard of the situation, and will be introduced by a minute of silence in memoriam of the late President Roosevelt."647 Messersmith, however, had to decline the invitation: "I need not tell you that no one rejoices more than I that our enemies are out of Vienna. In view of the death of President Roosevelt, you will appreciate that I and members of the staff of the Embassy will necessarily abstain from various official functions for the next several weeks."648

The event was, in fact, otherwise well-attended by representatives of the Mexican government, the diplomatic corps, and the organisations of European exile in Mexico City. The presidium consisted of the ARAM's president Franz Schalmoser, the *Chargé d'Affairs* of the Soviet embassy, Vassili Yakubovsky, Mexican navy minister general Heriberto Jara, the *Sub-Secretario de Gobernación* Fernando Casas Alemán, the former Mexican consul in Marseille, Gilberto Bosques, José Altamirano representing the *Secretario de Gobernación*

in Mexiko", in: *Österreicher im Exil, Mexiko 1938-1947. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Christian Kloyber and Marcus G. Patka (Wien, 2002), p. 631.

646 Memorandum on „Hungria Libre de México“ (4 May 1945) at USNACP, RG 84 UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 3.

647 Handwritten letter by Carl Alwin to ambassador George S. Messersmith (16 Apr 1945) accompanying the programme of the event of the 18<sup>th</sup> of April at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 842U-843O, s. fol.

648 Letter by ambassador George S. Messersmith to Carl Alwin (16 Apr 1945), at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 842U-843O, s. fol.

Miguel Alemán, Carlos Masanés, the *Chargé d’Affairs* of the Uruguayan embassy, the representative of the Czech government in exile Jan Vaclav Hyka, Francesco Frola for the Italian *Alianza Internacional “Giuseppe Garibaldi”*, and Ludwig Renn, Paul Merker, and Erich Jungmann for the movement *Alemania Libre*.<sup>649</sup> Main speaker for the Austrian colony was Bruno Frei who offered a wide-ranging historical scenario of Austrian independence and, by referring to the events of February 1934, claimed that Austrians had been the first nation to fight national socialism. He paid homage to the march of the Red Army “from the Volga to the Danube”, the leaders of the Allies, and to the hospitality of the Mexican government.<sup>650</sup> For his part, sub-secretary Fernando Casas Alemán reminded the audience of Mexico’s diplomatic protest in the League of Nations, albeit inconsequential, against the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in March 1938 and its continued commitment to the restoration of Austrian sovereignty as set out by the Allied conference of foreign ministers in Moscow in October 1943. He briefly praised Vienna as a geographical as well as cultural hub of Western culture and referred to the historical legacy of the Congress of Vienna to emphasise the respect for the rights of minor powers in international politics as a precondition for a peaceful global order, and he explicitly linked the progress of liberty and peace to the “march of victory” of the Red Army inspired by the same spirit as the (rather modest) Mexican military forces fighting in the Pacific theatre of war.<sup>651</sup> The US embassy in Mexico City summarised the meeting simply under “communist activities in Mexico”.<sup>652</sup> But even the relatively small colony of exiled Austrians in Mexico City was unable to unite across ideological divisions on that evening: The independent German and Austrian socialists of the *Union Deutscher und Österreichischer Sozialisten* chose the same evening to stage one of its regular meetings in the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* which featured “presentations and discussions on current international and German questions.”<sup>653</sup> On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 1945, a concert of Austrian music followed in the conference hall of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* with international soloists and the band of the Mexican navy under the direction of Estanislao García Espinosa and Carl Alwin. A short address was given by the director of *El Popular*, Alejandro Carrillo.<sup>654</sup>

649 „Reunión de austriacos, en el exilio“, *Novedades* (20 Apr 1945), p. 3; report „Communist Activities in Mexico – General“ (19 Jul 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), pp. 7-8; „Die Freien Österreicher danken der Roten Armee“, *Demokratische Post* II/17 (15 Apr 1945), p. 2.

650 Personal memorandum on Bruno Frei (7 Sep 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), pp. 2-3.

651 „Fué celebrada en México ayer, la liberación de Viena“, *Novedades* (19 Apr 1945); cf. also „Los Austriacos de México celebraron de Liberación de Viena por los Rusos“, *El Popular* (19 Apr 1945), pp. 1-2; „Wovon man spricht“, *Demokratische Post* II/18 (2 May 1945), p. 8.

652 See the collection of press reports at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/5; report „Communist Activities in Mexico – General“ (19 Jul 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fols.

653 See the announcement in: *Sozialistische Tribüne* I/3 (Apr 1945), p. 36.

654 „Die Freien Österreicher danken der Roten Armee“, *Demokratische Post* II/17 (15 Apr 1945),

For the German-speaking community of exile in Mexico City, the last days of war in Europe coincided with the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday of one of its most illustrious members, the Czech writer Egon Erwin Kisch, who was honoured by a banquet organised in the restaurant of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 1945. The organisations backing this event included the Czech, Yugoslavian, and Polish groups of political refugees, the German cultural association Heinrich-Heine-Club, and the international PEN-Club. The dinner was therefore not only attended by virtually all cultural and political protagonists of the German-speaking community of exile, but also by Jan Václav Hyka, representing the Czech government in exile, who spoke alongside Alejandro Carrillo, Jeanne Garnier-Stern, José Bergamín, Alexander Abusch, and André Simone. The international PEN-Club was represented by its president Enrique González Martínez, Carl Alwin, Theodor Balk, Antonio Castro Leal, Francesco Frola, Luis Martín Guzmán, Ludwig Renn, Alfonso Reyes, Ralph Roeder.<sup>655</sup> A special honour was bestowed on Kisch by his fellow German-speaking writers when on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May a performance of one of his plays, “Der Fall des Generalstabschefs Redl”, took place in the *Schiefer-Saal* of calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21 with German-speaking writers performing on stage as amateur actors.<sup>656</sup>

The news of the fall of Berlin was greeted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 1945 by spontaneous mass demonstrations in the streets of the city centre of Mexico City. Members of various European communities of exile participated in these demonstrations<sup>657</sup>, but unlike in May 1942, when Ludwig Renn was invited to speak to the assembled crowds on the occasion of Mexico’s entry into the war against Nazi Germany, this time no foreign speakers were allowed to address the Mexican public. Only later, far away from the city centre at the *Ángel de Independencia* on Paseo de la Reforma, Ludwig Renn spoke a few words:

Berlin has been liberated! We Free Germans are the representatives of the democrats of German origin who always fought together with the Allies against the Nazi hoards and their fifth column abroad. We welcome the liberation of Berlin as a symbol for the imminent extirpation of fascism. [...] In the hour of the conquest of our capital

p. 2; „Concierto-Homenaje a los Austriacos Libres de México“, *El Popular* (22 Apr 1945); „Tributo a los Libertadores“, *El Nacional* (15 Apr 1945); „Gran concierto homenaje ofrecido por Acción Republicana Austriaca“, *Gráfico* (24 Apr 1945).

655 See the „Invitación Banquete de Homenaje para Egon Erwin Kisch“ at BAL, SAPMO, SgY 14/21, fols. 13-4; see also „Egon Erwin Kisch. Zu seinem 60. Geburtstag“, *Demokratische Post* II/18 (2 May 1945), p. 7; the *Asociación Checoslovaco-Mexicana* honoured Kisch with its own celebration two days later.

656 See the invitation at BAL, SAPMO, SgY14/21, pp. 15-6; cf. also the announcement in: *Demokratische Post* II/18 (2 May 1945), p. 7; see also the review „Schriftsteller spielen Theater“, *Demokratische Post* II/19 (17 May 1945), p. 4; cf. (though slightly confusing the dates) Lenka Reiner[ová]: *Grenze geschlossen* (Berlin, 1958), pp. 319-20.

657 A couple of pictures were published in *España Popular* VI/241 (11 May 1945), p. 4; Lenka Reiner[ová]: *Grenze geschlossen* (Berlin, 1958), pp. 320-1.

city, in the hour when for our people a new life is dawning, we Free Germans take the vow: We will rebuild, first what has been destroyed abroad and then increasingly our own country. In this our motto shall be: Freedom for all those of goodwill!<sup>658</sup>

The following day, the Spanish *Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema* hosted the vice-president of the Spanish republican *Cortes*, Luis Fernández Clérigo, who used the occasion of Allied victories in Berlin and across Germany to restate the case of the Spanish Republic. The location was, again, of topographical significance: the headquarters of the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* – the former *Casino Alemán* at calle de López no. 23.<sup>659</sup> The *Centro Cultural Ruso-Mexicano* “Constantin Oumansky” staged a celebratory dinner on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May at the restaurant “Chapultépec” where the officials of the Soviet embassy congregated together with their Mexican and Spanish collaborators such as Víctor Villaseñor and the writer Constancia de la Mora. First secretary Andrej Glebsky was the main speaker, praising the achievements of the Red Army while ignoring the role of the western Allies. The view of the assistant US military attaché in Mexico City, Desmond Holdridge, was that “as usual, the tendency to claim to have shot all the bears, observable in most Soviet utterances, was noticeable in Glebsky’s speech, but the absence of political clichés and snide remarks about Anglo-American arms is encouraging.” The mood on this occasion was evidently elated: “[...] there was dancing, wining, dining, a fashion show and a floor show. The affair broke up at three in the morning and, as Bolshevik festivals go, it was quite gay.”<sup>660</sup> The communist-dominated German movement *Alemania Libre* addressed the Mexican public at a press conference held at the restaurant “Mignon” at Avenida Álvaro Obregón no. 255 on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, presided over by Antonio Castro Leal and attended by the former Mexican consul in Marseille Gilberto Bosques, leading Mexican communists Blas Manrique and Alberto Lumbreras, Mexican diplomat Pedro Quintanilla, the TASS correspondent Yuri Dashkevich, as well as the German communists Anna Seghers, Paul Merker, and Erich Jungmann. Ludwig Renn outlined a post-war order in Germany:

For us democratic Germans there begins a chapter of our history, an era in which everything which is noble and good will be sought and in which crime will be proscribed. The forces which will contribute to this are more considerable than is apparent at the moment. Soon we shall see them in action in Germany itself.<sup>661</sup>

658 „Mexiko feiert den Fall Berlins“, *Demokratische Post* II/19 (17 May 1945), p. 2, reprinted in Ludwig Renn: *In Mexiko* (Berlin 1979), pp. 199-200; see also Alexander Abusch: *Mit offenem Visier. Memoiren* (Berlin, 1986), p. 104.

659 „Acto de la Comisión de la Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema. Interesante conferencia del Sr. Fernández Clérigo“, *España Popular* VI/241 (11 May 1945), p. 5.

660 „Celebration of Fall of Berlin by Comision Rusa »Constantin Oumansky«“ (14 May 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

661 Personal memorandum on Ludwig Renn (3 Oct 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02

But the prevailing mood of optimism and celebration did not conceal the fact that, for the German-speaking central-European community of exile, the end of the European war contained the prospect of further personal ordeals to come. Lenka Reinerová remembered her experience of the end of the European war in Mexico in terms that are indicative of the terrible human cost of Nazi persecution which had taken its toll on the friends and families of the political refugees in Mexico:

Suddenly all the bells were ringing in Mexico, and, by telephone or in another way, we heard about it at the [Czech] legation. And I immediately received a call from my husband [Theodor Balk, i.e. Dragutin Fodor] who told me: »Listen, the war is over!«, I already knew that, and he said: »There is going to be a big demonstration in the city. We are all going, can you join us?«  
- »Yes, of course.« [...]

So I went on my way, and not very far from the legation – it was very hot around mid-day – there was Kisch, and to my astonishment he stood there not joyful at all, not radiant at all, on the contrary, somehow cast down, sunken in on himself. And when I reached him I said: »What is going on? The war is over!«, and he said a sentence that I have never been able to forget: »Yes. But think of the news that we will now have to take in...« And, unfortunately, he was right.<sup>662</sup>

Egon Erwin Kisch himself soon learned that he had lost two brothers, Paul and Arnold, to the Nazi terror in Europe, while Reinerová had to come to terms with the fact that she was the sole surviving member of her entire family.<sup>663</sup>

(Gibson), p. 5. The full texts of all statements by Renn, Merker, and Jungmann during this press conference were made available to the US embassy by the *Comité Latino Americano de Alemanes Libres*, see their letter (11 May 1945) and the transcripts at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 842U-843O, s. fols.

662 Interview with Lenka Reinerová, documentary *Flucht nach Mexiko. Deutsche im Exil*, by Gerlinde Boehm (Goethe Institute / SFB, 1995), min. 1:12:23 – 1:13:35.

663 „Wovon man spricht“, *Demokratische Post* II/22 (1 Jul 1945), p. 8; Lenka Reiner[ová]: *Grenze geschlossen* (Berlin, 1958), p. 324; „Wovon man spricht“, *Demokratische Post* III/1 (15 August 1945), p. 16.





## Part IV

### Post-War



### a. A government in exile

While for the central-European political refugees in exile in Mexico City the allied victory in Europe represented a fundamental change in their situation as the vast majority of them now made preparations for a speedy return to Europe, the Spanish community in exile was faced with new challenges which the survival of the Franco dictatorship in Spain presented against the backdrop of a new international world order. From this situation arose the question of the legitimate international representation of Spain while, as a former ally of Nazi Germany and Mussolini's fascist Italy, the Franco government had not been invited to the constituting San Francisco Conference of the United Nations which opened on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1945, two weeks before the end of hostilities in Europe. After the initial attempt to re-constitute the Spanish republican *Cortes* in Mexico City had failed in January, it was now the communist-dominated *Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional* under its president Pedro Carrasco and the secretary Lino Sánchez Portela which took to the stage in Mexico City in early June of 1945 to reiterate its insistence on the continuing legitimacy of the last republican government of Juan Negrín. The location was the theatre of the Mexican national union of telephone workers at Calzada Manuel Villalongín no. 50 in the north of the city district of *Cuauhtémoc*.<sup>1</sup> In order to boost the international support for the republican cause (and to avoid their own isolation from the other main political forces of the republican spectrum), the Spanish communists called for a broad anti-fascist political alliance of support for the republican government in exile.<sup>2</sup> The invitation made their political intentions clear:

As the war in Europe has ended, the Spaniards see with sadness that a policy of appeasement persists which helps the tyrant Franco to maintain the power and the continuity of his satellite regime of Hitlerism, the savage methods of which were faithfully copied in order to subdue our people. We do not intend to solve our problems from abroad and consider it a crime that appeasers and fascists try to impose a monarchy or a government destined to curtail the freedom of expression of the people's will. It needs to be we ourselves who reconquer the Republic and we stand ready to claim the rights granted to us by the Atlantic Charter and the decisions of the Yalta Conference. We shall not be excluded from those freedoms which we have earned through the blood of the best sons of Spain, spilled so that humanity may be liberated from Nazi-fascism.

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1 „Gran Asamblea del movimiento de ayuda a la Junta Suprema en México“, *España Popular* VI/244 (sic!, recte: no. 245, 8 Jun 1945), p. 8.

2 Cf. e.g. „Urgente misión del gobierno de la república“, *España Popular* VI/244 (sic; recte: no. 245, 8 Jun 1945), pp. 1-2.

An “assembly of discussion” was thus advertised, expressly directed at the whole republican community of exile in Mexico City.<sup>3</sup> The attendance at the *Teatro de Telefonistas* was, as the communist journal *España Popular* proudly noted, “enormous” including “no fewer than 400 delegates representing hundreds of organisations that participated in the assembly.” The presidency of the meeting included Pedro Carrasco as the president of the *Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema*, Dr. Manuel Márquez as president and José Ignacio Mantecón as vice-president of the assembly, Rafael de Buen, a teacher at the *Instituto Luis Vives* and writer for the journal *Reconquista de España* as secretary, and Prof. Veneranda G. Manzano and Francisco Herraíz as *vocales*. Other members of the presiding table were Rafael Gual Vidal in representation of the Mexican Governing party PRM, Fernando Gamboa of the Mexican *Comisión de Ayuda a las Guerillas Españolas*, the former Mexican consul in Marseille Gilberto Bosques, José Mancisidor for the FOARE, the vice-president of the republican *Cortes* Luis Fernández Clérigo of the *Izquierda Republicana*, the former Spanish republican government minister Mariano Ruiz Funes, republican general Francisco Matz, Francisco Comesaña, Lino Sánchez Portela of the CAFARE, the journalist Vicente Gaspar, Dr. Benítez Caballero, and Antonio Ramos of the *Unión Republicana*.<sup>4</sup>

The main purpose of the meeting held during the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of June 1945 was a re-launch of the *Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema* under the name of *Unión Nacional Española en México*. A source of the intelligence unit of the US embassy in Mexico commented that “this change of name was felt necessary in order to overcome the unfavourable reputation which the name Junta Suprema had acquired in some sectors and that under the old name »we have not been able to get very far, even in our own country«.”<sup>5</sup> The new organisation was headed by Dr. Manuel Márquez as president, Pedro Carrasco, general Francisco Matz, and admiral Luis G. Ubieta as vice-presidents, and Lino Sánchez Portela as secretary general, a physician and Spanish republican political refugee who had first resided in Torreón (Coahuila) before moving to Mexico City where he now lived in the headquarters of FOARE at Paseo de la Reforma no. 9, just south of the *caballito* on the Plaza de la Reforma.<sup>6</sup> Alongside the *Unión Nacional*, an organisation of

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3 „Gran Asamblea del movimiento de ayuda a la Junta Suprema en México“, *España Popular* VI/244 (sic; recte: no. 245, 8 Jun 1945), p. 8.

4 „Se constituye en México la Unión Nacional Española“, *España Popular* VI/245 (15 Jun 1945), p. 4. Cf. also the report and list of the delegates attending including their affiliations under: „Nace la Unión Nacional Española en México“, *Reconquista de España* I/6 (30 Jun 1945), p. 4.

5 Memorandum on the „Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema de Union Nacional, now known as Unión Nacional Española“ (15 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 8.

6 Memorandum on the „Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema de Union Nacional, now known as Unión Nacional Española“ (15 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), pp. 12-3.

intellectuals, the *Unión de Intelectuales Españoles en México*, was established under the leadership of the poet and director of the journal *Reconquista de España*, Agustín Millares, the writer Benjamín Jarnés, the poet Emilio Prados<sup>7</sup>, the writer Juan Rejano, the medical scientist Julio Bejarano, the medical surgeon Jacinto Segovia, the architect José Caridad Mateo, the journalist Arturo Mori, the painter Arturo Souto, and the economist Manuel Sánchez Sarto.<sup>8</sup> From among the speakers at this first assembly of the *Unión Nacional Española*, Pedro Carrasco presented a lengthy assessment of the Franco dictatorship and the dangers of internal division among the anti-fascist forces. For the regional clubs, Juan Moré Esteiro spoke for the *Fogar Galego* and Gabriel Morón represented the *Centro Andaluz*. Further speakers who echoed the message of political unity were José Ignacio Mantecón, the journalist Carlos Gamón, Julio Luelmo of the *Círculo Cultural "Jaime Vera"*, former university professor Agustín Millares, Alejandro Pérez Lías for the *Patronato de Ayuda a los Patriotas Catalanes*, former member of the Spanish *Cortes* Vicente Gaspar, and former Spanish republican government minister Mariano Ruiz Funes. Lino Sánchez Portela paid homage to the work of the *Junta Suprema* and their supporters in Mexico, the Mexican painter Fernando Gamboa reported on the activities of the *Comité de Ayuda a las Guerillas Españolas*, Luis Fernández Clérigo re-emphasised the loyalty to Juan Negrín, and Veneranda G. Manzano declared the support of the *Federación Española de Trabajadores de Enseñanza* (FETE), the Spanish teachers union in exile, before Serafín Aliaga and Miguel Prieto joined in the name of the Spanish youth organisations, the *Juventudes Libertarias* and the *Alianza de Jóvenes Partiotas*, respectively.<sup>9</sup>

The message of political unity among the Spanish republican community of exile was transported by the assembly to the public in the form of a *Manifiesto a la Emigración Republicana*. Again, the legitimacy of Juan Negrín as prime minister in exile was emphasised, when the convention stated that “we have a legal government with the glorious seal of the resistance. We have all the organisational bodies which legalise the Republic. We have a constitution that protects and supports the governing bodies. What are we waiting for in turning unity into a real fact?”<sup>10</sup> But alongside a resolution of principles and an outline of

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7 On Prados cf. Elena Díaz Silva: „Las heterodoxías del exilio: Emilio Prados a través de su correspondencia“, in: Elena Díaz Silva, Aribert Reimann, Randal Sheppard (eds): *Horizontes del Exilio. Nuevas aproximaciones a la experiencia de los exilios entre Europa y América Latina durante el siglo xx* (Frankfurt a.M., 2018), pp. 333-57.

8 „Propuesta de una constitución de Unión de Intelectuales Españoles en México“, *Reconquista de España* I/6 (30 Jun 1945), p. 6.

9 „Nace la Unión Nacional Española en México“, *Reconquista de España* I/6 (30 Jun 1945), p. 4-8.

10 „Manifiesto de la Asamblea U.N.E. en México a la emigración republicana“, *España Popular* VI/245 (15 Jun 1945), p. 2. Additionally, the *Unión Nacional* was also granted privileged access to the PRM-controlled radio station XEFO, located on Paseo de la Reforma, see:

the organisational structure of the *Unión Nacional*, the assembly also passed a resolution on the meaning of “unity” of all anti-fascist Spanish republicans which outlined the concrete steps to be taken to achieve it: unity among all political and trade unionists’ groups “could and should be obtained through objective discussion by the representatives of each of the groups without the exclusion of any one of them”, an “overture to the Prieto groups forming the Junta de Liberación”, as the observers of the US intelligence unit believed. Invitations were to be extended to all anti-fascist groups, and both Juan Negrín and the president of the Basque government in exile, José Antonio Aguirre, were to be invited to Mexico. On a more exclusionary note, however, the assembly stated that “any group which refused to cooperate in holding discussions would obviously not be interested in the substitution of the Franco regime by a republican government.”<sup>11</sup> No offer of anti-fascist unity across the Spanish community of exile in Mexico, so it seemed, would come without a *caveat*. In the eyes of the intelligence officers of the US embassy, it was not even worth the effort to differentiate much between the *Unión Nacional* and the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), “inasmuch as in the long run it is all the same group.”<sup>12</sup> Two days later, a plenary meeting of the PCE held in Mexico City endorsed the principles of the *Unión Nacional* and explicitly called for “great attention and maximum support” for its activities.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile in San Francisco, the conference to constitute the United Nations had in June decided to exclude the Spanish dictatorship from the circle of its founding member states, a decision which in no small part was the result of the intervention of the Mexican representative to the United Nations, the former Mexican ambassador to the Soviet Union Luis Quintanilla, who championed the Spanish republican cause on the international stage.<sup>14</sup> After the close of the San Francisco conference, Juan Negrín and the last Spanish republican foreign secretary, Julio Álvarez del Vayo, travelled from the United States to Mexico, at first by plane to Monterrey in the northern state of *Nuevo León* where on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July the two separated, and Álvarez del Vayo continued his journey by plane to

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Memorandum on the „Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema de Union Nacional, now known as Unión Nacional Española“ (15 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), pp. 17-8.

11 Memorandum on the „Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema de Union Nacional, now known as Unión Nacional Española“ (15 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 9.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

13 „Entusiasta Pleno de los Comunistas Españoles en México, D.F.“, *España Popular* VI/245 (15 Jun 1945), p. 7.

14 Cf. Carlos Sola Ayape: „A ganar la Guerra Civil Española: México contra Franco en la conferencia de San Francisco de 1945“, *Casa del Tiempo*, vol. 2, época IV, No. 24, pp. 153-9;;Id.: „América Latina ante la *Spanish question*: el régimen franquista como eje de la discordia en la ONU (1945-1950)“, *Latinoamérica* 61 (2015/2), pp. 65-95; cf. also: "Gracias, México", *España Popular* VI/247 (29 Jun 1945), p. 1.

Mexico City while Negrín chose to make his way to the Mexican capital in a less conspicuous manner by car. The imminent arrival of the last Spanish prime minister and his foreign secretary stirred up the attention of the Mexican press which carefully followed the unfolding events among the Spanish republican community of exile.<sup>15</sup> Some journalists were trying to research the accommodation arrangements for Negrín after Álvarez del Vayo had installed himself in the Hotel “Waldorf” but refused to talk to the press.<sup>16</sup> In fact, Juan Negrín arrived on the following day, the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, late at night and stayed in the home of his son, Rómulo Negrín, at Paseo de la Reforma no. 157, apartment 108, the same building where Dr. Manuel Márquez, president of the *Unión Nacional Española en México*, occupied the apartment no 301.<sup>17</sup> For official meetings, Negrín would use the residence of his personal friend Eduardo Villaseñor, director of the *Banco de México*, at calle Reina no. 39 in the southern district of *San Ángel*.<sup>18</sup> Evidently, Negrín intended to maintain a relatively low profile away from the usual public meeting places of the Spanish republican political leadership in Mexico City, and particularly from the *Centro Republicano Español* at calle Tacuba no. 15 in the historic city centre.

The next morning, Sunday the 15<sup>th</sup> of July, Negrín met with Ramón González Peña, president of the socialist *Círculo Cultural “Jaime Vera”* and justice minister in Negrín’s last Spanish republican government. Negrín mentioned his plan to meet with Mexican president Ávila Camacho to discuss ways to constitute a Spanish republican government in exile in Mexico. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, Negrín held a meeting of the rump republican cabinet present in Mexico City, including Segundo Blanco (Minister for Public Instruction), Antonio Velao (Minister for Communications), Ramón González Peña (Minister for Justice), José Moix (Minister for Labour), and Tomás Bilbao (without portfolio). He reported on his meetings with Spanish republicans in France and his journey to San Francisco, and “expressed his disgust with the attitude displayed by Indalecio Prieto in San Francisco. Negrín stated that Prieto was accusing him of being an agent of Moscow and the Russian government but expressed the opinion that there were other important leaders of the *Junta Española de Liberación* who did not support Prieto’s opinion of Negrín.”<sup>19</sup> Negrín and his ex-ministers also discussed practical avenues to establish a Spanish republican government in exile, first by having the re-convened *Cortes* elect Diego Martínez Barrio as president of the

15 See e.g. „Un gobierno republicano en el exilio“, *El Nacional* (14 Jul 1945).

16 Press report „Llegada de Negrín. Álvarez del Vayo ya arribó ayer“ (14 Jul 1945) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 45/1, fols. 79-80.

17 See the personal memorandum on „Juan Negrín (López)“ (20 Jul 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 1; for Márquez’ address, see e.g. his letter to the US embassy (28 Oct 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800P-800PolishRefugees, s. fol.; the list of *socios* of the *Ateneo Español* (1949) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fol. 119:

18 Memorandum on „Juan Negrín (López)“ (20 Jul 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 1.

republic in exile, so that Negrín would immediately resign as prime minister and, in all probability, then be asked to form a new government. It was José Moix of the Catalan PSUC who raised concerns that Negrín would not be able to command a sufficient majority and thus fail to re-establish a Spanish republican government in exile which would result in Indalecio Prieto being named as his successor which, in turn, would force the communists to oppose Prieto “in which case the entire plan of union would fail.”<sup>20</sup> Negrín lunched on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July with his personal friend Juan Simeón Vidarte (recently expelled from the *Círculo Cultural “Pablo Iglesias”*<sup>21</sup>), and in the afternoon he was “very cordially” received by the Mexican president Manuel Ávila Camacho in his presidential residence of *Los Pinos* in the south of the *Parque de Chapultépec*, but the US intelligence noted with some frustration that “there has been only speculation and unconfirmed rumours as to the nature of the conversation of Negrín and president [Ávila] Camacho.” A meeting with Diego Martínez Barrio the following day also remained a “closely guarded secret”.<sup>22</sup> Other meetings of Negrín during late July included the socialist Ángel Galarza, as well as Luis Fernández Clérigo and José Giral of the *Izquierda Republicana*. Among meetings with Mexican government officials,<sup>23</sup> Negrín also lunched with the French ambassador, Maurice Garreau-Dombasle, on the 19<sup>th</sup> July, and held a press conference at Villaseñor’s residence in *San Ángel* where he “appeared to be in excellent spirits” and “very optimistic over the possibility of uniting the Spanish republican elements.”<sup>24</sup> He then travelled to *Michoacán* to visit Mexican ex-president and Minister of Defense Lázaro Cárdenas who, reportedly “was quite strong in expressing his disappointment to Negrín at the failure of the Spanish republicans to settle their differences and unite against the Franco government.”<sup>25</sup> During a second visit to Diego Martínez Barrio in the company of republican ex-minister Bernardo Giner de los Ríos on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July, an understanding was reached that the Spanish republican *Cortes* should be convened as soon as possible and that Negrín’s

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19 Memorandum on „Juan Negrín (López)“ (24 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

20 Ibid.; evidently, the US embassy had excellent sources for Negrín’s meetings with his ministers.

21 Memorandum on „Juan Negrín (López)“ (20 Jul 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 3.

22 Ibid.; in a speech at the *Centro Andaluz*, Martínez Barrio made it clear that he preferred political compromise over ideologically entrenched positions that would leave the republican movement ineffective, sterile, and without a voice on the international stage: „Estoicismo, Placidez, Equilibrio“, press report of his speech at the *Centro Andaluz* (17 Jul 1945) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 45/1, fols. 89-90.

23 Memorandum on „Juan Negrín (López)“ (24 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 3.

24 Ibid., p. 2.

25 Ibid.



government would resign while all sides agreed “to make sacrifices for Spanish unity.”<sup>26</sup> The following day, Vicente Lombardo Toledano assured Negrín of the support by the CTAL for the Spanish republican cause. The conversation continued: “Upon the statement by [Lombardo] Toledano that Prieto had called him an agent of Moscow, Negrín responded with a statement that Prieto sees communists on all sides.”<sup>27</sup> By the end of July, Julio Álvarez del Vayo concluded that “he and Negrín had failed in their attempt to effect a compromise with Martínez Barrio and Indalecio Prieto and stated: »We realize that the complete union of all the republican forces is something impossible, but we feel that such union is the only way to prevent Franco from changing his government to a monarchy. Of course, with the new British [Labour] government, Franco has to change his plans.«”<sup>28</sup> The reaction on the part of the Spanish socialists of the *Círculo Cultural “Pablo Iglesias”* to Negrín’s efforts of negotiations in the Mexican capital did not spare him acerbic sarcasm:

[...] Juan Negrín has held talks with the following gentlemen who represent the life forces of the emigrant community: Don Antonio Velao, Don Ramón González Peña, and Don Tomás Bilbao, ministers without a ministry to govern, but who charge for calling themselves like that, since otherwise Don Juan Negrín would not have a government either to preside over. Don Ramón Lamonedá, secretary of a socialist party without members. Don José Rodríguez Vega, secretary of a UGT which does not have any either, thus representing himself. Don Luis Fernández Clérigo, a pillar of the republic. Don Ángel Galarza, idem. We possibly forgot some others. If that is so, we may be forgiven for the unintended injustice.

Don Juan Negrín forgot to hold talks with: the Spanish Socialist Party; the Unión General de Trabajadores; the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo. The Izquierda Republicana. The Unión Republicana. The Ezquerra Republicana de Cataluña. After a nice meal in Cuernavaca, Don Julio Álvarez del Vayo who continues to direct the foreign policy of the Republic, appeared, so they tell us, very satisfied and optimistic. Unity has been achieved.<sup>29</sup>

And the *Círculo Cultural “Pablo Iglesias”* formally declared: “Don Juan Negrín does not represent the Socialist Party”. They claimed that the only political forces that still supported Negrín were the communists and the *Unión Nacional*

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26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Memorandum on „Dr. Juan Negrín“ (4 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

29 „La Unidad está hecha“, *Adelante* IV/87 (1 Aug 1945), p. 3.

*Española* and that the great majority of Spanish socialists in France and North Africa rejected his affiliation with the party. Therefore, the group around Indalecio Prieto made it clear that “neither can Juan Negrín claim the representation of the Socialist Party, as he placed himself outside the party discipline, nor does the party have any responsibility for the actions which Señor Negrín is or may be undertaking on the fringes of our organisation.”<sup>30</sup> The Spanish anarchists of the CNT, for their part, maintained their distance to the unfolding negotiations to form a Spanish government in exile, and commented from their headquarters at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50: “We are not interested in the political game”:

Therefore, we continue to insist in the same: nothing that happens in exile can be of any value if it is not agreed to by the will and the mandate of those in Spain. Everyone may act as it seems convenient to him, but do not count on us for the constitution of organisations which would not be the precise expression of what in the interior of the country the Antifascist activists are doing, grouped together of their own free will in a common fighting front against Franco and the Falange.<sup>31</sup>

Against the backdrop of discord among the bitterly divided ranks of the Spanish community of exile, Negrín took to the stage of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* at 8 pm on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1945 in order to address the Spanish republican community in Mexico City. The “immense theatre”, so reported the communist journal *España Popular*, “was filled by the audience”:

There was no empty space. Even the aisles and stairs were overflowing with spectators. When the speaker appeared on stage, ready to commence his speech, that enormous mass of spectators rose to their feet and gave Dr. Negrín a resounding ovation which lasted for a long while, so that the speaker himself had to ask for silence in order to be able to begin with his speech.”

After paying homage to the Mexican governments of Lázaro Cárdenas and Manuel Ávila Camacho and expressing his gratitude to the governors of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* for hosting the occasion, Negrín introduced himself with classical rhetorical skill: “I am so terrified by meetings and assemblies such as the one today, when there are more than a few dozen people congregated, that I have to confess to you something which will appear to you untrue. This is the first time that I appear in a public political event, the first time in my life; and therefore, I am a novice, a first-timer.” In a speech lasting about two hours, Negrín then presented a survey of the causes for the republican defeat during the Spanish Civil

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30 „Don Juan Negrín no representa al Partido Socialista“, *Adelante* IV/87 (1 Aug 1945), p. 1.

31 „Con toda claridad: No nos interesa el juego político“, *Solidaridad Obrera* IV/78 (19 Jul 1945), p. 8.

War which he identified as mainly a matter of spirit and morale, and, without naming Indalecio Prieto, came to speak about the spring of 1938: “I wanted to keep close to me someone who as Minister of Defence had been my collaborator and friend. After various considerations and all kinds of conversations I did not succeed. I felt sorry, because I foresaw the consequences which were then confirmed and have been disastrous for the Republic.” Negrín continued with a report on his diplomatic efforts in exile during the Second World War and emphasized the recognition the Spanish Republic would still enjoy from across Latin America and, above all, from the Soviet Union and the National-Chinese government. Negrín expressed his principle opposition to the idea of replacing a government-in-exile, as it would disturb the constitutional continuity of and potentially destabilise the republican cause. But the international situation now required, in his view, the reconstruction of a new government of republican unity: “We do not ask for more than one thing; we do not ask for more than what is rightfully ours: the recognition of the government of the Republic, but first it is the republicans themselves who need to recognise it. (long applause)” An internationally recognised Spanish government of all republican forces in exile would, thus, also be able to win over the politically apathetic population of Spain that feared any political change or upheaval. To this, Negrín responded with a declaration of trust in the Spanish national character, history, and culture:

[...] we are all those of yesterday, those of today, and of tomorrow, united by a series of traditions which we inherited and which we have to pass on in an enriched form, because no person, no nation has the right to live off its traditions, unless they know how to improve them, broaden them, and create new traditions. Countries that exclusively live off the past are parasites on the tree of history, which use up the source of their nationality, and that is not the Spain that we want.

Negrín concluded with a universal appeal for support: “The Spanish people are waiting, and there is no time to waste, and, I repeat, the whole world is watching. I am asking for the collaboration of all for Spain and for the Republic. (long applause)”<sup>32</sup>

After further days of meetings and talks, Negrín invited the presidents and secretaries of all Spanish republican political parties, associations, and trade unions represented in Mexico City to a plenary meeting to be held at calle Palma 30-206 in the historic city centre at 11 am on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1945.<sup>33</sup> For once, almost the complete political spectrum of Spanish politics in exile in Mexico was represented at this meeting, including the communists and their allies of the *Unión Nacional Española*, the Basque nationalists, the youth organisations,

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32 „Dr. Negrín llama a la unidad por la República y por España. Importante discurso pronunciado en México el 1º de agosto“, *España Popular* VI/252 (3 Aug 1945), p. 4-5.

33 See the invitation quoted in „Explicación de una Actitud“, *Adelante* IV/88 (15 Aug 1945), p. 1.

different wings of the *Izquierda Republicana*, the republicans, and federalists, even Manuel Albar and Alejandro Otero of the *Círculo Cultural "Pablo Iglesias"* and their allies of the *Junta Española de Liberación*. Only the Spanish anarchists do not seem to have attended this meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> of August.<sup>34</sup> The main purpose of the meeting was to call for an immediate session of the republican *Cortes* in Mexico City in order to install Diego Martínez Barrio as President of the Republic in exile who, in turn, would accept Negrín's resignation.<sup>35</sup> Another meeting was scheduled for the following evening to finalise the accord, however Prieto's faction of socialists decided not to return and opposed the agreement and the procedure on formal grounds.<sup>36</sup> Instead, Gregorio Jover and Progreso Alfarache of the CNT now joined this second meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August to represent the two rival factions of the Spanish anarchists (though Alfarache does not seem to have signed the final agreement):<sup>37</sup>

The parties and organisations united today, aware of their responsibility in the current moment, agree unanimously to ask the President of the *Cortes*, the most distinguished Señor Don Diego Martínez Barrio with the utmost urgency that he proceed to convene, in official and extraordinary session, the *Congreso de los Diputados*, with the sole purpose that before it he may be sworn in, as dictates the constitution, to assume the functions of the Presidency of the Republic.<sup>38</sup>

While the two nuclear bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki were fundamentally changing the landscape of international politics, the columnist "Figarillo" commented on this cross-party agreement facilitated by Juan Negrín in the UNE's journal *Reconquista de España* in doubtful taste (while simultaneously displaying his rather rudimentary understanding of nuclear physics): "Mr Truman has constructed his bomb utilising the energy of atoms. So Dr. Negrín, too, has united the atoms, the atoms of the Spanish republican emigration, and he has given them explosive value, that is to say, the capacity to devastate. When the bomb of Dr. Negrín reaches the Falange, it will most likely produce general devastation."<sup>39</sup> Evidently, the prospect of re-establishing a Spanish government in exile caused

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34 Ibid.

35 Memorandum on „Juan Negrín (López)“ (24 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), pp. 3-4.

36 „Explicación de una Actitud“, *Adelante* IV/88 (15 Aug 1945), pp. 1-2.

37 Memorandum on „Juan Negrín (López)“ (24 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 4.

38 „Histórico Acuerdo de Unidad Republicana“, *España Popular* VI/254 (10 Aug 1945), p. 1; see also the report „Los Partidos Políticos se unen. Y suscriben unánimemente un documento requiriendo al Presidente de las Cortes a que reune a las mismas y tome posesión, ante ellas, de la Presidencia de la República“, *Reconquista de España* I/10 (11 Aug 1945), pp. 1-2.

some parts of the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City to harbour high expectations for the international isolation, even the internal destabilisation and eventual fall of the Franco regime.

Unlike in January, all political parties of the Spanish republican spectrum attended the session of the *Cortes* which took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1945 in Mexico City so that the necessary *quorum* was secured. The venue for this session was the *Salón de Cabildos*, a ceremonial congregation hall situated in the historical building of the city government, the *Palacio de Ayuntamiento* overlooking the south-west corner of the *Zócalo*, the central *Plaza de la Constitución* of the Mexican capital. The Spanish republican parliament, thereby, occupied a space right at the symbolic heart of the Mexican nation – a prominent and explicit honour paid to the Spanish republican cause by the Mexican government since the Mexican capital was, as the *Distrito Federal*, administered directly by the federal government. In fact, for this occasion the venue had been declared extra-territorial as under the sovereignty of the Spanish Republic (thereby addressing one of the formal objections raised by the *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”* over the legality of the installation of a republican president and government outside the national territory), and this temporary change in national sovereignty was signalled to the crowds of Spanish republicans gathering in the *Zócalo* by flying the Spanish republican flag from one of the balconies of the building.<sup>40</sup> The relatively small *Salón de Cabildos* was filled to more than twice its capacity, about 300 attendants, “not only were all the seats occupied which took up all the floor space of the *Salón*, but furthermore very many people braved the inconvenience and the suffocating heat and gathered, incredibly, in the aisles, in the door frames and window frames, in all places where there was the smallest of space.”<sup>41</sup> Apart from representatives of the constitutional bodies of the Spanish Republic, the diplomatic service, all political parties, trade unions, and cultural organisations, the event was also attended by ambassadors or the respective *Chargés d’Affairs* of the governments of China, Columbia, Venezuela, Ecuador, France, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Sweden, the Soviet Union, Poland, Peru, Uruguay, Bolivia, Cuba, Panama, Nicaragua, and Greece. The Mexican government was represented by the governor of the *Distrito Federal*, Javier Rojo Gómez, and several generals of the Mexican armed forces. In addition, José

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39 „Los Átomos de Mr. Truman y los Átomos del Dr. Negrín“, *Reconquista de España* I/10 (11 Aug 1945), p. 4.

40 See e.g. the photograph in: „Por un gobierno de unidad y victoria encabezado por Don Juan Negrín“, *España Popular* VI/256 (24 Aug 1945), p. 1. On the session of the *Cortes* cf. also: Pablo Jesús Carrión Sánchez: „Las Cortes españolas de 1945 en el destierro. La construcción del gobierno y las instituciones republicanas en el México posrevolucionario“, in: Mari Carmen Serra Puche, José Francisco Mejía Flores and Carlos Sola Ayape (eds): *1945, entre la euforia y la esperanza: el México posrevolucionario y el exilio republicano español* (México, D.F., 2014), pp. 89-91.

41 „Don Diego Martínez Barrio, Presidente de la República“, *España Popular* VI/256 (24 Aug 1945), p. 6.

Mancisidor represented the FOARE, and the president of the *Banco de México*, Eduardo Villaseñor, was present alongside the Mexican representative at the United Nations Luis Quintanilla, Gilberto Bosques, and other high-ranking Mexican officials. In total, 96 members of the Cortes of 1936 were present while another 40 had telegraphed their support for the ceremony from abroad. Luis Fernández Clérigo presided over the proceedings flanked by members of the last republican government under Juan Negrín, accompanied by his ministers Julio Álvarez del Vayo, Antonio Velao, Tomás Bilbao, Ramón González Peña, Segundo Blanco, Vicente Uribe, and José Moix. After Martínez Barrio had formally been introduced to the session, he took the oath of office as president of the Spanish Republic in exile, and a musical band in front of the building played the anthem of the Spanish Republic accompanied by a 21-canon salute to mark the legal restitution of the Spanish republican presidency.<sup>42</sup> After Martínez Barrio had left the building he was driven from the *Zócalo* down calle 16 de Septiembre in a limousine accompanied by a motorcycle escort while soldiers of the Mexican army stood in attention along the route.<sup>43</sup> Juan Negrín followed in the afternoon to visit Martínez Barrio at his private residence to submit his resignation as prime minister.<sup>44</sup> The day ended with a dinner in honour of the Mexican representative to the United Nations, Luis Quintanilla, who had decisively intervened in favour of the Spanish republican cause at the Conference of San Francisco in June. José Mancisidor for the Mexican FOARE and Luis Fernández Clérigo for the Spanish republican Cortes spoke on the occasion in the Hotel “Majestic” at Avenida Madero no. 73 adjacent to the *Zócalo* to re-emphasise the close bond between the Mexican government and the Spanish Republic.<sup>45</sup>

Over the following weekend, first soundings as to the prospects of establishing a new Spanish republican government in exile were taken while, simultaneously, the *Círculo Cultural “Pablo Iglesias”* invited all Spanish socialists to a meeting at the *Centro Republicano Español* in the *Palacio de Mármol* at calle Tacuba no. 15 for Sunday, the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 1945.<sup>46</sup> Antonio Ramos as president and Víctor Salazar as secretary of the *Círculo “Pablo Iglesias”* hoped to achieve a unification of all Spanish socialist currents and regional groups in Mexico, even though the preceding correspondence with the *Círculo Cultural “Jaime Vera”* and the regional associations had clearly indicated

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42 Ibid.; see also: „Las Cortes reciben la promesa del nuevo Presidente de la República“, *Reconquista de España* I/11 (18 Aug 1945), pp. 1-2.

43 Ibid., p 2.

44 „El Gobierno Negrín, dimisionario“, *Reconquista de España* I/11 (18 Aug 1945), p. 1.

45 „Sentido Homenaje a Don Luis Quintanilla“, *España Popular* VI/256 (24 Aug 1945), p. 4.

46 „Círculo Cultural Pablo Iglesias: A todos los socialistas españoles“, *Adelante* IV/88 (15 Aug 1945), p. 3. See the correspondence with the *Círculo „Jaime Vera”* and the *Federación de Agrupaciones Regionales Socialistas* at FPI, Archivos Particulares, Archivo Ramón Lamonedá Fernández, ARLF-171-42, fols. 2-14.

that no such co-operation or even merger of all socialist groups stood any chance of success. On the evening of the 16<sup>th</sup> of August a preliminary meeting was then attended by José Moreno Remacha, César Rodríguez González, and Marcial Fernández Vázquez (for the *Círculo "Jaime Vera"*), Ángel Galarza Gago, Jesús Ibáñez Rodríguez, and Bernardo Pizaro Moreno (for the regional groups of socialists), Tomás García Pérez and Felipe Malda Allende (for the Basque socialists), and Ovidio Salcedo Navarro and Víctor Salazar Herrero of the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"*. During a debate that lasted from 9 p.m. until 3.30 a.m. the next morning, it became clear that no common ground would be reached while Ángel Galarza pointed out that one of the necessary preconditions for any meeting of all socialist groups would be that "the assembly must be held at a venue which does not belong to any one of the organisations to be merged and with sufficient capacity to contain the number of possible attendees to such an assembly." Clearly, the politics of location and space played a significant role if Spanish socialist organisations were to be unified.<sup>47</sup> The meeting organised by the *Círculo "Pablo Iglesias"* for the 19<sup>th</sup> of August in the *Centro Republicano Español* went ahead anyway and dissolved the *Círculo* by transforming it into the *Agrupación Socialista en México* under the leadership of Indalecio Prieto, with Alejandro Otero as vice-president and Manuel Albar as secretary.<sup>48</sup> Two weeks later, the *Junta Española de Liberación*, closely associated with Prieto's camp of Spanish socialists, followed suit and declared its dissolution.<sup>49</sup>

On the following Monday, the 20<sup>th</sup> of August, Diego Martínez Barrio entered a series of talks with the leading representatives of Spanish republican politics in exile in Mexico City. The local press followed every move of the negotiations to form a Spanish republican government in exile, as meetings were held, once again, in the villa of Eduardo Villaseñor, the director of the *Banco de México*, at calle Reina no. 39 in the district of *San Ángel* on the southern outskirts of the Mexican capital.<sup>50</sup> After the very public spectacle of the *Cortes* in the *Salón de Cabildes* in the *Palacio de Ayuntamiento* on the preceding Friday, these negotiations now moved the arena of Spanish politics in exile far away to a

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47 „Acta de una Reunión, México D.F., 16 de agosto 1945“, Archivo General de la Guerra Civil Española (Salamanca), sig.9.16/6265, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel Cervantes: <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra/acta-de-una-reunion-disidencias-845712/> [17 Mar 2018].

48 „Disuelve el Círculo Cultural Pablo Iglesias y se constituye la Agrupación Socialista en México“, *Adelante* IV(89 (1 Sep 1945), pp. 3-4.

49 „Se disuelve la Junta Española de Liberación“, *Adelante* IV/90 (15 Sep 1945), p. 1.

50 See the press reports: „Mañana inicio sus labores del nuevo Gobierno Español“ (19 Aug 1945) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, Fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio Español 45/1, fols. 170-1; „Integración de Gobierno. Se espera para el miércoles entrante dejar formado el Gabinete de Martínez Barrio. Opinión Obrera“ (19 Aug 1945), *ibid.*, fols. 172-3; „En esta semana quedará constituido el Gobierno Republicano de España“ (19 Aug 1945), *ibid.*, fols. 177-8; „Hoy comienzan las consultas políticas entre los Españoles“ (20 Aug 1945), *ibid.*, fol. 191.

private, if not secretive space on the very edge of the metropolis. The Mexican periodical *El Popular*, speaking for the corporatist trade union CTM, analysed the fractured picture of political loyalties among the leaders of Spanish republican politics in Mexico City as follows: the group favouring another government headed by Juan Negrín consisted of Manuel Sarmiento of the parliamentary group of republican socialists, Ramón González Peña as leader of the PSOE and UGT, Mariano Ruiz Funes as president of the *Izquierda Republicana*, Vicente Uribe in the name of the Spanish and Catalan communists, Eugenio Arauz as president of the Federal Party, and Luis Fernández Clérigo as president of the *Cortes*. Another group preferred the appointment of José Giral (or another representative of the *Izquierda Republicana*) as new prime minister of the Spanish Republic in exile: Fernando de los Ríos of the *Agrupación Socialista*, and Álvaro de Albornoz and Augusto Barcía of the *Izquierda Republicana*. Miguel Santaló of the *Ezquerria Republicana de Cataluña* expressed his preference for Negrín, but was prepared to support Giral, if Negrín did not secure the necessary support of a majority, while Julio Jáuregui, speaking on behalf of the Basque nationalists and the CNT, and Jerónimo Gomáriz of the *Unión Republicana* declared their support for any new republican government in exile. Effectively, the socialists of Prieto's *Agrupación Socialista en México* tried to block the re-appointment of Negrín in order to isolate the communists from the other Spanish republican political forces in exile.<sup>51</sup> As a result, president Diego Martínez Barrio announced at lunchtime of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August at the residence of calle Reina no. 39 in the district of *San Ángel* that he had asked José Giral to form a Spanish government-in-exile.<sup>52</sup> This decision, however, led to continued rifts and divisions among the competing political factions.<sup>53</sup> The eventual result was a centre-left coalition dominated by the *Izquierda Republicana* and excluding the communists and their political allies of the *negrinistas*.<sup>54</sup> One political group which played no role in the reconstitution of a Spanish republican government in exile was the *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (POUM). Under the almost single-handed direction of Julián Gorkín at his private domicile at calle de López no. 161-41, the small group of *poumistas* had only just re-established their public presence in Mexico City and

51 See: „Hoy se conocerá el nuevo gobierno de la Rep. Española“, *El Popular* (22 Aug 1945), pp. 1 & 4.

52 „Giral fué encragado de formar gabinete hispano“, *Novedades* (23 Aug 1945), pp. 1 & 11; cf. the press reports: „José Giral nombrado Presidente del nuevo gobierno republicano español“ (23 Aug 1945) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, Fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 45/1, fols. 209-10; „José Giral, nombrado primer ministro español en el estierro“ (23 Aug 1945), *ibid.*, fols. 211-2. José Giral had already served as prime minister of the Spanish Republic for a few weeks in the wake of the military coup of July 1936.

53 See: „Dificultades para formar el nuevo Gobierno Ibero“, *El Popular* (25 Aug 1945), pp. 1 & 7; cf. the press reports: „Entró a su noveno día la crisis ministerial del Gobierno Español“ (26 Aug 1945) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, Fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 45/1, fols. 229-30; „Siguen desunidos los republicanos iberos“ (26 Aug 1945), *ibid.*, fols. 231-2.

54 See: „La República en Marcha. Como se formó el Gobierno Republicano“, *Izquierda Republicana* II/14 (15 Sep 1945), pp. 1-2.



edited a periodical journal, commenting on the formation of a Spanish government in exile with characteristic critical distance by declaring their “conditional support”: “They will have our sympathy and our support in everything progressive they achieve, everything revolutionary against the Franco regime”, and they would judge the new government “by its programmatic choices and we will react to it according to its works and deeds.” Above all, Gorkín and the POUM welcomed the exclusion of the communists and their allies from the new government while placing some hope in the representation of some unionist forces, such as the UGT and the CNT. Key to the liberation of Spain would be the internal resistance in Spain itself, while the international situation required renewed efforts to promote the republican cause against tendencies to acquiesce to Franco’s regime or to a restoration of the Spanish monarchy.<sup>55</sup>

As could be expected, the Spanish communists deplored the fact of having been sidelined by Giral in favour of a more centrist combination of republican political forces. Their publications insisted that Giral’s government did not “match the needs of our people” and that “without the communist party the politics of national democracy are impossible”.<sup>56</sup> Above all, the *Unión Nacional Española en México* demanded to see the policies of Negrín’s government (the combination of garnering international recognition of the republican cause while maintaining the pressure of *guerrilla* activities inside Spain) to be continued by Giral’s new government in exile. But the left opposition did not call into question the legitimacy of the new government:

No-one denies that the new government possesses legitimacy. It does. And let us make sure that this legitimacy be assisted by broad international support. But the rallying of friendly governments is not sufficient to depose Franco. We need to intensify, raise to the maximum, the emphasis on the heroic struggle which our people is maintaining. And it is precisely here where we believe – and the majority of the emigration shares our belief – that the government of Giral will neither muster the necessary forces, nor reap the fruits of victory.<sup>57</sup>

Two days after these comments were published, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1945, Juan Negrín himself took to the speaker’s podium of the *Frontón México* on the *Plaza de la República* in the shadow of the *Monumento a la Revolución* in the heart of the *Tabacalera* to offer his own assessment of the new political situation.

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55 „El POUM ante el gobierno republicano en el exilio“, *POUM. Órgano del Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* I/3 (Sep 1945), pp. 1-2.

56 „El Gobierno Giral no corresponde a las necesidades de nuestro pueblo“, „Por qué no participan los comunistas en el Gobierno“, and „Sin el Partido Comunista no hay política democrática nacional posible“, *España Popular* VI/257 (31 Aug 1945), p. 1.

57 „Editorial: Una solución de medias“, *Reconquista de España* I/12 (1 Sep 1945), p. 1.

Alongside the familiar leadership of Spanish and Mexican political parties, trade unions, and other associations which maintained close relations with the Spanish communists, including José Mancisidor of the FOARE, Gilberto Bosques, Fernando Gamboa, and Antonio Velao, Ramón González Peña, Julio Álvarez del Vayo, Segundo Blanco, Tomás Bilbao, as well as Vicente Uribe and José Moix for the Spanish and Catalan communists, the communist journal *España Popular* proudly noted “more than 2,000 Spanish republicans” who had convened in the *Frontón México*. A standing ovation and numerous interruptions by applause during his one-and-a-half-hour speech were supposed to transport Negrín’s image as the true popular leader of republican Spain.<sup>58</sup>

His rhetorical skills once again did not fail him when Negrín introduced himself to the audience as someone who was “taking on a new responsibility: the responsibility to act as a simple citizen in the position which my compatriots and my party assign to me in order to try to regain the Republic.”<sup>59</sup> After re-emphasising some key arguments of his previous speech in August, Negrín reiterated the commitment to the *guerrilla* resistance inside Spain:

The most important work which needs to be developed, the work which corresponds to developing all parties and republican citizens, above all those who had the good fortune to live in exile – and I say good fortune because if they had stayed in Spain many would no longer be alive – is to support and strengthen, coordinate and discipline, under the discipline of a popular army, the forces which fight inside [Spain]. Those forces will be the nuclei of condensation for the republican masses, they will be what secures and guarantees the republican order in the moment when we shall reconquer Spain.<sup>60</sup>

Negrín rejected any suggestions of a restoration of the Spanish monarchy and, instead, pledged his allegiance to the republican constitution of 1931. His speech furthermore contained wide-ranging remarks on a future programme of policies, originating from his renewed faith in socialism. Negrín touched upon issues of nationalist separatism within Spain which would have to be met with reasonable agreements of regional autonomy rather than by force, emphasised the role of local authorities, and the need for a reconciliation between the Catholic church and Spanish republicanism: “With the gospel in one hand and the constitution in the other, no religious problem in Spain is unsolvable.”<sup>61</sup> Negrín outlined key

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58 „El Doctor Negrín incita a la unidad y a la acción ofensiva para reconquistar a España“, *España Popular* VI/258 (7 Sep 1945), p. 3.

59 Juan Negrín: *Discurso pronunciado por Don Juan Negrín el día 3 de septiembre de 1945 en el Frontón México, Ciudad de Méjico* (London 1945), p. 3.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

policies with regard to the economy, labour, and defence for a future republican government, and thereby implicitly challenged Giral's new government in exile and its perceived lack of firm programmatic commitments to the urgent liberation of Spain. And Negrín's implicit message of no confidence in Giral's leadership was evidently understood among the Spaniards in exile, even beyond Mexico.<sup>62</sup>

The new government of Giral, however, was able to capture the attention of the Mexican public and of the community of exile in the Mexican capital the following month, when the newly formed leadership of the Spanish Republic hosted a reception at the Spanish embassy building at calle Londres no. 7 in the district of *Juárez*. The building had been in disuse since April 1939 when the fall of the Spanish Republic had resulted in the end of Spanish diplomatic representation in Mexico and the building had been handed over for safekeeping to the Cuban embassy.<sup>63</sup> The date of the 12<sup>th</sup> of October was chosen to celebrate the close relationship between the Spanish and Mexican republics, the *Día de la Raza*, commemorating the anniversary of Columbus' landing in the new world in 1492 which in post-revolutionary Mexico served to promote the identity politics of a shared Hispanic ethnicity on both sides of the Atlantic. The occasion, thereby, transported an intellectually conservative understanding of post-colonial identity onto the diplomatic stage of progressive republican politics.<sup>64</sup> This conflict over the ideological implications of the concept of *hispanismo* was openly addressed by the republican press in exile in Mexico City which sought to refuse the Franco regime any claim to the idea of trans-Atlantic Hispanic identity:

Spain and America will be more solidaric, more brotherly than ever, when over there, too, there will exist a republic again. When those emperors of crime and of treason will perish which have Spain in ruins.<sup>65</sup>

In this way, the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City tried to re-appropriate the ethnically charged notion of the Hispanic transatlantic "race" for the cause of Spanish republicanism.

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62 „El discurso de Negrín“, *El Socialista* IV/28 (Oct 1945), p. 3, reproducing a comment on Negrín's speech from the journal „Nosotros“ in La Habana.

63 „Cuba se ha hecho cargo de la embajada Española aquí“, *Excélsior* (18 Apr 1939), pp. 1 & 4.

64 On the contradictory character of the concept of left-wing republican *hispanismo* cf. Sebastiaan Faber: „Contradictions of left-wing hispanismo. The case of Spanish republicans in exile“, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 3/2 (2002), pp. 165-85; Id.: „„La hora ha llegado“ Hispanism, Pan-Americanism and the Hope of Spanish/American Glory (1938-1948)“, in: Mabel Moraña (ed.), *Ideologies of Hispanism* (Nashville/Tenn., 2005), pp. 62-104. Cf. also: Javier Krauel: „Equívoco hispanismo: notas sobre el exilio republicano y pensamiento reaccionario en el México de los años 1940“, *Res Publica* 13-14 (2004), pp. 209-18.

65 „El 12 de Octubre y la hispanidad franquista“, *España Popular* VI/264 (19 Oct 1945), p. 6.

The event on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October began at 8 am when the Spanish republican flag was, once again, hoisted above the Spanish embassy building. From 10 o'clock, the new republican president, Diego Martínez Barrio, held a reception assisted by his secretary, Bernardo Giner des los Ríos, and the new Spanish republican prime minister in exile, José Giral, with members of his cabinet, finance minister Augusto Barcia, minister of justice Álvaro de Albornoz, sub-secretary of industry and commerce Julio Jáuregui, and the minister for public education Miguel Santaló. Members of the Constitutional and the Supreme Court attended, as did members of the Spanish republican diplomatic service and the political parties. Alongside the *Centro Republicano Español*, a number of regional centres in Mexico City had sent representatives, among them the *Centro Andaluz*, the *Casa de Extremadura*, and the *Fogar Galego*. Representatives of professional associations such as the veterans' organisations, the *Ateneo Ramón y Cajal*, as well as the *Asociación de Escritores y Periodistas en el Exilio* completed the picture. What was remarkable about this public display of republican sovereignty in exile was the strong presence of Mexican government officials who paid tribute to the new Spanish republican government: foreign secretary Francisco Castillo Nájera, the *Secretario de Gobernación* Primo Villa Michel, defence minister general Francisco L. Urquiza, health secretary Dr. Gustavo Baz, navy minister general Heriberto Jara, Jesús Silva Herzog as sub-secretary of the finance ministry, and the director of *Pemex* Efraín Buenrostro, while Antonio Villalobos attended as president of the governing state party PRM. Equally important was the presence of members of the diplomatic corps in Mexico City: Hugh Keenleyside (Canada), Marcos A. Kholly (Cuba), Carlos Montenegro (Bolivia), Roberto Arzú Cobos (Guatemala), Jorge E. Boyd (Panama), Modesto Larrea (Ecuador), and a secretary of the US embassy, alongside an international group of various intellectuals and parliamentarians. From among the Spanish community of exile the generals José Miaja, Sebastián Pozas, Llano de Encomienda, and Hidalgo de Cisneros stood out, alongside Manuel Márquez and former prime minister Juan Negrín.<sup>66</sup> All the more noticeable was the absence of Indalecio Prieto (who, at that time, was visiting New York) and other members of the *Agrupación Socialista* who a few days earlier had celebrated a banquet to commemorate the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Asturian insurrection of 1934 at the Hotel "Mancera" at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 49.<sup>67</sup> The reception at the Spanish embassy was soon followed by a grand banquet in celebration of Mexican friendship with the Spanish Republic at the *Casino Militar* on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October where an almost

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66 On the reception of the *Día de la Raza* at the Spanish embassy building see: „El Día de la Raza en la embajada española en México“, *Solidaridad Obrera* IV/82 (22 Oct 1945), p. 2.; „Recepción en la embajada española en México“, *España Popular* VI/264 (19 Oct 1945), p. 5; cf. also the report by the Mexican police inspectors Manuel Ríos Thível (PS-27) and Juan Sánchez de Tagle (PS-42) under the date of 13th of October 1945 at AGN, DGIPS, caja 87, exp. 1, fol. 406.

67 „Banquete conmemorativo del 6 de octubre“, *Adelante* IV/91 (1 Oct 1945), p. 4; „Banquete conmemorativo del 6 de octubre“, *Adelante* IV/92 (15 Oct 1945), p. 3.

identical group of Spanish and Mexican notables attended.<sup>68</sup> Such ostentatious displays of recognition for the Spanish republic took place against the backdrop of clandestine attempts of representatives of the Franco regime in Mexico to develop trade relations and establish diplomatic relations between Mexico and the Franco regime in Spain. Among the newly arrived personnel for these activities was Germán Baraibar Usandizaga who was reported to reside in room 214 of the Hotel “Reforma” and was to take over the unofficial representation of the Franco regime in the Mexican capital from Augusto Ibañez Serrano. Ibañez’ close relationship with the fascist *Falange* no longer served the new strategy of the Franco regime to present itself as nothing more than Catholic-conservative and anti-communist.<sup>69</sup> The Spanish republican community of exile closely monitored the activities of the Francoist functionaries in Mexico.<sup>70</sup>

José Giral’s Spanish republican government in exile was confirmed by a vote of confidence passed during another session of the Spanish *Cortes* which was held, again, at the *Salón de Cabildes* in the *Palacio de Ayuntamiento* on the south-western end of the central Plaza of the *Zócalo* on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of November 1945.<sup>71</sup> The session was scheduled to coincide with the ninth anniversary of the Defense of Madrid in 1936. The Spanish communists and their allies of the *Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña (PSUC)* withheld their support for Giral’s government but added that their attitude did not

signify a veto against Sr. Giral, but the expression of our conviction that this government, by its character, is not in a position of implementing the policies which correspond with the interest of the

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68 „Banquete-homenaje a México y España“, *Adelante* IV/93 (1 Nov 1945), p. 3; „Un gran homenaje a los presidentes de las repúblicas de México y España“, *España Popular* VI/266 (2 Nov 1945), p. 3; „Grandioso homenaje a los presidentes y a los pueblos de México y de España“, *Izquierda Republicana* II/16 (15 Nov 1945), p.7; Prieto had only returned from New York that same day, see: „Indalecio Prieto, en México“, *Adelante* IV/93 (1 Nov 1945), p. 3.

69 Cf. Agustín Sánchez Andrés and Fabián Herrera León: „La administración de Manuel Ávila Camacho y el reconocimiento del gobierno de la República en el Exilio“, in: Mari Carmen Serra Puche, José Francisco Mejía Flores and Carlos Sola Ayape (eds): *1945, entre la euforia y la esperanza: el México posrevolucionario y el exilio republicano español* (México, D.F., 2014), pp. 161-80, esp. 170-1; more generally, Clara E. Lida (ed.): *México y España en el primer franquismo, 1939-1950. Rupturas formales, relaciones oficiosas* (México, D.F., 2001).

70 See e.g. the documentation of observations made by José Ignacio Mantecón: „Descarada actuación de los falangistas en México“, *España Popular* VI/264 (19 Oct 1945), pp. 1 & 4; cf. also the reports by the intelligence unit of the US embassy in Mexico City: „Augusto Ibañez Serrano, Germán Baraibar“ (30 May and 4 Sep 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fols.

71 Cf. „Acción de la Cortes Iberias“, *El Nacional* (7 Nov 1945); „Las Cortes Españolas dieron un voto de confianza a Giral“, press report (8 Nov 1945) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 45/1, fols. 161-2; „Confianza de las Cortes del Dr. Giral“, press report (8 Nov 1945) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 45/2, fol. 2; further photographs of the session *ibid*, fols. 3 & 14.

people and with the necessity of the fight against the fascist Spanish regime, and therefore the Communist Party of Spain just as the United Socialist Party of Catalonia will continue to strengthen because the government of the republic, which needs to direct the struggle against Franco without capitulation nor compromise of any kind, should be a government of a national coalition in which must be represented all popular and democratic forces of our nation.<sup>72</sup>

During the session, the socialists of Prieto's faction did express their confidence in the new government, but Prieto himself used the occasion to warn against an "excess of illusions" with regard to the effectiveness of republican institutions in exile to overthrow Franco's regime in Spain. He pointed out that the high hopes of international recognition by the allied powers had not been fulfilled, and he drew the conclusion that it would now be necessary to "hear the voice of Spain", indicating that he favoured the idea of a Spanish referendum to determine the future form of the Spanish state and government in order to depose Franco.<sup>73</sup> During the following weeks, Prieto began to campaign for this idea among the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City with particular attention being paid to the Spanish anarchists of the CNT<sup>74</sup>, while the Spanish communists categorically rejected any suggestion of a Spanish referendum.<sup>75</sup> The new government of Giral maintained a centrist course between the opposing factions, most closely associated with the *Izquierda Republicana*, and accompanied by a new, independent weekly journal – *España Nueva*.<sup>76</sup>

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72 „Declaración conjunta del Partido Comunista de España y del Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña”, *España Popular* VI/267 (9 Nov 1945), p. 1; cf. “El gobierno, ante las Cortes obtuvo una confianza que no inspira confianza”, *Reconquista de España* I/18 (23 Nov 1945), p. 1.

73 „Posición del Partido Socialista frente al problema de España. Discurso pronunciado por Indalecio Prieto el día 8 de noviembre de 1945”, *Adelante* IV/94 (15 Nov 1945), pp. 1-2; On the 17<sup>th</sup> of November, Prieto's *Agrupación Socialista Española* launched their campaign at the *Centro Republicano Español*, see the full texts of speeches by Manuel Albar, Luis Araquistain, and Trifón Gómez in: “Un gran Acto de Afirmación Política: Crédito y Responsabilidad del Partido Socialista”, *Adelante* IV/95 (1 Dec 1945), pp. 1-3.

74 See, e.g., his appearance before the Spanish socialist youth organisation at the *Centro Republicano Español* at calle Tacuba no. 15 in the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 1945: „Conferencia de Indalecio Prieto: Cómo podría verificarse en España un plebiscito”, *Adelante* IV/95 (1 Dec 1945), p. 4.

75 „¡Ni referendun ni plebescito! Bajo el franquismo, sería una angriente farsa”, *España Popular* VI/266 (2 Nov 1945), pp. 1-2; cf. “El Plebiscito es la Bandera del Derrotismo” (reproducing the speeches by Ramón Lamonedá and Ángel Galarza), *El Socialista* IV/29 (Dec 1945), p. 1.

76 Cf. „El Gobierno de la República ante el Parlamento”, *Izquierda Republicana* II/16 (15 Nov 1945), pp.1-2; “Un magnífico discurso parlamentario de don José Giral”, *ibid.*; “La República en Marcha” *España Nueva* I/1 (24 Nov 1945), p. 1. Giral's own speech before the *Cortes* was reprinted *ibid.*, p. 5.

The commitment to the principle of republican government in Spain against the possibility of a Spanish referendum was further re-emphasised two weeks later at a meeting at the *Teatro de lo Cinematografistas* at calle Orozco y Berra no. 15 in the district of *Guerrero* on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November. The socialist followers of Juan Negrín and the Spanish *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT) as well as the communists and some anarchists filled the audience as former foreign minister Julio Álvarez del Vayo, the socialist parliamentary leader Ángel Galarza, PSOE party secretary Ramón Lamonedá, the UGT's secretary general José Rodríguez Vega, and Juan Negrín himself addressed the question of republican principle.<sup>77</sup> Negrín introduced his remarks as “words of farewell and of gratitude towards the Mexican nation and towards the authorities of this nation.”<sup>78</sup> He re-emphasised the idea of unbroken legitimacy of republican institutions and government which would make unnecessary any notion of reconstruction or of reconstitution of the Spanish Republic. His firm commitment to the republican cause also related to the circumstances of the end of the Spanish monarchy 1931 when “the monarchists themselves declared their defeat and the death of the monarchy.” Negrín's rejection of any plans of a Spanish referendum was based on his distrust in the free exercise of the vote after years of fascist dictatorship in Spain:

I am talking here of the quality of the vote because in a democracy the free vote of the responsible citizen does not represent the same [quality] as that obtained through coercion by a *cacique*, the loan shark, or by those who exploit their sacred mission, desecrating it in order to exploit ignorance and spiritual misery; those, orchestrated in the rotten boroughs, are not free votes.<sup>79</sup>

Negrín was conscious that the Spanish republic in exile, during the preceding twelve months, had missed several occasions to obtain broad international recognition, but he still preferred the domestic resistance by the republican *guerrilla* (as a necessary addition to the international campaign for recognition of the Spanish Republic in exile) to any compromise in the form of a Spanish referendum.<sup>80</sup>

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77 „Importante acto del Partido Socialista y la Unión General de Trabajadores de España. Decisión de lucha por la libertad y contra todo compromiso“, *España Popular* VI/269 (30 Nov 1945), p. 3.

78 *Por la República. Contra el Plebiscito. Texto integro de los discursos pronunciados por los compañeros Ramon Lamonedá, José Rodríguez Vega [y o.] 25 de noviembre de 1945 en el teatro de los cinematografistas*, Biblioteca de “El Socialista” no. 3 (México D.F., 1945), p. 37.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 44; cf. „»España no acepta plebiscitos« - palabras del Dr. Negrín en el acto del PSOE“, *Reconquista de España* I/19 (8 Dec 1945), p. 1.

80 *Por la República. Contra el Plebiscito. Texto integro de los discursos pronunciados por los compañeros Ramon Lamonedá, José Rodríguez Vega [y o.] 25 de noviembre de 1945 en el teatro de los cinematografistas*, Biblioteca de “El Socialista” no. 3 (México D.F., 1945), pp. 46

The Spanish republican president Diego Martínez Barrio and his new government under José Giral participated in a number of social occasions with diplomatic implications among them a formal dinner held at the restaurant “Ambassadeurs” at Paseo de la Reforma organised by the Jewish International Order B’nai-B’rith. Apart from Martínez Barrio and Giral, the Secretary to the President Bernardo Giner de los Ríos, and the former mayor of Madrid, Pedro Rico, attended the occasion. The president of the culture commission of B’nai-B’rith, Adolfo Fastlicht, drew parallels between the major tasks of both the Spanish republican government and the Zionist movement in terms of the “reconquest of the homeland” from the fascist dictatorship in Spain and in the form of the organisation of a free and democratic Jewish state in Palestine, respectively. Martínez Barrio responded with the pledge of friendship and support for the Zionist cause by the Spanish republican government-in-exile. In the presence of Gregorio Shapiro, president of the *Comité Central Israelita*, León Dultzin as president of the Zionist Union, Manuel Weisman of the Hungarian community of Jews in Mexico, and Alberto Benrey of the Sephardi Union of Mexico, the president of B’nai-B’rith, José Benbassat, expressed “our most fervent desire for a complete success in your great and noble endeavour of swiftly reconquering the Spanish Republic, and I am asking God that he may grant us the great privilege to clasp your hand to convey the greetings and congratulations of the Jewish colony in Mexico in your seat [of government], the place which legitimately belongs to you, the Palacio Nacional in Madrid.”<sup>81</sup>

In February of 1946, the Spanish republican government-in-exile officially relocated from Mexico City to Paris, and, thus, ended the presence of the republican political leadership and their institutions in Mexico as the geographical focus of the Spanish republican-in-exile moved to Europe.<sup>82</sup> While José Giral made his first public appearances in Paris<sup>83</sup>, the journal *España Nueva* still noted the presence of the republican Minister of Justice in Álvaro de Albornoz and the Minister for Public Education Miguel Santaló at a charity night at the prestigious night club “El Patio” at calle Atenas no. 9 in the district of *Juárez* on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March. Other attendees included Luis Fernández Clérigo, ex-general José Miaja, and the ambassadors and plenipotentiary ministers of Columbia, Canada, Guatemala, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Poland. The event was held for the benefit of the Spanish Red Cross and saw many artists performing such as the actresses

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81 „El Presidente de la República Española con la Bené-Berith“, *Tribuna Israelita* 14 (Jan 1946), p. 24.

82 Cf. Pablo Jesús Carrión Sánchez: „Las Cortes Españolas de 1945 en el destierro, la reconstrucción del gobierno y las instituciones republicanas en el México posrevolucionario“, in: Mari Carmen Serra Puche, José Francisco Mejía Flores, and Carlos Sola Ayape (eds): *1945, entre la euforia y la esperanza: el México posrevolucionario y el exilio republicano español* (México, D.F., 2014), p. 97.

83 „Declaraciones del Dr. Giral“, *España Nueva* II/16 (9 Mar 1946), p. 2.



Rosita Díaz Gimeno, Dolores del Río, and Maria Conesa, the Argentine actor Hugo de Carril, and his Spanish colleague Ángel Garasa. But the main attraction of the event was the performance by the Spanish singer Miguel de Molina who had arrived in Mexico from his exile in Argentina.<sup>84</sup> A more delicate aspect of the evening was the presence of the German actress Hilde Krüger (known in Mexico as “Hilda”) who had operated as a spy for the Gestapo while forming intimate relations with Mexican government officials, among them the former *Secretario de Gobernación* Miguel Alemán Valdés who in the spring of 1946 campaigned to become president of Mexico as successor to Manuel Ávila Camacho.<sup>85</sup>

### **b. Dissolution of the German-speaking community of exile**

Among the German-speaking communities of exile, the end of the European war seemingly opened up the prospect of returning to Europe. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1945, the leadership of the German movement *Alemania Libre* had formally congratulated the diplomats of the US embassy on the Allies’ victory in Europe. The tone of the congratulatory message was designed to celebrate the anti-Hitler coalition of 1941 and not to alienate the US diplomats who figuratively and literally held the keys to the route of return to Europe:

The affiliates of our movement celebrate the victory of the armies of the United Nations over the Nazi enemy of the peoples [of the world]. We, who already before 1933 have fought against Nazism and have continued that struggle during twelve years of Hitler’s rule, we recognise with total conviction the political and moral responsibility the German people has contracted by allowing that Hitlerism and German imperialism unleashed this war and, while it lasted, committed such criminal atrocities against the temporarily subjected nations. The German people did not muster the necessary force to prevent that this criminal regime came to power or to overthrow it when the catastrophe could still be avoided. This is precisely why the United Nations had to sacrifice millions of lives. Our felicitations on the triumph of the United Nations is, thus, simultaneously a declaration in favour of the most severe punishment of all war criminals of the Hitler-German war, of imperialism and German militarism, of all its organisations and sinister traditions in Germany, in favour of the installation of a democratic regime, in favour of the imposition of the most extensive reparations upon the German people for the damages caused in the invaded countries.<sup>86</sup>

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84 „Una fiesta benéfica en El Patio“, *ibid.*; see also: „Miguel de Molina“ by J. M. Tort, *ibid.*, p. 10.

85 See: Juan Alberto Cedillo: *Los Nazis en México. La operación Pastorius y nuevas revelaciones de la infiltración al sistema político mexicano* (Debolsillo, 2010), pp. 7-58.

This message, however, was accompanied by public statements made by the leadership of *Alemania Libre* during their press conference at the restaurant “Mignon” at Avenida Álvaro Obregón no. 255 to the north of the district of *Hipódromo* two days earlier on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May. Paul Merker had declared: “The Movement Alemania Libre calls upon all true German patriots to unite; upon all those who have opened their eyes to the bitter lessons of war and its victims: the plan is to form a common front against all residues of fascism and nationalism which today rise up as the »fight against Bolshevism« and under other disguises. Its aim is to help to install in Germany a true democracy so that never again the forces of reaction may rule to use it for the benefit of their imperialist policies of robbery.”<sup>87</sup> Such declarations openly denounced the rise of anti-communism in the West and pointed towards a continuity of “imperialist policies of robbery” – they were clearly registered by the US-American diplomats.

Part of the preparations by the German communists in exile in Mexico City for their return to Europe was a meeting held at the *Haus der Freien Deutschen* at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 86 in the north of the district of *Hidalgo* on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1945. The main agendum of the meeting was the membership of non-German activists in the movement *Alemania Libre* who up until then had been welcome to participate in the work and activities of *Alemania Libre*. After the end of the Nazi occupation of countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Italy, the imminent restoration of Austrian independence, and the downfall of the Hungarian regime, the meeting concluded that members of these nationalities were now encouraged to concentrate on the political work of their respective national “free” movements and no longer to participate in the work of *Alemania Libre*.<sup>88</sup> The meeting, thus, effectively ended the practice of transnational anti-fascist politics among the German-speaking European communists in Mexico. But the meeting also served a second purpose: members of the German communist party who were present at the meeting were asked to fill in forms to be included in a list of political exiles who stated their intention to return to Germany at the earliest convenience. Already in September 1944 the exile movement *Alemania Libre* had begun to issue membership cards to their followers which had served the US embassy as a very precise overview over the extent and composition of *Alemania Libre* and their political “friends”.<sup>89</sup> The new

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86 Letter by *Alemania Libre* (Ludwig Renn and Paul Merker) to the US embassy in Mexico City (11 May 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 842U-843O, pp. 1-2.

87 Ibid., p. 10.

88 See the report „German Communist Party in Latin America“ (25 Jun 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 6; „Communist activities in Mexico-General, Mexico D.F.“ (19 Jul 1945) at USNACP, RG 84 UD2894, 820.02. (Gibson), p. 5.

89 The intelligence unit of the US embassy apparently used the issue of membership cards as the basis of an ongoing register of members and „friends“ of *Alemania Libre* – the 371 personal dossiers on each individual can be found at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, s. fols., dated between the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 1944 and the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 1945,

list drawn up in June 1945 would now be submitted to the Soviet embassy in Mexico City to be checked and approved “and it is expected that the exodus from Mexico of these European Communists will begin about August or September 1945.” They were expected by the intelligence unit of the US embassy to receive “further training and discipline and will infiltrate to the British, American and French occupied zones for the purpose of propagandizing the Germans.” Their report characterised the German communists in Mexico as the “cream of the German Communist propaganda and political experts.” One name in particular was mentioned: Walter Janka who was expected to move the publishing house *El Libro Libre*, which had existed in Mexico City since 1942, to Germany.<sup>90</sup> Any hopes for a speedy return to Germany, on the part of the German political exiles were quickly disappointed, not least because the route to Europe led, by necessity, through the United States in order to catch a passage across the Atlantic from a US-American or Canadian port. After some research, the US consulate was reluctant to grant transit visa to European communists who would, in their own estimate, “infiltrate to the British, American and French occupied zones for the purpose of propagandizing the Germans.”<sup>91</sup> Lenka Reinrová and her husband Dragutin Fodor (alias: Theodor Balk) were among the first to leave Mexico for Europe, possibly because their destination was Fodor’s native country Yugoslavia. In her memoirs, Reinrová recalled at length the difficulties they faced before they were allowed to travel to Montreal in Canada where they boarded a ship to Yugoslavia on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 1945.<sup>92</sup>

But it seems that the German communists in Mexico were facing other problems than just the unwillingness of US authorities to grant transit visa. In early November 1945, the KPD members in Mexico City held an internal conference which formulated an appeal to the KPD’s leader in Berlin, Wilhelm Pieck, to facilitate the return of the Mexican group. Evidently, the Soviet consulate in Mexico City had not yet approved the return of the German communists from Mexico:

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90 „German Communist Party in Latin America“ (25 Jun 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD28894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 6; cf. „Communist activities in Mexico-General, Mexico D.F.“ (19 Jul 1945) at USNACP, RG 84 UD2894, 820.02. (Gibson), p. 5.

91 „German Communist Party in Latin America“ (25 Jun 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD28894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 6.

92 Lenka Reiner[ová]: *Grenze geschlossen* (Berlin, 1958), pp. 326-9; cf. the short memorandum on Dragutin Fodor (1 Nov 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; Janka, for his part, remembered that certain “popular” personalities, such as Anna Seghers, Egon-Erwin Kisch, or André Simone (alias: Otto Katz) were allowed to travel through the US to the ports of their departure for Europe, see Interview with Walter Janka, documentary *Flucht nach Mexiko. Deutsche im Exil*, by Gerlinde Boehm (Goethe Institute / SFB, 1995), 1:15:25 – 1:15:48; Kisch, Simone, and their wives Gisl and Ilse left Mexico City from the railway station *Buenavista* on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 1946, see: „Wovon man spricht“, *Demokratische Post* III/14 (1 Mar 1946), p. 8.

The KPD group in far-away Mexico has striven in all its political activities – during the war and after the smashing of the Hitler regime – to adapt and implement the policies of our party in relation to the special conditions of this continent. We hope that our activities here will stand up to party scrutiny upon our return to Germany and that it will demonstrate that we, too, in a location far removed, have worked as communists in the interest of our party.

The message included a firm commitment to the objectives of communist post-war policies in Germany and closed with the “most urgent wish to be able to participate actively in this struggle and to return to our posts again on German soil.”<sup>93</sup> But such pleas do not seem to have been met with any sympathetic response – in fact, more than half a year later, Merker still complained to Pieck that the hopes of the Mexican group for a speedy return had been disappointed. Merker complained that no word from Berlin had arrived in Mexico City. He dutifully complained about the obstacles put in the way of the repatriation of European communists by US authorities and suggested that a whole ship be chartered for the purpose of collecting German exiles from across Mexico and the Caribbean. But clearly, the lack of response from Berlin weighed just as much on his mind:

I am writing again to you, dear Wilhelm, as I have done often over the last years. Will the letter elicit a response or, at least, a recognition? I am hearing from England, the US, and other countries that the friends [comrades] are receiving greetings and messages from you [pl.]. One or the other even takes a flight back home. Only Mexico appears to be eradicated from your thinking. I am under no illusions about the gigantic amount of work which rests on your shoulders and do not expect long letters or pamphlets. But, if there’s an opportunity, a few words of guidance should still be possible once in a while – international friends passing through Berlin, could pass them on. [...] But no word from you to me, not a single line whether you have received my letters, nothing.”<sup>94</sup>

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93 Letter by Paul Merker, Erich Jungmann, Alexander Abusch „and 47 other comrades“ to Wilhelm Pieck (3/4 Nov 1945) at BAL, SAPMO, SgY14715, fol. 1; cf. the report „German Communists making efforts to leave Mexico“ (8 Nov 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.; it seems that US intelligence in Mexico City misunderstood the Soviet embassy to be actively pursuing the repatriation of Merker and André Simone (i.e. Otto Katz) to Berlin and Prague, respectively.

94 Letter by Paul Merker to Wilhelm Pieck (28 Mar 1946) at BAL, SAPMO, SgY14/15, fol. 4; coincidentally, just one day earlier the US embassy investigated a report that Merker and Renn had left Mexico for Canada. The embassy’s First Secretary S. Walter Washington assured the US Secretary of State that „it is certain that their movements have been followed very closely and they are here at the present time.“; see: „Reported Visit of well-known German communist leaders to Canada“ (27 Mar 1946) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800C-800S, s. fol.

While communications between the German communists in Mexico City and their party leadership in Berlin were clearly disrupted, it is also telling that the group led by Merker appeared paralysed without instructions. However, assistance was soon at hand: A first group of German communist functionaries, among them Paul Merker, Alexander Abusch, Erich Jungmann, Paul Krautter, Albert Callam, Paul Hartmann, and Georg Stibi (together with their wives) left Mexico in May of 1946 on board the Soviet cargo ship “Gogol” sailing from the port of Manzanillo *en route* to Vladivostok.<sup>95</sup> From that moment on, the remaining leadership of the German communist group in Mexico City divided the financial support among themselves which was provided by US-American aid organisations – a fact that would come to haunt some of them during their years of late-Stalinist persecution in the German Democratic Republic.<sup>96</sup> Janka, his wife Charlotte, and Ludwig Renn finally left for Germany early in 1947.<sup>97</sup> Differences in travel opportunities, in obtaining permits and visa, may also have had to do with the fact that none of the earliest German-speaking exiles to return to Europe held the German nationality: Anna Seghers had naturalised as Mexican, Fodor was Yugoslavian, and Reinerová, Kisch, and Simone were Czechoslovakian.

While the German-speaking community of exile in Mexico City explored opportunities for their return to Europe, their exile organisations engaged in a series of political and cultural activities dedicated to the immediate post-war situation in Europe and mostly light-hearted entertainment. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 1945, Paul Merker addressed a meeting of the movement *Alemanía Libre* at the *Haus der Freien Deutschen* at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 86 in the district of *Hidalgo* on “Some questions of the present time regarding the future of Germany”.<sup>98</sup> It is likely that Merker presented his ideas of a “democratic” National Front policy under the de-facto leadership of the German communist party which he published a few weeks later in the monthly journal *Freies Deutschland*.<sup>99</sup> Other such events were László Radványi’s lecture on the problem of economic monopolies on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August Frank Jellinek’s

95 See: „Dank an Mexiko. Ein Abschiedsbrief deutscher politischer Flüchtlinge an den Präsidenten der Republik“, *Demokratische Post* III/20 (1 Jun 1946), p. 1, signed by Merker, Jungmann, Abusch, Callam, and Krautter; cf. „Die ersten Heimkehrer aus Mexiko“, *Neues Deutschland* V/6 (Jun 1946), p. 2; cf. the full passenger list (15 May 1946) „expected to sail this evening or tomorrow“ provided by US vice consul Walter E. Kneeland in Manzanillo at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800S-Y, s. fols.

96 See the lists of recipients of financial aid by the „New York Aid Committee“ at BAL SAPMO DY 30/IV-2/4/111, fols. 196-205 (May 1946 – Jan 1947), listing Josef Foscht, Marcel Rubin, Mizzie Frischauf, Walter Janka, Ludwig Renn, Albert Gromulat, Rudi Feistmann, Kurt Stern, Leo Zuckermann, Oskar Margon, Paul Mayer, Hans Marum, Rudolf Zuckermann (for medical aid), and Bodo Uhse (Dec 1946 and Jan 1947).

97 Walter Janka: *Spuren eines Lebens* (Reinbek, 1991), pp. 202-4.

98 Paul Merker: *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika. Erinnerungen, Dokumentationen und Berichte* (1965) at BAL SAPMO, NY 4102/6 (Nachlaß Paul Merker), fol. 242.

analysis of “Britain after the elections” referring to the new Labour government under Clement Attlee, alongside a lecture by Dr. Paul Feibelmann on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August explaining the nature and political significance of nuclear fission (which had just destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki), and an evening of “information and discussion” about the accords of the Potsdam Conference on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September.<sup>100</sup> These last two events took place in the *Sala Mendelssohn* on the first floor of the *Casa Schiefer* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21 in the historic city centre.<sup>101</sup> In his interpretation of the Potsdam Agreement, Merker placed particular emphasis on the de-cartellisation of German industry by means of expropriation and nationalisation. Such a fundamental intervention in the German economic structure would guarantee the lasting democratisation of post-war Germany while facilitating the peaceful economic exchange with global markets.<sup>102</sup> Deep conflicts among the political emigrants in Mexico were still on display when the anti-communist socialists joined the meeting. In Merker’s – doubtlessly biased – account: “at this meeting [...] Oettinghaus, Gutmann, Feuchtwanger, and Diamant showed up alongside others intent on provocation.”

Given the massive turnout which was evident at this meeting – the hall was over-crowded – they did not, at first, dare to make their presence felt. But after my presentation, Oettinghaus raised his voice during the discussion. At first, we let him speak uninhibited, even though he espoused in a provocative manner ideas of Stampfer and Victor Serge. When I opposed him during my concluding remarks, he and his column tried to prevent me from speaking by means of loud heckles. Some of those present then tried to ensure the peaceful progress of the meeting. But they were physically attacked by those trouble-makers. They also went for comrade Martha André-Berg. At this point, our tolerance demonstrated towards them was exhausted. After a short brawl, they ended up in the street. Then, the meeting could be successfully concluded.

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99 Paul Merker: „Deutsche Demokraten am Werk“, *Freies Deutschland* IV/9 (Aug 1945), pp. 5-6.

100 Paul Merker: *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika. Erinnerungen, Dokumentationen und Berichte* (1965) at BAL SAPMO, NY 4102/6 (Nachlaß Paul Merker), fol. 243; cf. Dr. Ernst Amann: „Die Atomzertrümmerung“, *Freies Deutschland* IV/10 (Sep 1945), p. 18.

101 See the invitation (25 Aug 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02, s. fol.

102 See the full text of Merkers presentation: „Für ein neues Deutschland der Demokratie und des Friedens“, *Demokratische Post* III/3 (18 Sep 1945), pp. 5-7.; cf. Paul Merker: „Die Potsdamer Beschlüsse“, *Freies Deutschland* IV/10 (Sep 1945), pp. 5-7; Paul Merker: „Die Beschlüsse von Potsdam 1. Reparationen und Wirtschaft“, *Demokratische Post* III/1 (15 Aug 1945), p. 1; Paul Merker: „Die Beschlüsse von Potsdam 2. Deutschland Demokratisierung“, *Demokratische Post* III/2 (1 Sep 1945), p. 1; cf. also: Paul Merker: „Die Zukunft der deutschen Wirtschaft“, *Neues Deutschland* V/1 (Jan 1946), p. 8-10.

Even though the precise character and circumstances of this clash between German communists and anti-Soviet socialists remains unclear, tempers were evidently running high, and Merker pointed towards the consequences for German-speaking antifascist politics of exile in Mexico City: “Some time later, the same circle – this time led by Regler – tried again to disturb one of our meetings. In this case, however, protection was organised by the Mexican and Spanish comrades who prevented Regler and his group from entering the venue of the meeting.”<sup>103</sup> Evidently, victory over Nazi Germany had not put a stop to the still smouldering animosities among the opposed left-wing groups of German-speaking exile in Mexico City – on the contrary: the imminent issues of the establishment of a new political order in post-war Germany brought the conflict between pro- Soviet and anti-Soviet currents among the exile community to the fore as they encountered each other at the *Casa Schiefer*. Regler, for his part, seems to have tried to gain entrance to the United States by offering his services to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) via the US-American journalist Dorothy Thompson in 1947.<sup>104</sup>

Alongside the political meetings, the activities of the German-speaking community of exile also included an increasing number of events which were dedicated to their Mexican and Latin American environment. Such references to their Latin American host societies had been common before in the activities of the movement *Alemania Libre* and their affiliated cultural association, the *Heinrich-Heine-Club*, but were mostly limited to the performance of music and folk dance. Now, the allied victory over the Nazi regime in Europe and the prospect of returning to Germany appears to have sparked renewed interest in the social and cultural fabric of Mexico. The German bi-weekly journal *Demokratische Post* explained this shift in social and cultural interest and attention thus:

We have the duty, more than before, to concern ourselves with the affairs of our host country. We have therefore begun to offer to our readers more comprehensive information about the political and cultural life in Mexico. Once in a while, we also intend to publish articles in Spanish. The time will come, and it is already near, when democratic newspapers will arrive from Germany. We can only maintain our own profile, if we report more often than before about Mexican themes.<sup>105</sup>

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103 Paul Merker: *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika. Erinnerungen, Dokumentationen und Berichte* (1965) at BAL SAPMO, NY 4102/6 (Nachlaß Paul Merker), fols. 361-2.

104 See his letter to Dorothy Thompson (23 Apr 1947) at AdK, Nachlaß Alexander Abusch, Bü 176/3 (Korrespondenz Kantorowicz, Regler mit Dritten).

105 „Neue Aufgaben“, *Demokratische Post* II/23 (15 Jul 1945), pp. 1-2.

Lenka Reinerová, for her part, recalled an additional motivation to explore her Mexican environment: “During my whole stay in Mexico I was unable to leave the capital because of my work at the [Czechoslovakian] legation. Now that every day brings us closer to our return to Europe, I fear that I might suddenly leave without having made closer acquaintance with this strangely beautiful country. That must not happen.”<sup>106</sup> While Reinerová here added her experiences of travelling throughout the country to Cholula, Querétaro, Guanajuato, San Juan de los Lagos, Guadalajara, Manzanillo, and across the state of *Michoacán*, the educational events held among the German group of exile in the capital showed a wider range of interest: Already on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1945, Wilhelm Möllmann had presented his experience of “Twenty Years in Bolivia and Paraguay” and expanded on this theme on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February under the title “Adventures in the Heart of South America”. He also included the German youth organisation *Freie Jugend* in his audience on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June when he presented a version of his presentation “South American world”.<sup>107</sup> Later on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, the art critic and historian Paul Westheim offered his view on “Pyramids as works of art”, and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July Egon Erwin Kisch added his “Impressions from Yucatán”. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, Dr. Alfredo Schlesinger dedicated his presentation to the issues of “Guatemala today”<sup>108</sup>, followed on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August by engineer Robert Weitlauer who spoke about the “Unknown Mexico”. Finally, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October the Swiss photographer and ethnographer Gertrude Düby talked about her efforts to document the life of the indigenous *Lacandon* people in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas, entitled “Peculiarities of some Indio tribes” and continued on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December with reflections on the “Women in the Mexican Revolution”. All these events took place at the *Haus der Freien Deutschen* at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 86 in the district of *Hidalgo*.<sup>109</sup> The *Heinrich-Heine-Club* followed such examples after already hosting Gertrude Düby on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July when she had reported on her work in Chiapas under the title “Off the main paths” at the *Casa Schiefer*<sup>110</sup>, followed on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July by a Mexican film *soirée* featuring John Steinbeck’s film “The Forgotten Village” and the Mexican production “Janitzio” at the *Teatro de los Cinematografistas* at calle Orozco y Berra no. 15 in the district of *Guerrero*<sup>111</sup>, and this set of events was completed on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October with

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106 Lenka Reiner[ová]: *Grenze geschlossen* (Berlin, 1958), p. 313.

107 *Österreicher im Exil, Mexiko 1938-1947. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Christian Kloyber and Marcus G. Patka (Wien, 2002), p. 633.

108 Cf. „Demokratie in Guatemala“, *Demokratische Post* III/4 (1 Oct 1945), p. 5.

109 All dates in: Paul Merker: *Die Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Lateinamerika. Erinnerungen, Dokumentationen und Berichte* (1965) at BAL SAPMO, NY 4102/6 (Nachlaß Paul Merker), fols.242-3.

110 Cf. Gertrude Düby: „Die Alphabetisierungskampagne in Chiapas“, *Demokratische Post* III/1 (15 Aug 1945), p. 4; Gertrude Düby: „Salz der Indios“, *Neues Deutschland* V/5 (May 1946), p. 23.

111 Cf. Rudi Löwenthal: „Der mexikanische Film“, *Demokratische Post* III/4 (1 Oct 1945), p. 4.



the Mexican journalist, originally from Yucatán, Ermilo Abreu Gómez who spoke about the “Legends of the Maya” back at the *Casa Schiefer*.<sup>112</sup> For the German-speaking community of exile in Mexico City the year 1945, thus, turned into a wide-ranging appreciation of their Mexican, Latin American, and indigenous environment of which they had been aware but which they had so far included in their cultural activities only in passing.

The year 1945 also marked a period of light entertainment, reflective of the elated mood of celebration after the allied victory over Nazi-Germany. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1945, the *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM) staged their “Gran Festival Vienés”, or Viennese variety show, at their now customary venue in the district of *Hipódromo* at Avenida México no. 103, directly adjacent to the *Parque México*. From 9 o’clock in the evening, costumes were “desirable” while a dance orchestra entertained the guests, the dance ensemble directed by Waldeen von Falkenstein performed, and an ambience of a traditional Viennese wine-locale (*Heuriger*) was created, at the bar Dr. Egon Neumann entertained on the piano, while a “Trio Mexicano” and further “surprises” were staged.<sup>113</sup> The Austrian journal *Austria Libre* praised the decoration of the venue, the entertainment by “the gentlemen Neumann, Hermann and Dr. Schatz”, and the “mastery” of the *Ballet Waldeen*. As the evening was dedicated to the celebration of the liberation of Austria, the organisers explicitly documented the presence of the Soviet *Chargé d’Affairs* in Mexico, Vasili P. Yakubovsky, the representative of the Czechoslovakian government Jan V. Hyka, as well as the Soviet embassy secretaries Kasparov and Glebsky, alongside the representative of the Soviet news agency TASS, Yuri Dashkevich.<sup>114</sup> Just three weeks later, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July, a “Light-Hearted Theatre Soirée” took place at the *Teatro de los Electricistas* at calle Artes no. 45 in the *Tabacalera*, once again staged by the ARAM. The programme offered a musical theatre revue by Charles Rooner, “Thalia in Nöthen” (Thalia in Trouble), performed by Rooner himself in the role of a theatre director in search for a suitable variety programme, Gabriele Stern as the “muse of poetry (currently unemployed)”, Albrecht Viktor Blum as the resident actor, and further members from the Austrian colony. The Mexican dancers Ileana Crespo, Margarita Cejudo and Esperanza de Cejudo completed the cast, and Egon Neumann provided the musical accompaniment while Günther Gerzso had responsibility for the costumes. The second part of the evening featured Arthur Schnitzler’s “Abschiedssouper”, a “scene from carefree days”, again with Rooner and Blum, Rooner’s wife Luise, and Paul Hermann as the cast. As a conclusion, Charles and Luise Rooner performed a dialogue of letters by Sholem Aleichem,

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112 „Ermilo Abreu Gómez über Maya-Legenden“, *Demokratische Post* III/6 (1 Nov 1945), p. 9; all dates in: *Heines Geist in Mexico*, ed. by Heinrich-Heine-Club (México D.F., 1946), p. 31.

113 Invitation at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 12859, s. fol.; cf. „Wiener Bunter Abend“, *Austria Libre* IV/6 (Jun 1945), p. 7.

114 „Der »Bunte Wiener Abend«“, *Austria Libre* IV/7-8 (Jul-Aug 1945), p. 7.

“Goldrush”, as a shadow play, a “film from not at all carefree days”.<sup>115</sup> The review praised the concept of the show as a reply to the “much controverted question: What are we to play?”:

It was proof that it is possible to entertain a large audience and to maintain an elevated level of artistic quality. The solution is far from new: it follows the tradition of the best Austrian theatre, the musical review and the magic farce (from which the “Magic Flute” originated), the tradition of the great, smiling and laughing, while fundamentally serious theatre authors Raimund and Nestroy. That is why this time the performance on stage exuded a typically Austrian mood, bringing people together; that is why the audience were able to laugh so often and loudly while maintaining the artistic ground.

A special commendation was reserved for Elsa Volk and Fritz Elias “who impersonated two unstoppable hecklers from the audience, so that those who do not know them might have believed they played themselves.” The review concluded with the hope that this theatre *soirée* would serve as a model for future events, “in which the great poets of Austrian theatre, still popular everywhere, shall be made heard more prominently.”<sup>116</sup> The German group centred around the movement *Alemania Libre*, for their part, used the fourth anniversary of their monthly journal *Freies Deutschland* in the evening of the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 1945 to stage their own light-hearted celebration. Charles Rooner and Viktor Albrecht Blum, again, took to the stage alongside Steffanie Spira and her husband Günther Ruschin, performing a series of theatre parodies in the style of Schiller, Sardou, Hoffmannsthal, Ganghofer, and Wedekind. Complete with the appearance of a magician and a raffle, the event continued into the small hours of the morning in the hall on the second floor of the building at Paseo de la Reforma no. 503, home of the *Centro Cultural “Constantin Oumansky”* – where, incidentally, the Austrian ARAM also began holding their monthly membership meetings at around the same time.<sup>117</sup> Among the guests, the organisers proudly highlighted “a number of members of other European colonies”, but above all Gilberto Bosques, former Mexican consul in Marseille and now destined to take up his new position as Mexican ambassador in Lisbon.<sup>118</sup>

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115 Invitation at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 12859, s. fol.; cf. also BAL, SAPMO, SgY14/21, fols. 21-2.

116 „Erfüllung und Versprechen. Unser Theaterabend“, *Austria Libre* IV/7-8 (Jul-Aug 1945), p. 7.

117 „Die Mitgliederversammlung der ARAM“, *Austria Libre* IV/11 (Nov 1945), p. 7.

118 „Vierjahres-Fest“, *Freies Deutschland* IV/12 (Nov-Dec 1945), p. 2; „Vier-Jahresfest des FD“, *Neues Deutschland* V/1 (Jan 1946), p. 33; on Bosques cf. „Gilberto Bosques, ministro de México en Portugal“, *España Nueva* I/1 (24 Nov 1945), p. 3; on the farewell dinner held in his honour by the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City cf. „Homenaje a Don Gilberto Bosques“, *España Nueva* I/2 (30 Nov 1945), p. 2.

But the activities of the German-speaking community of exile in Mexico City during the second half of the year 1945 also consisted of charitable activities aimed at relieving the material deprivations of the populations of Germany and Austria. The first such initiative took shape during the summer 1945 as an effort to raise contributions towards financing a parcel aid campaign by the women's committee of the ARAM, first for the benefit of Austrians in Paris, later to Vienna. The initiative envisaged small groups of Austrian exiles in Mexico City to commit to a monthly payment of 25 pesos in order to send parcels via New York to Europe.<sup>119</sup> This soon developed into an aid campaign for Vienna, and by November, this initiative had turned into an institutionalised *Comité de Ayuda a Viena* supported by eminent members of the Mexican cultural and academic elite, among them the director of the Mexican Symphonic Orchestra Carlos Chávez, the poet Enrique González Martínez, the former director of the UNAM Antonio Castro Leal, Gilberto Bosques in Lisbon, the editor of *El Nacional* Raúl Noriega, the cancer specialist Dr. Ignacio Millán, and the Spanish writer and republican exile José Bergamín.<sup>120</sup> By the end of 1945, this initiative then broadened into the *Comité de Ayuda a Austria* the presidency of which now included the Mexican political elite: foreign secretary Francisco Castillo Nájera, navy secretary general Heriberto Jara, and Javier Rojo Gómez, the governor of the *Distrito Federal*. Roberto López, the director of the Mexican National Bank, acted as treasurer while Millán, Dr. Maria Frischauf, and Marcel Rubin served as secretaries of the organisation. Offices were established in the district of *Roma Sur* at calle Tehuantepec no. 75, the private address of Dr. Kurt Wallis.<sup>121</sup> Such initiatives to organise parcel aid campaign for the benefit of the Austrian population evidently continued for some time, at least well into 1947 when a renewed campaign was organised from offices of the *Comité de Ayuda a Austria* in apartment 133 in the *Edificio Lafayette* at calle Cítlaltépetl no. 36 in the south of the district of *Hipódromo*, until late 1945 the home of Marcel and Ludovika Rubin and by 1947 occupied by Dr. Anton Bruck.<sup>122</sup> One form of raising funds of the Austria aid committee was the organisation of a charity concert, such as the one on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February 1946. The conference hall of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* hosted a programme of works by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Wolf, Mahler, and Johann Strauss performed by the Mexican singer Carlos Puig, the pianist Raquel Rubinstein, and the Austrian soprano Rosi Volk accompanied by the composer

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119 „Paketaktion für Österreicher in Paris“, *Austria Libre* IV/7-8 (Jul-Aug 1945), p. 7.

120 „¡Ayudad a Viena!“, *Austria Libre* IV/9-10 (Sep 1945), p. 1; „Unsere Paket-Aktion“, *ibid.*, p.11; „Comité de Ayuda a Viena“, *Austria Libre* IV/11 (Nov 1945), p. 1.

121 „Comité de Ayuda a Austria“, *Austria Libre* IV/12 (Dec 1945), p. 1 & 8; cf. the report „Acción Republicana Austriaca en México“ (27 Dec 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), pp. 3-4; see also the receipts for aid parcels being shipped to Austria via the Danish Red Cross by a similar aid initiative during the summer of 1947 at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 21504, s. fols.

122 See the ARAM membership records of the Rubin family at DÖW, Exilarchiv, nos. 19329 and 2903/2, s. fols.; Bruck's address (25 Jul 1947) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 21504, s. fol.

Marcel Rubin.<sup>123</sup> The review did not fail to mention that the *encores* consisted of Mexican songs by Silvestre Revueltas and Manuel Ponce, “linking, with a beautiful gesture, the Mexican musical culture to the Austrian”, also evident by the performance of the *Mexican Quarteto Clásico Nacional* “as if the four musicians had known the Wienerwald, the times of emperor Josef and the Viennese atmosphere since their childhood.”<sup>124</sup> Thus, the committee was able to produce a first aid payment of 2.600 pesos, 740 of which had been raised through the concert alone. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 1946, Dr. Ignacio Millán, head of the Mexican cancer institute, contributed to the fundraising efforts with a public lecture “What the public needs to know about cancer”, illustrating his work with educational film material at the *Casa Schiefer*.<sup>125</sup>

By the end of 1945, the German movement *Alemania Libre* had established its own “Aid Organisation for the Victims of Nazi Persecution in Germany”. The German organisation differed from its Austrian counterpart in that it did not include any representatives from among the Mexican cultural or political elite, but instead originated on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November from a meeting between the organisation of political refugees and members of the ex-patriate German colony. The consensus reached at that meeting was described by Bodo Uhse in the German journal *Demokratische Post*:

It goes without saying that in all of us the urge is strong to help and assist the homeland. This feeling provides a basis of understanding for all – of which only those shall be excluded who do not care about the misery of the homeland because they regarded their own well-being or their unpatriotic party political objectives as more important than the welfare of their people. All others, however, and those, too, who during the past years have fallen victim to illusions about the path of the German people or who believed because of misunderstood patriotism that it was their duty to accept everything and to stay silent, now have found a unifying basis: aid for Germany.

This compromise formula reflected the official communist national front policy for Germany transcending all “unpatriotic party political obstacles” and was also designed to overcome deep ideological divisions between the pro-Soviet movement *Alemania Libre* and the traditionally national-conservative German ex-patriate community in Mexico. The signatories of this first appeal to set up the German aid committee, thus, included not only the leading representatives of *Alemania Libre* but also a great number of ex-patriate Germans from across Mexico who had never played any active part in the anti-fascist politics of

123 „Großes Konzert zugunsten des Hilfsfonds für Österreich“, *Austria Libre* V/1-2 (Jan-Feb 1946), p. 7.

124, „Österreichische Musik in Mexiko“, *Austria Libre* V/3 (Mar 1946), p. 5.

125 On the financial results of the aid committee cf. „Bericht über unsere Hilfsaktion“, *ibid.*, p. 6.

German exile in Mexico.<sup>126</sup> Friedrich Müllerried acted as president of the organisation. In April 1946, the committee announced its first aid payment via the *Centrale Sanitaire Suisse* of 4.000 Swiss francs.<sup>127</sup> But the German-speaking community of exile also continued to contribute to other charitable efforts, usually in favour of transnational aid offered to the Soviet Union. A case in point here is the participation of the ARAM's women's committee in a bazaar to raise charity funds for Russian orphans between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1945 organised by the *Comité de Mujeres Israelitas Pro-Ayuda a los Niños Huérfanos de la Guerra en la URSS*. The already traditional Viennese coffee house raised 1.500 pesos, and such efforts were repeated in the restaurant "Sans-Souci" on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November.<sup>128</sup>

Such activities could not, however, conceal the fact that from 1946 onward the German-speaking community of exile began to decline more and more in terms of numbers as well as lose much of its immediate political urgency after the fall of Nazi fascism. The German cultural association *Heinrich-Heine-Club* anticipated this trend by staging its own "farewell evening" on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1946 at the restaurant "Mignon" at Avenida Álvaro Obregón no. 255 just north of the district of *Hipódromo*. One last time, the active membership of the cultural branch of the German-speaking anti-fascist community in Mexico City gathered to celebrate the achievements of the past four years, and the journal *Neues Deutschland* (recently so renamed from its former title *Freies Deutschland* in January) noticed among those present "people from the most diverse ideological and political camps, German-speaking people of numerous nationalities – Germans, Austrians, Czechoslovakians, Poles, Hungarians, and Yugoslavians – united by the sole connection of love of free culture and the progressive spirit."<sup>129</sup> Rudolf Fürth-Feistmann acted as *conferencier* of the evening, and among the speakers were the club's president Anna Seghers alongside Egon Erwin Kisch who recalled the difficult early days of the organisation, Kurt Stern who offered a humorous account of his work as secretary, and Alexander Abusch who reported on the collaboration of Austrian and Czechoslovakian writers. The artistic programme included appearances by Paul Krautter, Paul Hermann, Steffanie Spira who recited a monologue from the play "Galgentoni", Bruni Falcon who performed two songs by Beethoven and Mahler accompanied by Ernst Roemer and Marcel Rubin, Günther Ruschin who performed a duet from Brecht and

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126 „Gründung eines deutschmexikanischen Hilfswerks für die Opfer des Nazismus in Deutschland“, *Demokratische Post* III/10 (31 Dec 1945), p. 1; cf. „Deutsch-mexikanisches Hilfswerk für die Opfer des Nazismus“, *Neues Deutschland* V/2 (Feb 1946), pp. 29-30; Anna von Fischer: „Hilfe für Berlin!“, *Demokratische Post* III/19 (15 May 1946), pp. 1 & 5.

127 „Die erste Spende aus Mexiko nach Deutschland abgegangen“, *Demokratische Post* III/17 (15 Apr 1946), p. 1

128 DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/5, s. fol.; „Schöner Erfolg“ and „Bazar des Comité Mexicano pro-Ayuda a Rusia“, *Austria Libre* IV/11 (Nov 1945), p. 7.

129 „Der Abschluß des Heinrich Heine-Klubs“, *Neues Deutschland* V/4 (Apr 1946), pp. 39-40.

Weill's "Three-Penny-Opera" with his wife Steffanie Spira (again accompanied by Ernst Römer), Albrecht Viktor Blum who recited Heine's "Deutschland, ein Wintermärchen", and Charles Rooner who sang a humorous song entitled "Some time, I want to be in Mexico again" accompanied by Egon Neumann which the audience successfully demanded as an *encore*.<sup>130</sup> Many of those attending this farewell gathering, so *Neues Deutschland* noted, regretted the decision to end the work of the *Heinrich-Heine-Club*, a sentiment to which the vice-president Leo Deutsch responded that:

the dissolution of the Heine-Club did not, in any way, mean the end of German-speaking cultural activities in Mexico, but that the victorious conclusion of the war against Nazism and the imminent departure of so many of the most active collaborators of the Heine-Club had created a new situation. The German-speaking cultural work had to adapt to this new situation: that was the only and irrefutable reason for the dissolution of the Heine-Club. Other organisations, above all those of the German democrats and the republican Austrians will follow in the footsteps of the Heinrich-Heine-Club and will continue to make the free culture of the German tongue be heard in Mexico.

He closed with the simple message: "The work continues!"<sup>131</sup> The last public activity of the club consisted of the edition of a collection of short reminiscences and a documentation of all events hosted by the *Heinrich-Heine-Club* over the years. In this booklet, Kurt Stern paid homage to the customary venue for the club's cultural events, the *Sala Mendelssohn* in the *Casa Schiefer* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21, which he located in a surreal dream-like geography of European and Mexican urban topography:

I stood in Berlin (a fantastic dream!) and contemplated the Victory Column (a nightmare!). Suddenly, a man approached. He seemed familiar, but I did not at first recall where I had seen him before. He addressed me: "Are you coming tonight?" I stared in his face: "Where?" - "To the Heine-Club!" And suddenly I saw that he dragged a Bechstein grand piano on a leash, and then I realised: he was the porter of the Schiefersaal. Willingly, I let myself be lifted atop the piano, and with racing speed we flew along the streets: along the Siegesallee, across Wenceslas Square, passing the Prater, over the rooftops of Belgrade, along Insurgentes, through the Brandenburg Gate. But the further we went, the slower our flight became: because everywhere along the journey people had boarded the Bechstein piano. Among many dozens Feibelmann and Theo Balk made a noise;

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130 „Die Abschiedsveranstaltung des Heineklubs“, *Demokratische Post* III/13 (15 Feb 1946), p. 4.

131 „Der Abschluß des Heinrich Heine-Klubs“, *Neues Deutschland* V/4 (Apr 1946), pp. 39-40; cf. Elisabeth Gronau: *Der Heinrich-Heine-Klub in Mexiko-Stadt, 1941-1946* (Norderstedt, 2005).

Anna Seghers and little Paul Mayer were dancing a rumba; the intimidated Egon Erwin Kisch, the sleepy maestro Roemer, and the mute Alejandro Abusch sat in a corner very quietly and modestly. Feisty and jocular, Dr. Deutsch sang behind me the “Fromme Helene” while before me Steffie Spira murmured glorified words about middle ear infections. So packed was our carriage that the poor porter of the Schiefersaal was huffing and puffing pitifully. But finally he reached the corner of Friedrichstraße and Venustiano Carranza. We stormed head over heels into our good old Schiefersaal. “Quick, quick, jefecitos, you have to speak!”, welcomed us Rudi Feistmann already at the stairs. That caused me such a shock that I woke up from my dream.<sup>132</sup>

By re-configuring the experience of exile as an adventurous ride across the central European capitals only to end up at the imaginary corner of “Friedrichstraße and Venustiano Carranza”, Stern expressed the widely shared feeling that Mexico City and, above all, the German-speaking community gathering at the *Schiefersaal* had not only provided a temporary second home for the political refugees but had also inscribed itself onto a shared transnational urban geography of anti-fascist culture which the members of the group would carry with them on their onward journeys back to Europe. But the final word belonged to Anna Seghers who, in the summary of the work of the *Heinrich-Heine-Club*, returned to the legacy of Heinrich Heine himself who, as a political *émigré* in Paris, had set the example for cultural work in exile:

He was the patron of our community in this peculiar country where our odysseys landed us. With our limited powers, we tried to bring to life here a reflection of his spirit, his mockery, and his criticism while he rests far away in his beloved Paris in the Montmartre cemetery where generation after generation offers a tender tribute, a bunch of violets that will never wither. We took solace from his mournful mockery when nostalgia hit us too strongly: the same stars shall float above our tombs, on the Rhine or under palm trees, even if no requiem is being sung and no kaddish will be spoken.

Seghers linked Heine’s legacy with the heroes of Mexican independence and revolution, “not separated by borders, by place, nor time nor race.” And she claimed Heine’s words for a commitment to the political and ideological engagement of art in general: “However much we love art, the conquered Warsaw is just as dear to us as art.” She placed his legacy alongside that of Goethe, Marx,

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132 Kurt Stern: „Ein Fiebertraum“, in: *Heines Geist in Mexico*, ed. by Heinrich-Heine-Club (México D.F., 1946), pp. 16-7; the brochure also contains numerous photographs, among them of the interior of the Schiefersaal and of the porter whose name has not been recorded, *ibid.*, p. 13.

and Engels and celebrated the fact that Nazi fascism had failed to silence Heine's voice. She concluded:

We have, in his name, travelled a long distance together, because our lives had many aspects in common with his, outwardly and inwardly. [...] Heine shared all stages of emigration with us: the flight and the rootlessness and the censorship and the struggles and the nostalgia. We have now reached a point where he lets us continue on our own: the final homecoming.

And the end of political exile also implied for her a return to a more concrete understanding of the social and political task of the artist: "The final homecoming, that is for many the departure, it is for all the pledge to end the »Wintermärchen«. Germany must no longer be a Wintermärchen, but instead a bright and hardened reality."<sup>133</sup>

Meanwhile, the more light-hearted entertainment activities of the German-speaking community in Mexico City continued for some time into the spring of 1946, at first just a few days later on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 1946 with a performance of an adaptation of Ben Jonson's "Volpone" at the *Teatro de los Telefonistas* at Calzada Manuel Villalongín no. 50 in the north of the district of *Cuauhtémoc*. The familiar circle of actors around Charles and Luise Rooner who had turned the early modern play into a lighthearted musical revue and Steffanie Spira, Günther Ruschin, and Albrecht Viktor Blum were celebrated for their lively performance of this comedy of greed and deception.<sup>134</sup> The success of the performance resulted in a repeat performance on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February.<sup>135</sup> Other such cultural events included a performance of Shakespeare's "Midsummernight's Dream" on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1946 at the *Posada del Sol* at Avenida de los Niños Héroes in the south of the district of *Hidalgo* and a performance of Ibsen's "Ghosts" during a visit of Ernst Deutsch in Mexico on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of August 1946, organised by the *Menorah* and the *Comité pro-Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Alemán* at the *Teatro de los Telefonistas* at Calzada Manuel Villalongín no. 50.<sup>136</sup> On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of

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133 Anna Seghers: „Abschied vom Heinrich Heine-Klub“, in: *Heines Geist in Mexico*, ed. by Heinrich-Heine-Club (México D.F., 1946), pp. 5-8.

134 „»Volpone« in Mexiko“ by Adolf Bruemmer, *Demokratische Post* III/13 (15 Feb 1946), p. 6; cf. „Volpone in Mexiko“, *Neues Deutschland* V/3-4 (Mar-Apr 1946), p. 40; cf. the programme at BAL, SPAMO SgV14/21, fols. 23-4.

135 Cf. Steffie Spira-Ruschin: *Trab der Schaukelpferde. Aufzeichnungen im nachhinein* (Berlin, 1984), pp. 202-3.

136 See the programme for „Midsummernight's Dream“ at BAL, SAPMO, SgY14/21, fols. 25-6; cf. the review by Else Volk: „»Sommernachtstraum in Mexiko« in Mexiko“, *Austria Libre* V/6-7 (Jun-Jul 1946), p. 6; Bodo Uhse: „Der Sommernachtstraum . Statt einer Freilichtauffhrung eine Wald- und Wiesenkritik“, *Demokratische Post* III/20 (1 Jun 1946), p. 4; for the guest performance of Ibsen's „Ghosts“ with Ernst Deutsch, see. Steffie Spira Ruschin: *Trab der*



August, Deutsch had presented an evening of recitals at the *Haus der Freien Deutschen* at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 86.<sup>137</sup> Walter Janka characterised these events as the “break-through” for the newly established *Comité pro-Intercambio Cuultural Mexicano-Alemán* which had been frequented by an audience of 300 or 400, among them representatives of the Soviet Union.<sup>138</sup> Its activities included the co-operation with the *Unión Republicana Española*, as on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 1947, when a play by Bodo Uhse, “Price of Life” was performed in the theatre of the URE in their headquarters at calle Bucareli no. 145 in the district of Juárez.<sup>139</sup>

A special place in the cultural calendar of the German-speaking community of exile in Mexico City was reserved for the celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> birthday of Heinrich Mann, still living in his Californian exile. The journal *Neues Deutschland* dedicated its spring issue to the prominent author.<sup>140</sup> The central celebration of Mann took place on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 1946 in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*. Mann’s international fame went far beyond the German-speaking community in Mexico City: the celebration was presided over by Enrique González Martínez, president of the Mexican PEN, alongside the literature professor at the UNAM José Luis Martínez, the representative of the Mexican ministry for education Jaime Torres Bodet, Rafael Molina Betancourt as a former official of the *Secretaría de Gobernación*, the Spanish physician and former dean of the faculty of medicine in Madrid Dr. Manuel Márquez, Anna Seghers, Josef Foscht as secretary of the ARAM, Friedrich Müllerried for the German Aid Committee for Victims of Nazism in Germany, Paul Merker as leader of the German movement *Alemanía Libre* in Latin America, Alexander Abusch as editor

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*Schaukelpferde. Aufzeichnungen im nachhinein* (Berlin, 1984), pp. 204-7; „Das Ernst-Deutsch-Gastspiel in Mexiko“, *Demokratische Post* IV/1 (15 Aug 1946), p. 4; Anna Seghers: „Das Ernst-Deutsch-Gastspiel in Mexiko“, *Demokratische Post* IV/2 (3 Sep 1946), p. 4.

137 *Österreicher im Exil, Mexiko 1938-1947. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. by Christian Kloyber and Marcus G. Patka (Wien, 2002), p. 642.

138 Walter Janka’s report „Kurze Mitteilungen über unsere Arbeit in Mexiko“ (21 Mar 1947) at BAL, SAPMO, DY30 IV 2/4 no. 117, p. 1; cf. „Mexikanisch-deutscher Kulturaustausch“. Gründung des »Comité Pro-Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Alemán«, *Demokratische Post* III/21 (15 Jun 1946), p. 1.

139 See the advertisement reproduced in: Steffie Spira-Ruschin: *Trab der Schaukelpferde. Aufzeichnungen im nachhinein* (Berlin, 1984), p. 211; cf. an interview with Steffie Spira: „»Preis des Lebens« Zur Uraufführung des Schauspiels von Bodo Uhse in Mexiko. Ein Interview mit Steffanie Spira“, *Demokratische Post* IV/15 (15 Mar 1947), p. 4.

140 *Neues Deutschland* V/3-4 (Mar-Apr 1946), see „Bericht über meinen Bruder“ by Thomas Mann, *ibid.*, pp. 3-4; „Heinrich Mann“ by Lion Fuchtwanger, *ibid.*, pp. 5-6.; „Dem Volke uneigennützig dienstbar“ by Paul Merker, *ibid.*, pp. 6-8; „Der Große Lehrer“ by Friedrich Carl Weiskopf, *ibid.*, pp. 8-9; „Der Dichter der kleinen Stadt“ by Paul Westheim, *ibid.*, pp. 9-10; „Der Dichter des »Untertan«“ by Alexander Abusch, *ibid.*, pp. 10-11; including a reprint of an episode of Heinrich Mann’s „Der Untertan“: „Der Untertan hört ‚Lohengrin‘“, *ibid.*, pp. 12-4. See also: „Heinrich Mann zum Gruß – anlässlich seines 75. Geburtstages“ by B.F. (i.e. Bruno Frei?), *Austria Libre* V/3 (Mar 1946), p. 4.

of *Neues Deutschland*, and Erich Jungmann, secretary of *Alemanía Libre* in Mexico. The Spanish writer and publicist José Bergamín praised Mann as an exemplar of the best German literary traditions and reminded the audience of his steadfast attitude during the Spanish Civil War. Enrique Arreguín, secretary general of FOARE, similarly praised Mann's anti-fascist credentials as an intellectual. Finally, Ludwig Renn spoke in the name of the movement *Alemanía Libre* and expressed his gratitude for the support rendered by him towards the organisation. Bruni Falcon interpreted songs by Beethoven, Mozart, Wagner, and Verdi accompanied by Marcel Rubin. The event was heralded as an impulse for the future work of German-Mexican cultural exchange in partnership between the Mexican government and the German anti-fascist community of exile.<sup>141</sup>

The formation of the *Comité pro-Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Alemán* in June 1946 marked the phase of transformation of the political associations of political exile in Mexico into cultural organisations which reached beyond the group of anti-fascist politics in exile, both to the Mexican society and the German-speaking ex-patriate community in Mexico. The committee was headed by Antonio Castro Leal who, for years, had acted as a sponsor of the German political organisations in exile, the journalist Ermilo Abreu Gómez and the poet Paul Mayer. Amantina Quitanilla, Johannes Schröter, and Adolf Brünner served as secretaries. As collaborators, the committee could rely on prominent Mexican personalities, among them the poets Enrique González Martínez and Carlos Pellicer, the writer, polymath, and founding director of the *Casa de España* (now the *Colegio de México*) Alfonso Reyes, the director of the Mexican Symphonic Orchestra Carlos Chávez, the actress Dolores del Río, the painter María Asúnsolo (gallery owner on Paseo de la Reforma and del Río's cousin), the sculptor Ignacio Asúnsolo, the writer Martín Luis Guzmán, the painters Xavier Guerrero and Diego Rivera, Gilberto Bosques, and the former Mexican foreign secretary Isidro Fabela. The committee dedicated itself to fostering German-Mexican cultural relations by showcasing the "true cultural traditions of both people" and emphasised that its activities would "contrast sharply with those developed by the former Ibero-American Institute in Berlin which, under Nazism, had transformed into a straight-forward agency of the fifth column in Latin America."<sup>142</sup> Already on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, during its annual membership meeting the Austrian *Acción Republicana Austriaca en México* (ARAM) had taken a similar step by transforming the ARAM into the *Asociación Austro-Mexicana* (ASAM). The

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141 „Heinrich Mann-Feier“, *Demokratische Post* III/15 (15 Mar 1946), p. 1; see also: „Heinrich Mann und sein Werk“ by Ludwig Renn, *ibid.*, p. 5; „Eine Ehrung Heinrich Manns“, *Demokratische Post* III/16 (1 Apr 1946), p. 1; „Mexiko feiert Heinrich Mann“, *ibid.*, p. 5; „Heinrich Mann-Feier in Mexiko“, *Neues Deutschland* V/5 (May 1946), p. 28.

142 „Mexikanisch-deutscher Kulturaustausch“. Gründung des »Comité Pro-Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Alemán«, *Demokratische Post* III/21 (15 Jun 1946), p. 1; cf. Teresa Cañadas García: *La Huella de la Cultura en Lengua Alemana en México a partir del Exilio de 1939-1945* (Univ. Complutense de Madrid, 2013), <http://eprints.ucm.es/22359/1/T34645.pdf>, p. 288; Ludwig Renn: *In Mexiko* (Berlin/Weimar 1979), p. 43.

association aimed at the “concentration of democratic Austrians and Mexicans of Austrian origin” in order to promote the cultural and economic relations between Mexico and Austria, to organise charitable initiatives, and to establish a centre of “Austrian sociability”. The leadership of this new organisation consisted mainly of the leading group of the ARAM with Fritz Schalmoser as president, Elsa Volk and Kurt Wallis as vice-presidents, and Artur Bonyhadi, Moritz Ellenbogen, Josef Foscht, Bruno Frei, Mauricio Luft, Fritz Elias, Simon Grünzweig, and Robert Schwarz as assisting board members.<sup>143</sup> The twin function of a cultural and business organisation was debated soon after by Robert Schwarz and Robert Horetzky. Schwarz emphasised that even with limited means and geographically distant from Austria, the ASAM would be able to perform a valuable function for the development of cultural ties between Mexico and Austria:

We will probably be unable to bring the Vienna Philharmonics to Mexico, but we will soon have the opportunity to provide music records to the radio stations here. We will be equally unable – at least for now – to let our great scholars, medical men, physicists, chemists, psychologists etc. speak in person here in Mexico, but we will easily be able to make available their works to those interested in a library. Anyone who is enthusiastic about Austrian landscape may accompany us during our excursions, and will be excited about the similarities as well as the contrasts. Only very few will have the good fortune to travel to Austria (exchange trips and stipends are, by the way, also part of our programme) but shows of Austrian photography and films will surely provide a valuable substitute. Audiotheque, library, film shows, and slide shows are some of our immediate cultural goals, against which, however, our established cultural activities, such as theatre, concerts, lectures, and social events shall not be abandoned.

Effectively, the cultural activities of the ASAM were to be supported by charitable initiatives in order not to divert any valuable financial resources away from the Austrian relief fund.<sup>144</sup> The business commission, on the other hand, published a far more optimistic assessment of its role which would not need to reinvent economic relations between Mexico and Austria but simply to restore “good old relations”. Close contacts with the Austrian chambers of commerce on all levels and the Austrian legation in Washington would be linked up with “interested circles in Mexico” in order to facilitate future trade relations.<sup>145</sup>

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143 „Gründung der »Asociación Austro-Mexicana«, *Austria Libre* V/4-5 (Apr-May 1946), p. 1; Die Jahresversammlung der ARAM“, *ibid.*, p. 7.

144 „Was die ASAM will – Die kulturellen Aufgaben“ by Dr. Robert Schwarz, *Austria Libre* V/6-7 (Jun-Jul 1946), p. 7.

145 „Was die ASAM will – Von der Wirtschaftskommission“ by Dr. Robert Horetzky, *Austria Libre* V/6-7 (Jun-Jul 1946), p. 7.

Thus, the ARAM had ceased to exist, and its German counter-part, the movement *Alemania Libre*, followed suit in the wake of the formation of the *Comité pro-Intercambio Cultural Mexicano-Alemán* and disbanded its organisation on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1946. While proudly claiming that *Alemania Libre / Freies Deutschland* in Mexico had been “as far as we know, the first movement of this name and of its kind worldwide” (a veiled reminder that the *Nationalkommittee Freies Deutschland* in the Soviet Union had been established only in July 1943), the leadership acknowledged the reasons which would now make its dissolution inevitable. The movement *Alemania Libre* had been founded “in the knowledge of the grave shared responsibility which the German people carries for Hitler-Fascism and its war.” After fighting for “the annihilation of Hitler and his fifth column, for a new democratic Germany, for a free German culture, for the restoration of peaceful and friendly relations with all other nations” its goals had now been “substantially achieved.” What remained was now the “restoration of cultural relations of our host country with the homeland in order to continue with the best tradition of our people”, the “moral and material aid and relief for the new Germany in order to shorten the suffering inflicted on the German people by Hitler”, and the “support of the incessant struggle against racist propaganda and all other forms of Nazism”.<sup>146</sup> At the same time, the publication of the monthly journal *Neues Deutschland* was brought to an end:

None of those who know us will believe that we are cancelling this publication because we were of the opinion that our task was now completed. Our task is never completed, because it consists of the untiring participation in the eternal struggle for liberty, humanity, and progress. We have tried to conduct this struggle on this continent in the name and in the interest of our country. Now we want to continue with it in a place where we may be able to conduct it with greater immediacy and effect and where it is in full swing once again: in Germany itself. What we have sought to communicate and propagate in these pages, a FREE GERMANY, a NEW GERMANY, we now want to turn into reality over there by action.

And the journal bowed out by quoting Johannes R. Becher’s homage to nationalist sentiment: “Here I stand, I can do no else. I believe in the German people. I believe in my homeland, in my fatherland. I believe in Germany.”<sup>147</sup> The Austrian monthly journal *Austria Libre* survived the German *Neues Deutschland* for just one more issue until it, too, was closed down in August 1946.<sup>148</sup> But Austrian sociability continued in its well-established forms in October with the “Atelierfest” for the benefit of the *Comité de Ayuda a Austria*. A variety show

146 „Die Auflösung der Bewegung Freies Deutschland in Mexiko“, *Demokratische Post* III/21 (15 Jun 1946), p. 2.

147 „Dank und Abschied“, *Neues Deutschland* V/6 (Jun 1946), p. 3.

148 „Zum Abschied“, *Austria Libre* V/8 (Aug 1946), p. 1.

performed by the, by now, familiar group of Austrian theatre actors and musicians around Charles and Luise Rooner, Egon Neumann and Rosi Volk took place in a hall at calle Isabel de Católica no. 12 on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 1946 and promised “music, dance, bar, buffet”, the traditional Viennese “*Heuriger*” wine locale and musical folklore of a “*Schrammeln*” ensemble. Its inspiration was meant to be the custom of studio parties which used to take place decades earlier among the artists of the *Secession* and the *Künstlerhaus* in Vienna.<sup>149</sup>

The most important difference between the situation of the German and the Austrian communities in Mexico consisted in the fact that the latter could relate to a provisional Austrian government which had initially been installed under Karl Renner by the Soviet authorities and which had found international recognition under chancellor Leopold Figl from all allied powers after the Austrian elections of November 1945. Late in 1947, the Austrian government (which had been granted limited authority over the representation of Austria on the international stage) sent a representative to the newly formed United Nations’ Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF). On his way to New York, Hermann Zeissl, undersecretary in the Austrian ministry for education, stopped over in Mexico in order to meet up with the Austrian colony in Mexico. He had been supplied with a list of names by the Austrian chancellery and reported on them dutifully as far as he had been able to meet with them in Mexico. More generally, he characterised the Austrian colony in Mexico as fundamentally divided into three groups: the members of the *Asociación Austro-Mexicana* (ASAM) who mainly consisted of the political emigration since 1938, “they belong mostly to Jewish, bourgeois circles, to a lesser extent they are communists, but the latter appear to have a strong influence on the attitude of the Asociación on account of their greater agility and political training. But the opinion of the Austrian colony that this constitutes a communist organisation is evidently not entirely accurate”; secondly, alongside the members of the Austrian socialists, much smaller in numbers, still led by Rudolf Neuhaus from his *Librería Internacional* at Avenida Sonora no. 204 in the district of *Hipódromo*, “very highly regarded, gives a good impression”, so Zeissl noted about him, “distributes in Mexico City the »Wiener Arbeiter-Zeitung«, works for the establishment of literary and artistic relations between Vienna and Mexico”, and finally, the members of the ex-patriate community of Austrians originating from the earlier Austrian immigration during the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, “mostly people from the middle or lower middle class. The relationship of this group to the other two is, on the whole, not very good.”<sup>150</sup> How much of an understatement this last assessment was became clear towards the end of Zeissl’s stay in Mexico. After having accepted a number of invitations from

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149 Advertisement in *Austria Libre* V/8 (Aug 1946), p. 8; cf. the invitation card at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 12859, s. fol.; cf. also „Unser Atelierfest“, *Austria Libre* V/8 (Aug 1946), p. 7.

150 „Memorandum des Ministerialrates des Bundesministeriums für Unterricht, Dr. Hermann Zeissl, betreffend die österreichische Kolonie in Mexico“ (6 Dec 1947) at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 22409/2, p. 5.

both, members of the ASAM and members of the ex-patriate Austrian colony in Mexico City, Zeissl was made aware of an article in *El Popular*, the Mexican daily newspaper affiliated with the corporatist trade union CTM, which accused him of prejudicating the choice of a new Austrian honorary consul in Mexico. Allegedly, Dr. Leo Deutsch, formerly vice-president of the *Heinrich-Heine-Club*, had claimed during a recent meeting of the *Menorah* that Zeissl had let it be known in a private conversation that the new Austrian honorary consul must “not be a Jew” or anyone who was “not a chemically pure Aryan”.<sup>151</sup> Zeissl sharply refuted any such accusations and pointed out that the selection of any diplomatic personnel was outside his remit anyway. His general assessment of the situation of the Austrian community in Mexico is revealing:

I need to add that evidently the emigrant colony is given to gossip to an extraordinary extent. My every move was apparently observed and commented upon, and it so happened e.g. that a member of the emigrant colony (engineer Kohler) told me, on the day I returned from Cuernavaca where I had spent a weekend in the country house of the aforementioned Imhof, that he [Kohler] had heard that the new Austrian consul had already been chosen. That it was Baron Imhof. This background may help to understand the previously mentioned events (newspaper article and Dr. Deutsch) when adding that, according to statements made by the leadership of the Asociación, the Jewish faction of the emigrant community would regard the nomination of a member of the old emigration as a declaration of war, while I heard equivalent statements from the old emigrant community with regard to the nomination of a member of the new emigrant community.<sup>152</sup>

The social and political divisions caused by the arrival of the Austrian political emigration since the 1930s had clearly left a mark on the Austrian community in Mexico City which far outlasted the European war and perpetuated overtones of ideological conflict and Antisemitism.

Finally, the group of German-speaking socialists in Mexico City which had organised as the *Union Deutscher und Österreichischer Sozialisten* (Union of German and Austrian Socialists – UDÖS<sup>153</sup>) as a successor organisation of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Sozialisten* (Working Group of German Socialists<sup>154</sup>) since 1944 intended to use the end of the European war to mobilise an independent socialist movement among the German-speaking colony in Mexico City. By February 1945, the group around Walter Stein and Gustav Regler

151 Ibid., p. 6.

152 Ibid., p. 7.

153 See: „Union deutscher und österreichischer Sozialisten in Mexiko“, *Sozialistische Mitteilungen* 58/9 (London, Jan-Feb 1944), p. 23.

had edited a monthly journal, the *Sozialistische Tribüne*, and held regular meetings at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* at calle Venustiano Caranza no. 50 in the historic city centre. Gustavo de Anda served as Mexican *gerente* of the journal, while Ramón Sales provided the postal address of the editorial committee at calle de López no. 161, apartment 13 – the same building from where, during those days of 1945, Julián Gorkín organised the small group of the mainly Catalan POUM.<sup>155</sup> The German-speaking UDÖS campaigned in support of an independent, anti-totalitarian political programme which carried clear nationalist overtones and warned against “any kind of subjugation” and the “intention of the Allied governments to turn the German people into the scapegoat of war and themselves into the groundkeepers of world peace.” Just as they had struggled against the Nazi dictatorship, they now insisted that the “wrath of the world must not now be directed against the German people, but against the fascists inside and outside Germany. Neither annexation nor subjugation but self-determination of nations is the foundation of a free and therefore peaceful world.”<sup>156</sup> In their political endeavours, they identified three ideological enemies against whom their publication would be directed:

The FASCISTS who, on the eve of defeat, intend to change their shirt without [changing] their political convictions, including their deliberate or unwitting enablers who are offering new shirts and shelter. The RUSSIAN WOLVES in the disguise of liberation who are lowering European living standards down to Russian levels, replacing the German military boot across Europe with the Russian yoke [...] The WHAT-DO-I-CARE faction who are sticking their head either into the sand or into the enticing feeding trough and, incorrigible in their naiveté, follow the pipers from Berlin, the Kremlin, or another capital city and enable them to play their game, [...]<sup>157</sup>

The group equally condemned the pre-war appeasement policy of the Western Allies and highlighted the transition of Poland from Nazi occupation to liberation by the Soviet Red Army as a difference between “pestilence and cholera”.<sup>158</sup> The group tried to intervene in the public discourse of left-wing transnational politics

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154 See the information on some leading members of the Working Group of German Socialists who were later to be found as members of the UDÖS at AGN, DGIPS, caja 127, exp. 1, fols. 14-5

155 Memorandum „Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano“ (21 Sep 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 6; Sales also acted as postal contact for the journal *Mundo* edited by the group *Socialismo y Libertad* between June 1943 and July 1945; the *Sozialistische Tribüne* was described by an US intelligence officer as having „a very limited circulation“ and a „corresponding unimportance“; Gorkín’s address can be found e.g. on the title page of *POUM – Órgano del Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* V3 (Sep 1945).

156 „Zum Geleit!“, *Sozialistische Tribüne* I/1 (15 Feb 1945), p. 1.

157 Ibid, pp. 1-2.

in Mexico City by means of open evenings of lectures and debate, usually relating to topics of socialist theory and practice as well as international politics. The imminent end of the European war was marked by the circle around the UDÖS with a “May Day celebration” at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 1945. In their invitation, the group rejoiced somewhat prematurely: “Germany and Austria will, such as the rest of the world, be liberated from National Socialism on this year’s 1<sup>st</sup> of May. We, thus, want to celebrate this 1<sup>st</sup> of May among our comrades and friends as the end of Nazi-Fascism which is setting new tasks for us.”<sup>159</sup> At 8 o’clock in the evening, Alfred Thomas emphasised that “our task as socialists begins in earnest only now, after the war”. Julián Gorkín spoke for the POUM and expressed his hope in “the close co-operation between Socialists of all countries to form a socialist Europe from the ruins.”<sup>160</sup> Jacobo Abrams<sup>161</sup>, speaking for the Jewish socialists, reminded the audience of the common struggle of German-speaking and Jewish socialists and “warned not to forget the victims of fascist persecution – be they Germans, Jews, Spaniards, Poles, or members of other nations.” Marceau Pivert and the Argentinian socialist and publisher Lautaro González Porcel echoed such positions and intentions. The event ended with socialist songs, recitals by Gustav Regler and Walter Zenker, and a transnational singing of the International “which was heard simultaneously in five different languages.”<sup>162</sup> In this way, the German-speaking Union of German and Austrian Socialists gathered a small but distinctly transnational group of independent and fiercely anti-communist European and American socialists in their domicile of calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50 which reached far beyond the German-speaking colony of Mexico City. They also formally declared their affiliation with the group *Socialismo y Libertad* around Julián Gorkín, Victor Serge, Marceau Pivert.<sup>163</sup> It is unsurprising that the communist response was soon obviously hostile. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of October 1945, the Soviet news agency TASS alerted the world press to the existence of an “anti-democratic group called »Union of German and Austrian Socialists« which has formed in Mexico with the aim of working against the United States and Russia.”<sup>164</sup> By the autumn of 1945, the building of the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* at calle Venustiano Carranza

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158 „Wir haben das Recht und die Pflicht zu sprechen“, *ibid.*, p. 3.; „Wer keine Wahl hat? Hat die Qual“, *ibid.*, p. 15.

159 See the invitation at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 16515, s. fol.

160 Cf. a similar argument (probably by Gorkín himself): „Socialismo y Libertad debe ser organizado en Europa“, *Mundo* 13 (Jul 1945), p. 32; see also „Der Aufbau Europas“ by Marceau Pivert, *Sozialistische Tribüne* I/5 (15 Jun 1945), . 1.

161 In other documents, Abrams was recorded as „Jacobó Abrahams“, cf. e.g. the confidential memorandum (24 May 1943) on the violent attack on the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1943 when he had been one of the organisers of the commemorative meeting for Erlich, Alter, and Tresca at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jan-May, p. 1.

162 „Unsere Maifeier“, *Sozialistische Tribüne* I/4 (15 May 1945), p. 20.

163 See e.g. the back page of *Sozialistische Tribüne* I/4 (15 May 1945).



no. 50 housed, apart from the UDÖS, a broad range of left-wing political groups and offices of their associated publications: the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists of the CNT headed by Juan García Oliver and its publications *CNT* and *Solidaridad Obrera*, edited by Progreso Alfarache and managed by Enrique Maldonado, the *Movimiento Socialismo y Libertad* directed by Serge, Pivert, and Gorkín and their journal *Mundo*, and the journals *Tierra y Libertad* and *Estudios Sociales* which relied on the collaboration of a sizeable group of mostly Spanish anarcho-syndicalists: Lucio Merino, Floreal Ocaña, José Prego, Miguel Yoldi, and the actor and singer Victor Zaragoza, José Bregel, Juan Gallego Crespo, Ismael Martí (the former director of *Iberia*), Ricardo Mestre, Silvia Mistral, Augustin Suchy, Mariano Viñuales, and the editorial team of *Acción*, Manuel Muñoz Díez, Abelardo Iglesias, Genaro de la Colina, Ignacio Zugadi, Emilio Navarro Beltrán, which in 1946 took offices at calle Artículo 123 no. 24 in the city district of *Centro*.<sup>165</sup> The *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* also housed a restaurant which advertised its “Spanish cuisine” in the journal of Giral’s government-on-exile to the Spanish republican community in the Mexican capital.<sup>166</sup>

The journal *Sozialistische Tribüne* only existed for a few issues until November 1945, but some of its inspirations for an independent and European post-war democratic socialism among the German-speaking community of Mexico City lived on, carried forward by just a few German-speaking socialists in Mexico, one of the most prominent of whom was Max Diamant.<sup>167</sup> As a left-wing socialist and veteran of the Spanish Civil War, Diamant had arrived in Mexico in 1942 and earned a living first as the owner of the restaurant “Conti” on calle Dolores no. 11 in the district of *Centro* and in 1945 also owned the grocery store “Gourmet” at the corner of calle de López and calle Ayuntamiento, just south of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*.<sup>168</sup> Diamant had been active among the anti-communist socialists during the war and had come under scrutiny by the Mexican

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164 Press report „Habla Moscú de un grupo anti ruso en México“, at DÖW, Exilarchiv, no. 2903/5, s. fol.; the identity of the alleged group leader „Alfred Schreter“ mentioned in the TASS report must remain unclear. He allegedly was a „deserter from the US army, set free from a Mexican internment camp“. No „Alfred Schreter“ (or Schroeder/Schroeter) fits this description – only a man called „Schroter“ had become the subject of an anonymous denunciation made to the US consulate in 1941 for being an agent of the Soviet GPU, see the dispatch „GPU agents in Mexico“ by US consul Shaw to the US Secretary of State (23 Aug 1941) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800S-800C General, s. fols.; cf. also the record of Albrecht Freiherr von Schroeder as a member of NSDAP in Mexico at BAL, SAPMO, SgY14/16, fol. 136 rev.

165 See the report „Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano“ (21 Sep 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fols.; for the editorial team of „Acción“ see e.g.: „Acción. Portavoz de la Agrupación Estudios Sociales“, *Acción. Al Servicio de la Confederación Nacional del Trabajo de España I/2* (1 May 1946), p. 2.

166 „Restaurant Ibero-Mexicano“, *España Nueva I/2* (30 Nov 1945), p. 10.

167 See: Patrick von zur Mühlen: „Max Diamant und das mexikanische Exil“, in: Johannes Platz, Antonio Muñoz Sánchez, Patrick von zur Mühlen (eds): *Max Diamant. Sozialist, Exilant, Gewerkschafter* (Bonn, 2017), pp. 119-28.

*Secretería de Gobernación* as an alleged “conspirator” of Heinrich Gutmann, singled out by the communists in Mexico as a “fifth-columnist” because of his strongly anti-Stalinist attitude.<sup>169</sup> Diamant remained in Mexico during the 1950s while he edited a new German-speaking political journal under the title *Sozialistische Hefte* in the name of a group of *Deutschsprachige Sozialisten in Mexiko* (German-speaking Socialists in Mexico) between around 1955 and 1957 which aimed at representing a Mexican local party group of the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD). At that time, he used as an address the office no. 407 in the building at Avenida 5 de Mayo no. 20 at the heart of the historical city centre of the Mexican capital.<sup>170</sup> Diamant finally returned to West-Germany in the early 1960s and worked as secretary for international relations at the west-German Federation of Trade Unions (DGB).

The continuing political activities of the German-speaking independent socialists in Mexico, however, never succeeded in establishing a lasting connection with the wider context of the German ex-patriate community in Mexico which perpetuated its right-wing nationalist political orientation well beyond the defeat of National Socialism and the re-establishment of democracy in West-Germany. One of Diamant’s fellow activists among the German-speaking socialists in Mexico, Walter Zenker, who had taken an active part in the UDÖS and had appeared at the May Day celebrations at the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* in 1945, tried to influence the politics of cultural exchange between Mexico and the Federal Republic of Germany during the 1950s – with little success, as it turned out. At the time, the Mexican-West-German cultural relations relied substantially on the newly-established German-Mexican Institute of Cultural Exchange “Alexander von Humboldt” generously funded by the West-German Foreign Office in order to foster contacts, co-operation, and exchange between Mexican and German intellectuals, academics, scientists, and artists. In 1958, tensions between the leadership of the institute and a small group of German Social Democrats, among them Zenker, came to a head when the institute expelled three critical members of the latter faction. Zenker recorded in a

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168 See the memorandum „Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano“ (21 Sep 1945) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), p. 6. In July 1942, Diamant had applied to the *Comité Central Israelita* for a subsidy of 500 pesos for his restaurant, see: CDICA, Actas del Comité Central Israelita de México, vol. 2, Acta no. 188 (28 Jul 1942), fol. 30rev.; listen also to an interview with Diamant’s daughter Doris Diamant, *Emigration und Remigration von Max Diamant, Journalist, Fluchthelfer, Gewerkschafter. Gespräch mit Doris Diamant über die Arbeit ihres Vaters, des Antifaschisten, Journalisten, Fluchthelfers und Gewerkschaftsfunktionärs, Max Diamant (Lodz, 1908 - Frankfurt/M 1992)* at: <https://www.freie-radios.net/54509> [4 Aug 2019].

169 See the memorandum „Sobre las intrigas del señor Enrique Gutmann“ (Jun 1943) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 122, exp. 45, fol. 21.

170 See for example: *Der 20. Juli*, Sozialistische Hefte, no. 12, (México D.F., Jul 1956 ); cf. Fritz Pohle: *Das mexikanische Exil. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politisch-kulturellen Emigration aus Deutschland (1937-1946)* (Stuttgart, 1986) , pp. 397-8.

combative pamphlet, published the following year, a lack of transparency and a culture of complacency and relative inactivity within the institute which he contrasted sharply with the more active and successful work of the French-Mexican Institute, coincidentally directed by Marceau Pivert, his fellow independent socialist of the movement *Socialismo y Libertad*. Attempts to have the social-democratic opposition in the German institute represented on its governing board were, so Zenker presented the situation of 1958, obstructed and sabotaged by the board of directors who, allegedly, also spread rumours of an imminent hostile take-over of the institute by the “reds and the Jews”. Such a continuity of stereotypical vilification of the democratic opposition within the institute drove Zenker to raise fundamental concerns over the ideological orientation of the institute’s leadership. He pointed towards the Mexico as a “national-revolutionary and social-revolutionary country” which guarded as one principal the “equality of races and individuals” and observed “also tolerance in religious issues.”<sup>171</sup> The damage caused by National Socialism to German-Mexican relations required, so Zenker, “long and tenacious work to remedy that damage among the Mexican intellectuals, in order to replace the sword as a symbol of German culture with the quill.” This, however, would require a “clear and fundamentally democratic orientation” of those responsible for the cultural activities among the German-speaking community in Mexico – something which he evidently doubted to be the case.<sup>172</sup> The scandal, which reached the Foreign Office in Bonn, and even the office of the Federal Republic’s president, demonstrated the deep-rooted ideological rift which still existed between the German ex-patriate colony and the remnants of the anti-fascist community of exile in Mexico by the end of the 1950s.

Others from among the German-speaking group of political refugees who remained in Mexico did so for personal reasons while expressing their fundamental disenchantment with politics. One such case was the actor Michael Flürsheim who spent most of his later life as an immigrant outside the Mexican capital in Puebla and, later, in Monterrey.<sup>173</sup> Flürsheim harboured similar concerns about the continuity of post-fascist ideological attitudes during the post-war era as Zenker observed them among the German ex-patriate colony, and he refused ever to return to Germany again. “Thank goodness”, so he recalled 50 years later, “I had a reason not to return. I had a Mexican wife who was absolutely incapable of ever learning German. [...] And a one-year-old toddler. To return with those two to a destroyed Germany would have been irresponsible.”<sup>174</sup> But his underlying concern was different in nature:

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171 Walter Zenker: *Die deutsche Kulturaffaire in Mexiko* (México D.F., 1959), p.3.

172 Ibid., p. 4.

173 Michael Flürsheim in: “Flucht nach Mexiko. Deutsche im Exil“, directed by Gertrude Boehm (Goethe-Institut / SFB, 1994), min. 1:09:28 – 1:09:56.

174 Ibid., min. 1:09:10 – 1:09:30.

I would not want to go back to Germany, I once gave in interview to GEA [a journal of the *Esperanto* movement] and they published a picture of me subtitled with my statement: »I do not go to Germany. I cannot live in a country where I need to think of every person: He might have killed my cousin or my uncle.« That argument has by now lost some of its edge for me. But still, I do not understand any Jew who is going to Germany. Because things such as Hitlerism do not die out, that is not true, it is part of human nature. Not just in Germany, in other nations, too, of course. But among the Germans it came to life first. And to live there among those people when, at any time, they might shout: »Kill the Jews! - no matter whether it is a »half-Jew« or not«...?<sup>175</sup>

Those who did return – usually to the Soviet Zone of Occupation and later the German Democratic Republic or other communist-controlled central-European countries – faced other challenges during the late-Stalinist and post-Stalinist periods of the 1950s which resulted, in many cases, in renewed persecution and – as in the cases of Lenka Reinerová, Paul Merker, and Walter Janka – incarceration, or even, as in the case of André Simone (i.e. Otto Katz), execution during the Czechoslovakian purge of the Slánský trial in 1952.<sup>176</sup> The implicit anti-Semitism of these persecutions – the indictments included charges of “Zionism” and “Cosmopolitanism” – provided a sinister echo to the concerns of those who, like Flürscheim, were fearful of such ideological continuities in the West.

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175 Ibid., min. 1:21:23 – 1:22:15.

176 Marcus G. Patka: „Die drei Leben des Otto Katz alias André Simone alias Rudolf Breda“, in: Ann Saint Sauveur-Henn (ed.): *Zweimal verjagt. Die deutschsprachige Emigration und der Fluchtweg Frankreich – Lateinamerika 1933-1945* (Berlin, 1998), pp. 140-54; Anson Rabinbach: „Otto Katz: Man on Ice“, in: Raphael Gross, Yfaat Weiss (Hgg.): *Jüdische Geschichte als allgemeine Geschichte* (Festschrift für Dan Diner zum 60. Geburtstag) (Göttingen, 2006), pp. 325-53; Alexander Stephan: „„Ich habe das Gefühl, ich bin in die Eiszeit geraten“. Zur Rückkehr von Anna Seghers aus dem Exil“, *The Germanic Review* 62/3 (1987), pp. 143-52; Gerd Koenen: „Die DDR und die »Judenfrage«. Paul Merker und der nicht stattgefundene »deutsche Slánský-Prozeß« 1953, in: Leonid Luks (ed.): *Der Spätstalinismus und die „Jüdische Frage“. Zur antisemitischen Wendung des Kommunismus* (Köln/Weimar/Wien 1998), pp. 237-70; Jeffrey Herf: „Antisemitismus in der SED. Geheime Dokumente zum Fall Merker aus SED- und MfS-Archiven“, *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 42/4 (1994), pp. 635-67; Id.: *Divided Memory. The Nazi Past in the two Germanies* (Cambridge/Mass., 1997), pp. 106-57; Id.: *East German Communists and the Jewish Question: the case of Paul Merker* (Washington, D.C., 1994); Wolfgang Kießling: *Paul Merker in den Fängen der Sicherheitsorgane Stalins und Ulbrichts* (Berlin, 1995); Id.: „»Wiedergutmachung am jüdischen Volke«. Paul Merkers politische Vorstellungen aus dem Jahr 1942-45 und der Merker-Prozeß des Jahres 1955“, *Exil* 12/2 (1992), pp. 67-76; Lenka Reinerová: *Alle Farben der Sonne und der Nacht* (Berlin, 2003); the files of the investigation against the Mexican emigration by the Central Party Control Commission of the SED can be found at BAL, SAPMO, DY30/IV 2/4, nos. 106, 111, 112, 117, 121, 124, 148, 288.

### c. Into the Cold War

In early 1946, while the Spanish republican government-in-exile transferred its seat from Mexico to France and actively sought to include the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) into the exile coalition in order to mobilise the broadest possible international support for the republican cause against any recognition of the Franco regime, the anti-communist socialists led by Indalecio Prieto in Mexico seized the opportunity to promote Prieto's policy of a Spanish referendum to end Franco's rule by means of a plebiscite. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1946, the socialist youth organisation *Juventudes Socialistas Españolas* (JSE) celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Prieto took to the stage of the *Centro Republicano Español* at Calle Tacuba no. 15 alongside José San Pedro Inchausti and Nicolás Zárate – founding members of the JSE – and Julia de Iruretagoyena, widow of co-founder Tomás Meabe, in order to elaborate further on his policy of a Spanish plebiscite.<sup>177</sup> If the prisons and concentration camps of the Franco regime were opened and the republican opposition freed, and if the borders of Spain were to be opened to let the *emigrés* return before the plebiscite, “it is possible that a plebiscite may no longer be necessary because this would bring about the republic by acclamation.” The prospect he presented to the audience of the *Centro Republicano* was certainly optimistic:

A plebiscite under those conditions, who could doubt that in Spain the spirit of 1931, of 1934, or 1936 would manifest itself? And that the spirit of our people would come to the fore, the heroic acts of our militia and of the republican army? Anyone who doubts this does not have faith in Spain nor in its people. For us, Spain comes above anything else, and we have the highest confidence in our people. If the people can decide freely, that decision will be for the Republic.<sup>178</sup>

Prieto's claim to represent a broad consensus of Spanish socialists in favour of his policy of a Spanish plebiscite was soon rejected by the rival faction of Spanish socialists of the *Círculo Cultural “Jaime Vera”*<sup>179</sup>, and the split which had plagued the party over the question whether or not support constitutional continuity in the form of Negrín's government-in-exile during the war finally tore the party apart when in April 1946 Juan Negrín and his closest allies were formally expelled from the PSOE. The Spanish republican socialist journal *El Socialista*, published in Mexico, commented bitterly: “The preoccupation of the prietista emigration has

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177 See the press announcement „Banquete de Socialistas a D. Indalecio Prieto“ (25 Dec 1945) at AEM, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 1945/2, fol. 117.

178 „El Partido Socialista Obrero acepta unánimemente la consulta electoral para resolver el problema político español. Discurso de Indalecio Prieto en México el 6 de enero de 1946“, *Adelante* V/99 (1 Feb 1946), p. 4.

179 See: „Una maravillosa coincidencia. ¿En qué quedamos?“, *El Socialista* V/30 (30 April 1946), p. 4.

not been the triumph over Franco, but the triumph over Negrín. How much longer will the Spanish republicans fight against Negrín instead of against Franco?”<sup>180</sup> The inclusion of the communist Santiago Carrillo as minister into the Spanish republican government-in-exile, on the other hand, prompted the socialist youth of the JSE in Mexico City to protest against the “fundamental political and moral incompatibility of that man, whose legitimate and monstrous merit of conduct can only let him being considered fit for running the Ministry of Treason.”<sup>181</sup> The split of the Spanish Left in exile into two opposing camps which had fallen out over the question of co-operation with the Spanish communists was finally complete and would last for decades to come.

Outside the *Centro Republicano* at calle Tacuba no. 15, the public sphere of the Mexican capital was dominated by the Spanish republican political forces of the *Unión Nacional Española* (UNE) which represented the national front policies of the communist-dominated Left of Spanish republican politics in exile. Its Mexican partner organisation, the FOARE, redoubled its efforts with a renewed campaign for the rupturing of diplomatic relations with the Franco regime by the United Nations and a call for the release of political prisoners in Francoist Spain.<sup>182</sup> On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February, Julio Luelmo, Spanish left-wing socialist of the *Círculo Cultural “Jaime Vera”* and ex-director of local government of the Spanish Republic who now acted as chief of propaganda for the UNE, reaffirmed the position of the pro-communist Left at a public meeting at the headquarters of the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC) at calle de López no. 23 – the former venue of the *Casino Alemán* which was, by now, gaining a prominent place in the public political practice of the exiled Left in Mexico City. By way of introducing Luelmo, the president of the UNE, Dr. Manuel Márquez, emphasised the theme of “unity” which he related to world politics not just during war but also in peace and pointed out that “it is in the interest of [the world] that after this horrible contest no fascist centre remains.” Even taking into account international economic interests, so Márquez, “limits of decency exist which should not and cannot be crossed.” Luelmo then praised the “great Soviet leader Josef Stalin” alongside the Mexican presidents Cárdenas and Ávila Camacho as true friends of the Spanish Republic and elaborated at length on the importance of unity of all anti-Francoist forces after he had rejected Prieto’s suggestion of a Spanish plebiscite, “in the judgement of the Unión Nacional Española in Mexico, a formula created by the enemies of the Spanish people, a violation of its rights which hurls a grave responsibility onto those republican sectors and individuals who play a game with those who conceived them.”

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180 „República vs. Plebiscito“, *El Socialista* V/30 (30 April 1946), p. 3; cf. Luis Carlos Hernando Noguera: *Plebiscito o Monarquía. El PSOE ante la segunda Restauración, 1943-1978*, doctoral thesis (UNED, 2012), pp. 14-25.

181 „Una Declaración de las Juventudes Socialistas en México“, *Adelante* IV/102 (1 May 1946), p. 6.

182 „Nueva Comisión Ejecutiva“, *España Popular* VI/277 (25 Jan 1946), p. 5.

Instead, for Luelmo, the future of the Spanish republican government in exile would follow the principles of a united anti-fascist national front of the UNE.<sup>183</sup> Such a message of anti-fascist national front policies on the eve of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the election victory of the Spanish *Frente Popular* in 1936 was soon echoed by Vicente Lombardo Toledano, the president of the Latin American trade union federation CTAL, at a public meeting against the Franco regime of terror in Spain in the *Sala de Conferencias* of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February. The meeting was organised by the FOARE and presided over by its president José Mancisidor, its secretary Ricardo Castellote, the director Enrique Arreguín alongside leading representatives of the Spanish community of political exile in Mexico: Luis Fernández Clérigo as former president of the Spanish *Cortes*, Vicente Uribe as communist ex-minister of the republic, and Pedro Carrasco as vice-president of the UNE. For Lombardo, the cause of the Spanish Republic appeared as an eminently transnational issue as he envisioned to “be brought to life not the Spanish Empire of the 16<sup>th</sup> century but the great and vigorous family of 100 million men and women who speak the Spanish language in this world, as an important force in support of world peace and a democratic world based on liberty and social justice.”<sup>184</sup>

The following day, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the election victory of the Spanish *Frente Popular* in 1936 provided an opportunity for the pro-Soviet Spanish Left in Mexico City to celebrate their loyalty to the Soviet effort in support of the Spanish republican cause in a manner of exceptional public attention and propaganda value. For weeks, the Mexican press had been following the progress of a group of Spanish children, evacuated from Spain to the Soviet Union during the Civil War, on their journey from the USSR to Mexico via New York to be reunited with their parents who had found asylum in Mexico.<sup>185</sup> On the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, the children had first arrived in the Mexican capital by buses at the station at calle Ramón Guzmán no. 137 in the district of *San Rafael*, and after years of separation the reunion of families did not fail to impress even the Mexican opposition media which usually maintained a critical distance to the fate of the Spanish republicans:

The scenes which occurred on the platforms were of high drama. Sons and daughters separated from their parents at the age of ten arrived transformed into men and women. The first instance of the encounter

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183 „La Política de Unión Nacional: única solución para España. Conferencia de D. Julio Luelmo en nombre de UNE en México“, *Reconquista de España. Órgano de la Unión Nacional Española en México* I/21 (25 Feb 1946), pp. 1-3.

184 „Un gra acto contra el terror franquista. Vibrante intervención de Lombardo Toledano en el mitin de Bellas Artes en México“, *España Popular* VI/281 (22 Feb 1946), p. 5.

185 „Viene a México un Grupo de Españoles que Vivía en Rusia“, *Excélsior* (24 Jan 1946), p. 2; „Llegó el navio cargado de 21 »bolchevizados«, *Novedades* (25 Jan 1946), pp. 2 & 11; „Vienen en Camino los Niños Españoles“, *Excélsior* (31 Jan 1946), pp. 1 & 15.

had curious aspects. Among tears and laughter, some parents did not recognise their children and, above all, some children – torn from their homes at an early age, did not recognise their parents. And then... a long embrace signalled the return home of some children which the war has converted into prodigal children.

But many others, as the paper *Excelsior* noted, still awaited the return of evacuated children from the Soviet Union, and their parents would “now feel their pain redoubled.”<sup>186</sup> Still, the pro-Soviet faction of the Spanish community of exile was able to present to the public the gratitude of Spanish parents who, in a message to the Soviet ambassador in Mexico Alexander Kapustin, praised the assistance of the Soviet government: “Our children and thousands of others found a home on Soviet soil which we could not give them on our own soil of which fascism robbed us and which, we trust, will be saved for them and all Spaniards in our liberated fatherland.”<sup>187</sup> The 16<sup>th</sup> of February, thus, turned into the celebration of a children’s party in the *Centro Andaluz* at calle Bolívar no. 57, organised by the Spanish republican youth clubs, featuring the performance of theatre sketches and Andalusian and Slavic dances attended by the Soviet ambassador and his Military Attaché. Pedro Garfias recited political poetry and Gabriel Cervantes spoke in the name of the so-called *Niños de Morelia*, the Spanish children evacuated to Mexico during the Spanish Civil War, and thereby suggested a parallel expression of international solidarity between republican Spain, the USSR, and Mexico.<sup>188</sup>

The Spanish republican youth, as it was organised in the pro-communist *Juventud Socialista Unificada* (JSU), was called upon only a few weeks later to participate in a concerted public manifestation of their commitment to the republican cause during a protest march across the city centre which headed for the embassies of those international governments which continued to maintain diplomatic relations with the Franco regime. Their *Boletín de Noticias* listed the addresses of those embassies in its issue of the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 1946: the British embassy at the corner of calle Río Lerma and calle Río Sena in the district of *Cuauhtémoc*, in the district of *Juárez* the embassies of the United States at calle Niza no. 53, of France at calle Havre no. 15, of Columbia, Venezuela, and Guatemala at Avenida de los Insurgentes no. 72, and of Denmark at calle Liverpool no. 5; in the district of *Hipódromo* the embassies of China at calle Celaya no. 26 and of Czechoslovakia at calle Teotihuacán no. 18, and the Cuban embassy in the district of *Condesa* at calle Francisco Márquez no. 160; in the district of *Lomas de Chapultépec* the embassies of Uruguay at Prado Sur no. 465,

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186 „Llegaron de Rusia 21 niños españoles. Emocionante arribo de 21 españoles“, *Excelsior* (16 Feb 1946).

187 „Agradecimiento de familiares“, *España Popular* VI/281 (22 Feb 1946), p. 4.

188 „Una fiesta en el Centro Andaluz: La llegada a México de niños españoles residentes en la URSS“, *España Popular* VI/281 (22 Feb 1946), p. 4.



of Panama at Paseo de la Reforma no. 530, and of Belgium at Sierra Madre no. 305; in the district of *Roma Norte* the embassies of Chile at calle Jalapa no. 57 and of Brazil at calle Orizaba no. 24; and the embassy of Canada at Paseo de la Reforma no. 1 in the *Tabacalera*.<sup>189</sup> On the 6<sup>th</sup> of March, the FOARE gathered its followers at the memorial to Benito Juárez (the *Hemiciclo Juárez*) and marched “in perfect order” down Avenida Juárez towards the *Caballito* into Avenida de los Insurgentes towards the embassies of the United States, France, and Britain to hand over a note demanding the international isolation of the Franco regime and petitioning for the allied powers to exert pressure on the Spanish dictatorship to pardon and release political prisoners who were threatened by the death penalty. The Mexican press reported “more than 3.000 Spaniards” who filled the streets of the city centre, and the communist paper *España Popular* counted even “more than 4.000” participants, while the agents of the *Serretaría de Gobernación* estimated the turnout at around 1.200 protesters, among them “about 5 % Mexicans”.<sup>190</sup> Among the marchers were UGT leader and left-wing socialist Ramón González Peña, communist leader Vicente Uribe, the president of the association of Spanish journalists and writers in exile Arturo Mori, Emilio Criado y Romero of the same organisation, Marcial Fernández of the *Alianza Nazonal Galega*, the treasurer of the FOARE Fernando Carmona, left-wing socialists of the *Círculo “Jaime Vera”* Ángel Galarza and Rafael Carreras, the president of FOARE José Mancisidor, and its secretary general Enrique Arreguín.<sup>191</sup> When the march reached the US embassy, a small delegation of protesters was received by embassy officials who gave their assurances that the petition would be presented to the ambassador. At the French embassy, the protesters were received by the ambassador himself “with great friendliness and courtesy”, and the ambassador and Luis Rodríguez Clérigo (representing the presidency of the Spanish *Cortes*) exchanged “words of affection between the two countries” and the crowd responded by singing the *Marsellaise* and shouting “Viva Francia!”. At the British embassy, however, no official was prepared to meet the Spanish protesters, the crowd was being told that neither the ambassador nor any official was present at the time, so that the protesters felt snubbed and an attack on the building by some youngsters in the crowd was only narrowly averted.<sup>192</sup>

Meanwhile, the Spanish anarchists of the CNT chose another form of keeping the Spanish republican cause in the public eye by staging the *Festival*

189 *Boletín de Noticias de la JSU de España* II/6 (4 Mar 1946), p. 2.

190 See the press report: „Se celebró la manifestación contra el terror franquista“ at AEM, Fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 46/1, fol. 42-3; „Entusiasta y poderosa manifestación en México“, *España Popular* VI/283 (8 Mar 1946), p. 2; „Informa sobre manifestación de Republicanos Españoles exiliados“ (8 Mar 1946) by agents IPS-7 and IPS-30 at AGN, DGIPS, caja 323, exp. 64, s. fol.

191 „¡Adelante la movilización antifranquista“, *España Popular* VI/284 (15 Mar 1946), p. 3.

192 „Informa sobre manifestación de Republicanos Españoles exiliados“ (8 Mar 1946) by agents IPS-7 and IPS-30 at AGN, DGIPS, caja 323, exp. 64, s. fol.

*Pro-España* at the *Teatro "Virginia Fábregas"* in calle Donceles no. 26 in the historical city centre on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1946. Somewhat grandiloquently, their journal *Solidaridad Obrera* characterised the occasion, an artistic charity gala, as "the greatest success which the Spanish emigration in Mexico has registered in their calendar." The programme opened with recitals by a co-editor of *Solidaridad Obrera*, Carlos M. Baena, and continued with short sketches and songs, which recalled the streets of Madrid, Barcelona, and Granada, the typical qualities of the Spanish landscape, performed by the singer Maruja González, the musicians Jesús Freire and Manuel Pineda, the director Antonio Palacios, the actors Manuel Noriega, the Cuban-born Mexican Rafael Banquells, Rosita Farnés, María Márques, and Magdalena Nombela. The actor Ángel Garasa Bergés closed the proceedings of the evening.<sup>193</sup> It seems that this variety *soirée* drew on earlier productions of Spanish artists at the *Teatro Fábregas* which had already been staged in November 1939<sup>194</sup> and could easily be brought back to the stage for a charitable event which yielded close to 3.000 pesos in one evening.<sup>195</sup>

The anniversaries of the major events of the Spanish Republic continued to shape the calendar of political practice in Mexico City. The 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1946 marked the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of the Spanish Republic in 1931 and was, thus, celebrated publicly in ostentatious fashion by the Spanish republican community of exile. The commemorations followed a schedule which spanned the entire day across the city: At 10.30 in the morning, a reception was held at the Spanish embassy building at calle Londres no. 7 in the district of *Juárez* where two members of the Spanish republican government in exile who still remained in Mexico hosted the representatives of political parties, trade unions, military commanders and functionaries of the central and regional governments, and Spanish intellectuals. The minister of Justice, Álvaro de Albornoz of the *Izquierda Republicana*, and the Minister for Public Education, Miguel Santaló of the *Ezquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, on this occasion also welcomed the Polish ambassador to Mexico who emphasised the importance of promoting the Spanish republican case before the UN Security Council.<sup>196</sup> The occasion concluded with a short speech by Albornoz and a wine reception, so it is unlikely that those who attended the commemoration in the Spanish embassy building were able to participate in the commemorations which started at 11 o'clock at the *Centro Republicano Español* at calle Tacuba no. 15 in the *Centro Histórico* where "a broad delegation, in numbers and in representation" began to

193 „Festival Pro-España“, *Solidaridad Obrera* V/91 (20 Apr 1946), p. 1.

194 See: „Del Madrid Castizo a la Calle de Donceles de México“, *Iberia - Portavoz de la colonia español antifascista* I/22 (24 Nov 1939), p. 9; "Otro triunfo en el Fábregas", *ibid.* I/23 (1 Dec 1939), p. 10.

195 „Festival Pro-España“, *Solidaridad Obrera* V/91 (20 Apr 1946), p. 1.

196 „Importantes actos conmemorativos en Mexico: La emigración republicana unida celebró con entusiasmo el 14 de Abril“, *España Popular* VI/289 (19 Aor 1946), p. 4; „Magnífica intervención del Excmo. Sr. Embajador de Polonia“, *ibid.*

make their way to the Spanish cemetery west of the city district of *Tacuba* on the north-western outskirts of the metropolis. There, the organisers of the commemorations had decided to lay flowers at the tomb of an “unknown” Spanish republican in exile, Dionisio Domínguez Villaseca, former member of the postal worker union, thereby alluding to the commemorations of the Unknown Soldier which had been established in Western Europe after the First World War.<sup>197</sup> At the cemetery, the writer Antonio Robles recited a eulogy to all unknown republican comrades buried in Mexico and elsewhere.<sup>198</sup> At around 1 o’clock a group of several hundred Spanish republicans led by Alborno and Santalló laid laurel wreaths at the Monument to Mexican Independence (otherwise known as the *Ángel de Independencia*) on Paseo de la Reforma and held an honorary watch for the “heroes of the independence of Mexico”.<sup>199</sup> The main commemorative event then took place at the *Casino Militar* in the north of *Parque de Chapultépec* where a grand banquet was held in celebration of the Spanish Republic, presided over by Alborno and Santalló, the sub-secretary of the Mexican *Secretaría de Gobernación* Héctor Pérez Martínez, the Mexican chief of the transport police, diplomatic representatives of Venezuela, Chile, Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, Poland, the Spanish generals Francisco Llano de la Encomienda and Ignacio Hidalgo de Cisneros, and representatives of the Spanish republican judiciary. The Spanish socialists of the *Agrupación Socialista* did take part in the events of the day, but awarded them little prominence.<sup>200</sup> And even though some of the diplomatic guests reiterated the demands for an international isolation of the Franco regime, the international recognition for the Spanish republican cause appeared, especially on the part of the Mexican government, significantly diminished. The official address to the banquet on behalf of the Mexican government was presented by the chief of the transport police, as the *Secretaría de Gobernación* kept a low profile while its former chief, Miguel Alemán Valdés, had resigned in June 1945 in order to campaign for the Mexican presidency as successor of Manuel Ávila Camacho. In his own speech, Alborno appeared to issue a warning to those who were prepared to give up on the Spanish republican cause which sounded all the more ominous:

What one needs to wish for is that the blind obstinacy of the years 1936 to 1939 may not be repeated. Back then, because no-one wanted the war, in order to avoid war at all cost, to flee from war in any, even dishonourable, way possible, war was made inevitable. Now, because

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197 „Importantes actos conmemorativos en Mexico: La emigración republicana unida celebró con entusiasmo el 14 de Abril“, *España Popular* VI/289 (19 Aor 1946), p. 4.

198 „Ante la Tumba de un Republicano. Por Antoniorobles“, *Izquierda Republicana* III/21-22 (Apr-May 1946), pp. 1-2.

199 „Importantes actos conmemorativos en Mexico: La emigración republicana unida celebró con entusiasmo el 14 de Abril“, *España Popular* VI/289 (19 Apr 1946), p. 4.

200 See the brief notice: „Commemoración del 14 de Abril“, *Adelante* IV/102 (1 May 1946), p. 1.

no-one dares to affirm justice with all its consequences, it may happen that the masses, disillusioned and in despair, might rise up again and with it terrible violence, too.<sup>201</sup>

In the light of relative reticence by both the outgoing government of Ávila Camacho and the designated successor Miguel Alemán Valdés to associate themselves publicly with the Spanish republican cause, the support of non-governmental bodies in Mexico such as the FOARE would be all the more important. And, indeed, the FOARE planned its own celebration of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Spanish Republic on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1946 “at a place and time to be announced”<sup>202</sup> which, however, clashed with the celebrations organised by the Spanish community of exile. It was thus re-scheduled for the following week on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April<sup>203</sup>, only to coincide with the celebrations of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Spanish communist-led youth movement JSU which spanned the whole day from the morning at the *Piscina Elba* to the *Casal Catalá* at calle Uruguay no. 5 to the main commemorative event at the theatre of the *Sindicato de Meseros* at calle Orozco y Berra no. 80 in the district of *Guerrero*.<sup>204</sup> The commemoration by the FOARE was finally held yet another week later on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April at the *Teatro “Principal”* at calle Bolívar no. 30 at 10.30 in the morning.<sup>205</sup> Presided over by the FOARE’s president José Mancisidor, the list of speakers included the Polish ambassador to Mexico Jan Drohojowski, sub-secretary De Benito for the Spanish republican government, Luis Fernández Clérigo as vice-president of the Spanish-republican *Cortes*, Gabriel Morón (also president of the *Centro Andaluz*) for the left-wing Spanish socialists, and Ignacio Mantecón in the name of the PCE. The presence of the Polish ambassador and his explicit commitment to the responsibility of the UN Security Council to uphold the Spanish republican cause was emphasised in the Spanish communist press in Mexico, “the attitude of Poland was the same as was maintained by Mexico some time ago, joining in brotherhood those two countries in their desire for justice for the Spanish people.”<sup>206</sup> Such declarations of international solidarity stood in curious contrast to the lack of coordination of public political activities between the pro-Soviet republican organisations of the Spanish community in exile and their long-standing Mexican allies from among the governing élites. The relationship of the

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201 „Un discurso de D. Álvaro de Albornoz“, *Izquierda Republicana* III/21-22 (Apr-May 1946), p. 8.

202 „Gran Mitin para le 14 de Abril. XV aniversario de la proclamación de la República“, *España Popular* VI/287 (5 Apr 1946), p. 3.

203 „El acto organizado por la FOARE se transfirió al día 21 del actual“, *España Popular* VI/288 (12 Apr 1946), p. 3;

204 „Commemoración del X aniversario de la J.S.U.“, *España Popular* VII/290 (26 Apr 1946), p. 5.

205 „Actos republicanos en México“, *España Popular* VII/290 (26 Apr 1946), p. 1.

206 „Gran Mitin de unidad republicana en México“, *España Popular* VII/291 (3 May 1946), p. 5.

Spanish republicans of the *Unión Nacional Española* and the Mexican trade unions appeared to be in better shape when a few days later members of the Spanish UGT, the PSOE and the PCE, the youth movement JSU, the PSUC, and representatives of the nationalist Catalan, Basque, and Galician communities joined the annual May Day parade in the centre of Mexico City.<sup>207</sup>

Already the evening before, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1946, Indalecio Prieto had addressed the *Centro Republicano Español* with what had turned into an annual tradition of his lectures to the anti-communist Spanish socialists in Mexico.<sup>208</sup> Prieto's topic was a discussion of avenues for policies of socialisation in Spain which he approached under the guiding question of the compatibility of socialism and liberty. While rejecting the Soviet model as the "absolute negation of liberty" he also disapproved of the British and French concepts of nationalisation under the respective Labour and socialist post-war governments and, in his characteristically national inclination, posed the question of a specifically Spanish way of socialisation. On the basis of the Spanish republican constitution of 1931, Prieto arrived at a differentiated solution which would place the natural resources of the nation under the control of the state while he equally emphasised the role of municipal authorities for the organisation of collective ownership. To him, local government offered the key to reconciling policies of socialisation with the principle of liberty, not least through the involvement of the trade unions. Without mentioning the Spanish anarchists by name, this programme constituted a thinly veiled offer of an anti-communist alliance against Giral's Spanish republican government-in-exile in France, and it also may have been intended as an offer of a common platform to disenchanted followers of Juan Negrín among the Spanish socialists, just days after he and his closest allies had been expelled from the party.<sup>209</sup>

The timing of Prieto's programme of socialisation was probably also aimed at the imminent visit of José Giral to Mexico two weeks later. In the early hours of the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, Giral arrived at the airport of the Mexican capital and was greeted by delegations of the Spanish republican community, including the government ministers who resided in Mexico, the sub-secretary of the Mexican Foreign Ministry, Manuel Tello, and the ambassador Jan Drohojowski who represented Poland as a champion of the Spanish republican cause at the United

207 „Una fuerte columna española desfiló el 1o. de Mayo en México“, *España Popular* VII/291 (3 May 1946), p. 4; pictures of the occasion can be found *ibid.* VII/293 (17 May 1946), p. 4; VII/294 (23 May 1946), p. 2; VII/296 (6 Jun 1946), p. 6.

208 „Para el Primero de Mayo“, *Adelante* IV/102 (1 May 1946), p. 6. This notice of the schedule of events for Tuesday and Wednesday, the 30<sup>th</sup> of April and the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1946 made it clear that the PSOE members in Mexico had no plans to participate in the public May Day celebrations of the Mexican trade unions and had organised their own events all hosted by the *Centro Republicano Español* at calle Tacuba no. 15.

209 Indalecio Prieto: „Esbozo de un Programa de Socialización en España“, *Adelante* IV/103 (15 May 1946), pp. 1-3.

Nations.<sup>210</sup> On the following day, the 18<sup>th</sup> of May at 6 pm, the FOARE had organised a public demonstration of solidarity with the Spanish government in exile in front of the Spanish embassy at calle Londres no. 7 which – according to sympathetic sources – was attended by approximately 2,000 Spanish republicans and their Mexican supporters. Alongside consultations with the political leadership of the Spanish community in exile in Mexico City, Giral also met with the Mexican foreign minister Castillo Nájera before leaving for New York.<sup>211</sup> According to intelligence of the US embassy, the purpose of Giral's visit was to prepare the transfer of the remaining members of the Spanish government in exile from Mexico to France and to collect materials concerning the clandestine activities of the Franco government which the Mexican press reported as consisting of some 135,000 words and weighing in at 30 lbs. when he left for New York. Otherwise, Giral's visit – coinciding with the last weeks of the Mexican presidential election campaign – generated relatively little public interest after “it was rumored that he would hold a press conference. However, this press conference failed to materialize and during his stay here only scattered reports by individual reporters were published in the press.”<sup>212</sup> In similar fashion, the Spanish communists held their *pleno de trabajo* on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May at the inconspicuous headquarters of the *Confederación Nacional Campesina* (CNC) at calle de Lopez no. 23 (the former *Casino Alemán*), a venue which they continued to use later during the year for the commemoration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the PSUC on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July and of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Defensa de Madrid* organised by the UGT on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November.<sup>213</sup>

Once, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 1946, the former *Secretario de la Gobernación* Miguel Alemán Valdés was returned, as expected, with 78 % of the popular vote as president-elect of Mexico for the post-revolutionary governing state party (which had been reconstituted in January as the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* – PRI), the Spanish republican community of exile in Mexico City adopted, once again, a more visible public profile in the capital city. Already on

210 „Caluroso recibimiento en México a Giral, jefe del gobierno de la república“, *España Popular* VII/294 (24 May 1946), p. 3; see also the photograph under „El Dr. Giral a su llegada a México“, *El Popular* (17 May 1946) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 46/2, fol. 15.

211 „Concentración popular de simpatía al Gobierno de la República Española y a su Presidente“, *El Popular* (17 May 1946); „Caluroso recibimiento en México a Giral, jefe del gobierno de la república“, *España Popular* VII/294 (24 May 1946), p. 3.

212 Confidential report by Second Secretary of the US embassy David Thomasson on „Visit of Dr. José Giral, Prime Minister of the Spanish Republican Government-in-Exile, to Mexico City“ (24 May 1946) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800S-Y (Internal Affairs), s. fols.

213 „Entusiasta y patriótico Pleno de trabajo de los comunistas españoles en México“ (with pictures), *España Popular* VII/296 (7 Jun 1946), p. 3; „Diez Años de Vida del PSUC de Cataluña“ (with picture), *España Popular* VII/305 (2 Aug 1946), p. 5; „Todo México en pie contra los crímenes de Franco“, *España Popular* VII/320 (15 Nov 1946), p. 2; „Acto contra el terror franquista“, *El Socialista* V/34 (Nov 1946), p. 3.

the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, the Spanish CNT had commemorated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the military coup of Franco against the Spanish Republic with an artistic festival at the *Centro Andaluz* at calle Bolívar no. 57 in the historic city centre.<sup>214</sup> The actual anniversary of the 18<sup>th</sup> of July was then marked by a prominent public meeting at one of the largest venues in the Mexican capital, the *Arena México* at calle Dr. Río de la Loza no. 94 in the district of *Hidalgo*. Organised by the *Confederación de Trabajadores de América Latina* (CTAL), the Latin American federation of trade unions under the leadership of Vicente Lombardo Toledano, the 18<sup>th</sup> of July was chosen in coordination with the pro-communist World Federation of Trade Unions in Moscow as the launching date of an international campaign against the Franco regime in Spain.<sup>215</sup> Speakers at the meeting included Lombardo Toledano and the ambassador of the Spanish republican government in exile in Mexico City, Luis Nicolau d'Olwer, initiating a public campaign of several weeks which focused on the key demand for an economic boycott of the Franco regime in Spain.<sup>216</sup> The communist journal *España Popular* reported an audience of no fewer than 5,000 at the *Arena México* who greeted the speakers with “an impressive ovation and endlessly booming Vivas!” Alongside numerous Mexican trade union officials the event saw members of the diplomatic corps in attendance: the Soviet ambassador Alexander Kapustin and his first secretary Kumarian, the Polish ambassador Drohojowski, the Czechoslovakian ambassador Laska, and the Cuban ambassador Kobly. The painter David Álfaro Siqueiros appeared with FOARE president José Mancisidor and the vice-president of the Spanish-republican *Cortes* Luis Fernández Clérigo. Nicolau d'Olwer reminded the audience of the German and Italian intervention in the Spanish Civil War while “some of the Western democracies” had “asphyxiated” the republic so that “Franco succeeded with his plans to enslave the Spanish people.” International action against the Franco regime would not constitute an intervention in the internal affairs of Spain since “that regime is the product of a foreign intervention.” The main speaker of the evening was Vicente Lombardo Toledano who reported on his recent visit to Moscow and highlighted the support by the communist World Federation of Trade Unions for the republican cause.<sup>217</sup> While he denounced a continuing policy of “appeasement” by the Western powers towards the Franco regime, his speech adopted a significantly more confrontational tone towards the United States which the Spanish republicans had so far avoided in order to lobby for Washington's

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214 „Gran Festival“, *Solidaridad Obrera* V/95 (6 Jul 1946), p. 2.

215 „Gran movilización obrera, en contra del franquismo“ (11 Jul 1946), press report at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 46/3, fols. 5-6.

216 „Los mejores sectores del pueblo de México en el Gran Acto Contra Franco“ (18 Jul 1946), press report at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca España y el Mundo 46/2, fols. 35-6; pictures of the meeting under „Oradores del gran Mitin Antifranquista de Anoche“, *El Popular* (19 Jul 1946) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 46/2, fol. 123.

217 „Los trabajadores latinoamericanos emprenden su gran campaña por la derrota del franquismo“, *España Popular* VII/304 (26 Jul 1946), pp. 3 & 5.

diplomatic support. Reminding the audience of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbour Policy towards Latin America during the 1930s, Lombardo Toledano displayed a more confident attitude: "The Good Neighbour Policy, as far as it exists, does not depend on us, the Latin Americans, but on the Government of the United States. It is they, the government of a strong country, who will decide whether they want our friendship or whether they do not want it."<sup>218</sup> In his view, the continuation of the anti-fascist coalition depended on the commitment of the US-American government, and any failure to support the Spanish republican cause would demonstrate the questionable ideological attitude of the Western powers towards the upholding of democratic principles.

For the rest of the year, the Spanish republican public activities centred around two major venues in the city: the *Teatro de Telefonistas* at Calzada Manuel Villalongín no. 50 in the district of *Cuauhtémoc* and the *Teatro "Iris"* at calle Donceles no. 36 in the historic city centre. The former saw a *Asamblea de Información* by the PCE, its Catalan equivalent of the PSUC, and the youth organisation JSU on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September<sup>219</sup>, another *Gran Mitin* on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September which continued to transport the message of support for José Giral's Spanish republican government-in-exile<sup>220</sup>, while on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August the *Teatro "Iris"* had hosted an *Acto Antifranquista* organised by the Mexican teachers' union uniting the Mexican union leadership and the Mexican communists with FOARE.<sup>221</sup> Back at the *Teatro de Telefonistas*, the FOARE organised another large Congress of Solidarity with the Spanish Republic which lasted for three days between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1946.<sup>222</sup> Before an audience of about 1,200 participants (about two thirds of whom were Mexican), the *Convención de Solidaridad* counted on the support of the governing state Party PRI, the Mexican trade unions, the FOARE, numerous Mexican members of Congress and representatives of the Mexican government, as well as the diplomatic support by the Soviet Union, the governments of Poland and Czechoslovakia, and representatives of the Spanish republican government-in-exile. The convention took place under the honorary sponsorship of no fewer than three Mexican presidents: ex-president Lázaro Cárdenas, the still incumbent Manuel Ávila

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218 „Que en Septiembre se Descargará la Espada Democrática Contra Franco“, *Excelsior* (19 Jul 1946).

219 „Fortaliciendo el Gobierno y la lucha de nuestro pueblo, frustraremos las maniobras reaccionarias. Importante Asamblea Informativa de la Delegacion del Partido Comunista en México“, *España Popular* VII/310 (6 Sep 1946), p. 3.

220 „Contra las maniobras reaccionarias y la capitulación“, *España Popular* VII/313 (27 Sep 1946), p. 3.

221 „Un gran acto antifranquista del Magisterio mexicano“, *España Popular* VII/310 (6 Sep 1946), p. 5.

222 „Convención de la FOARE“, *España Popular* VII/315 (4 Oct 1946), p. 1.



Camacho, and president-elect Miguel Alemán Valdés.<sup>223</sup> The organisers published with particular delight a message of support by Albert Einstein who expressed his conviction that “the majority of people in the democratic nations would like to see the resurrection of a democratic regime in Spain” and transmitted his greetings to “all friends of a free and sovereign Spain”.<sup>224</sup> In terms of political content, the *Convención de Solidaridad* reiterated its loyal commitment to José Giral’s government-in-exile, protested against the continuing acts of political violence by the Franco regime in Spain, declared its solidarity with the clandestine militant opposition in Spain, called for the diplomatic isolation and economic boycott of the Spanish dictatorship in order to reconstruct a democratic, republican government in Spain in accordance with the United Nations, and warned against the possibility of a cultural subversion of Latin America by pro-Franco nationalist elements across Hispano-America.<sup>225</sup> The *Convención de Solidaridad* concluded with an *Acto de Masas* at the *Teatro “Iris”* on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October.<sup>226</sup> Such public manifestations were accompanied by a campaign of protest directed at the US-American embassy against repressive violence by the Franco regime<sup>227</sup>, and this international campaign continued in November with petitions to the US and British embassies, and further public declarations of solidarity by the Mexican labour movement, for example at a meeting of about 5,000 supporters of the *Federación de Trabajadores del Distrito Federal* at the *Arena Mexico* on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November.<sup>228</sup>

Against this backdrop of intensified public campaigning by the Spanish political factions in Mexico who adhered to José Giral’s government-in-exile and their Mexican political allies, the anti-communist leader of the Spanish socialists in Mexico, Indalecio Prieto, took the opportunity to campaign for his plan of a referendum under the auspices of the United Nations to determine the future of Spain. After the expulsion of Juan Negrín and his closest political allies from the

223 „México con la República Española. Gran éxito de la Convención de Solidaridad“, *España Popular* VII/316 (18 Oct 1946), p. 1.

224 „El gran sabio Einstein saluda a la Convención“, *ibid.*

225 „Importantes Resoluciones de la Convención“, *España Popular* VII/317 (25 Oct 1946), p. 3; cf. „Gran triunfo antifranquista de la Convención de Soliaridad“, *ibid.*, pp. 1 & 5; see also: „Un Acto Inolvidable. Nuestra Convención de Solidaridad con la República Española“, *Mexico Antifranquista – Órgano de la FOARE* I/2 (10 Dec 1946), pp. 1 & 11.

226 „Con un gran mitin de masas de clausuró la magnífica Convención de Solidaridad“, *España Popular* VII/317 (25 Oct 1946), p. 6.

227 See the „Memorandum for the Ambassador“ by John Wilson (18 Nov 1946) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 800 S-Y, s. fol.; cf. *ibid.* also the report by the First Secretary of the embassy to the US Secretary of State (22 Nov 1946), and a telegramme of protest to the US embassy by the FOARE (26 Oct 1946); cf. the photographs in *España Popular* VII/321 (22 Nov 1946), p. 1 & 2.

228 „Todo México en pie contra los crímenes de Franco. Intensas actividades en la Semana contra el terror franquista“, *España Popular* VII/320 (15 Nov 1946), p. 1.

ranks of the PSOE, Prieto now evidently felt encouraged to turn against the Spanish republican government-in-exile of José Giral (which, pro forma, included the Spanish communists). Giral's anti-fascist national front policies mirrored those of the first post-war governments in France and Italy, but Prieto's anti-communism led him into a different direction. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1946, in a speech to the *Agrupación Socialista en México* (presumably at the *Centro Republicano Español* at calle Tacuba no. 15), he had only implicitly challenged the legitimacy of Giral's government when, in the light of the failure by the United States and Britain to support the Spanish republican cause, he called for the nations of Hispano-America to monitor a Spanish plebiscite.<sup>229</sup> Five weeks later, on the 17 of December, Prieto went considerably further when he addressed a meeting of the *Juventudes Socialistas*: in fact, on this occasion, he called for nothing less than the abolition of the Spanish republican government-in-exile:

As I said before – you have heard me say it on other occasions – I always reckoned our government to constitute an obstacle [to international action against the Franco regime]. At this hour, that is very evident, and [even] the most short-sighted are seeing it clearly. During the session of the Cortes of the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 1945, the socialist parliamentary faction foresaw the loss of vitality of the republican institutions which had been reconstituted. That loss is now total [and] definitive. For this reason, the institutions which have lost their vitality must disappear and must disappear immediately, because not only have they become useless and costly, but they are also an obstacle, a hindrance, and obstacles and hindrances need to be eliminated. Naturally, the first step towards their abolition must be the immediate retreat of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español from their representation in government. (Applause) [...] The resignations must also be submitted early enough in order to prevent us from being infected by the putrefaction which is already running through the government.<sup>230</sup>

Prieto added his own understanding of an anti-totalitarian equal distance from both the Western powers, which continued to cooperate with the Franco regime, and the communists in Giral's government: "I confirm, in the light of rumours which circulate in some press reports, that the Partido Socialista Obrero Español will not tolerate any »Quisling« who is following orders from Moscow, and it will equally not submit to either England nor to the United States. (Very good. Applause)"<sup>231</sup> Prieto's radical turn against the Spanish republican institutions in

229 „Socialistas exilados en México expresan su solidaridad con la Ejecutiva del Partido en España. Discurso de Indalecio Prieto“, *Adelante* IV/113 (15 Nov 1946), pp. 1-4.

230 „El Problema Español después de la Resolución de las Naciones Unidas. Conferencia de Indalecio Prieto“, *Adelante* IV/115 (15 Dec 1946), p. 4.

231 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

exile aroused the interest of the US-American representatives in Mexico City who had been alerted to Prieto's speech by the State Department in Washington where a report in the Mexican right-wing oppositional newspaper *Excelsior* had been picked up.<sup>232</sup> Even though Prieto's remarks had been published in full by the Spanish socialist periodical *Adelante* in December 1946 (in fact, two days before Prieto had even given the speech), First Embassy Secretary Walter Washington still struggled to keep up with Prieto's new course more than a month later: "I am therefore endeavoring to obtain the complete text of his remarks. I have not thought it wise to indicate to Prieto himself that we are interested enough to want a copy of the statement, but I hope that I may obtain it through a newspaper source."<sup>233</sup> This considerable delay of information suggests, rightly or wrongly, that the US officials in the Mexican capital scarcely followed or even understood the Spanish republican politics of exile, even at a moment when the US government was itself about to embark on a similar course *vis-à-vis* the western European post-war governments, aiming at splitting off the communists from their more moderate socialist partners in Italy and France, thereby establishing the ideological *tableau* of Cold War politics for decades to come.

During the early months of 1947, one of the most popular venues for the German-speaking community of exile in the Mexican capital city was increasingly used by their Spanish anti-fascist political brothers-in-arms. After the departure of the most prominent political and cultural protagonists of the German-speaking exile community, the *Schiefersaal* (or *Sala Mendelssohn*) on the first floor of the *Casa Schiefer* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21 hosted a succession of public meetings, first on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January, in protest against political murder and other violent oppressive measures under the Franco regime. At this meeting Vicente Gaspar, in the name of the Spanish commission of the FOARE, denounced the recent crimes of the Spanish regime and warned against any attempts at creating a modified fascist dictatorship in Spain which might see Franco himself taking a less conspicuous back seat in Spanish politics. Víctor Basuri spoke for the *Solidaridad de Obreros Vascos* and added a tone of catholic Basque nationalism to the proceedings.<sup>234</sup> The meeting coincided with a campaign of like-minded petitions to the US-American and British embassies in Mexico City as well as the Mexican president Miguel Alemán and the United Nations spearheaded by the Mexican trade unions under the direction of Vicente Lombardo Toledano.<sup>235</sup> On

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232 See the letter from Outerbridge Horsey to First Embassy Secretary Washington (10 Jan 1947) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 800 Internal Affairs, s. fol.

233 Message by the First Secretary to the US Embassy S. Walter Washington to „Mr. Horsey“ (20 Jan 1947) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 800, s. fol.; the full text was finally transmitted to Washington on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, see the dispatch no. 2593 (28 Jan 1947) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 800, s. fol.

234 „Mitin de protesta en México contra el asesinato de Llerandí, Isasa y Biedma“, *España Popular* VIII/330 (24 Jan 1947), p. 2.

235 „Toda la democracia mexicana protesta contra los brutales crímenes franquistas“, *ibid.*

the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, Luis Zapirain appeared at the same venue to address a meeting about the policies of the Basque Communist Party presided over by Ricardo Castellote.<sup>236</sup> Supported by the presence of Felipe Arconada for the PCE, Luis García Lago for the PSUC, Dionisio Encina for the PCM, Germán Iñurrategui for the Basque government-in-exile, and Luis Aritiodurtena for the *Acción Nacionalista Vasca*, Zapirain stressed the notion of unity, the key role of the Basque proletariat for the liberation of the province, and emphasised the importance of the unanimous support for the anti-fascist struggle and its international dimension.<sup>237</sup> But the venue of the *Sala Schiefer* also continued to serve events of a cultural nature, organised by diverse political backgrounds, for example of the 19<sup>th</sup> of April when the movement *Tierra y Libertad* invited the public to a guitar recital by Pepe Hurtado, accompanied by the flamenco singer Niño del Brillante and other artists such as the singer María del Carmen, the guitarist Paco Miller, and the pianist Paquita Martínez.<sup>238</sup> For the 7<sup>th</sup> of June, the anarchist journal *Solidaridad Obrera* announced another concert by the pianist Violeta Rillo at the same venue.<sup>239</sup> Thus, the *Sala Schiefer* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 21 hosted a range of events originating from diverse backgrounds of the political spectrum of the transnational politics of exile in Mexico City.

During 1947, the by now customary calendar of Spanish-republican political events across the Mexican capital continued beginning in February with a commemoration of the victorious Popular Front of 1936. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, the communist-dominated *Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas* congregated in the conference hall of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*. Presided over by Dr. Manuel Márquez, the socialist member of the *Cortes* and president of the *Centro Andaluz Gabriel Morón*, Felipe Arconada for the PCE, Odón de Buen for the FUEDE, and Néstor de Buen representing the youth sports association, the JSU's secretary general José Diéguez pointed out that the JSU should not be seen as an organisation of exile but as an integral part of the struggle conducted to remove Franco from power in Spain. Felipe Arconada provided a broader political perspective of a necessary alliance of all anti-fascist forces of Spain and emphasized:

[...] the Republic has a new government which is not yet a government of broad national concentration for which we have fought, since important anti-Franco sectors are missing. However, its

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236 „Gran Conferencia“, *ibid.* VIII/331 (31 Jan 1947), p. 3.

237 „El P. Comunista de Euzkadi, ante los problemas del pueblo vasco“, *ibid.* VIII/333 (14 Feb 1947), p. 2.

238 „Sala de Concierto Schiefer“, *Solidaridad Obrera* V/104 (31 Mar 1947), p. 4; the paper mistakenly announced the venue as located at the no. 50 of calle Venustiano Carranza which was the location of *Solidaridad Obrera*'s own editorial offices.

239 „Gran recital del piano“, *Solidaridad Obrera* V/105 (17 May 1947), p. 2.

constitution represents a clear triumph over those who wanted to erase the Republic and its institutions, over those who wanted to pulverise the republican unity and [the unity] of the labour movement inside and outside [of Spain], over those who wanted the Republic left without representation in the international sphere. We consider the Government of the Republic as a bastion, as a defensive trench against Francoism, as a command post of unity and of the fight against Franco and the Falange [...]<sup>240</sup>

Arconada referred to the new Spanish republican government-in-exile led by the socialist Rodolfo Llopis who had replaced José Giral after the latter's coalition had collapsed in late January 1947. Llopis had maintained the alliance with the Spanish communists which kept the rhetoric of their events in Mexico City firmly in line with the claim to constitutional legitimacy of the Spanish government-in-exile.

The JSU continued their meetings at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* for another three days before the FOARE marked the anniversary of the electoral victory of the Spanish *Frente Popular* of 1936 at the *Tribuna Monumental* in Chapultépec Park on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February. According to the communist journal *España Popular*, “thousands of enthusiastic spectators” attended the gathering presided over by Fernando Carmona of the FOARE, the Spanish republican ambassador Luis Nicolau d’Olwer alongside his Chilean counterpart Héctor Arancibia Lago, Dr. Manuel Márquez as president of the Spanish section of the FOARE accompanied by his wife Dr. Trinidad Arroyo, and other representatives of the pro-Soviet Left. The event also featured an artistic performance by the actors Ángel Garasa and Pituka de Foronda as well as musical contributions by the *Orquesta Típica de la Ciudad de México* and the *Agrupación Musical Madrid* directed by Pedro Mendizabal. Nicolau d’Olwer formulated the key demands of the Spanish republicans in exile thus: “Once more we repeat, addressing the United Nations: we do not ask for a foreign intervention to re-establish the republic in Spain. What we ask for – and justice is on our side – is that the obstacles be removed which foreign nations have put in place and which prevent the Spanish people from the free exercise of their sovereignty.”<sup>241</sup> Similar statements in support of the new government-in-exile under Rodolfo Llopis were made at another meeting between the PCE, PSUC. and the PCM at the *Teatro de Telefonistas* at Calzada Manuel Villalongín no. 50 in the district of *Cuauhtémoc* on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February.<sup>242</sup> Furthermore, the congress of the Mexican trade union CTM held between the 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of March 1947 demonstrated prominently the solidarity which the CTM maintained with the Spanish republican cause, as a

240 „Una gran asamblea de las JSU“, *España Popular* VIII/334 (21 Feb 1947), p. 2.

241 „Magnífico acto en México, en conmemoración del 16 de febrero“, *ibid.*

242 „Un gran mitin del Partido Comunista de España en México“, *España Popular* VIII/335 (28 Feb 1947), p. 2.

representative of the FOARE was invited to speak on the opening day of the proceedings on behalf of the Spanish republicans in exile. On this occasion, the notion of “foreign powers” that prevented the fall of the Franco regime and the restoration of the Spanish Republic was spelled out in unmistakable clarity and directed at “the United States and the British Empire because of their support that they offer to the Franco regime which is shaken by the bankruptcy of its economy [...]”.<sup>243</sup> Clearly, the Spanish republican pro-Soviet Left was prepared to step up its rhetoric according to the unfolding global confrontation of the Cold War which had a considerable impact on the perception and the viability of the Spanish republican cause in exile in Mexico City.

So it comes at no surprise that the annual celebrations of the anniversary of the Spanish Republic of 1931 took place at separate events according to ideological persuasion in different parts of the Mexican capital. The unifying element across the Spanish republican political spectrum was the presence of the republican ambassador Luis Nicolau d’Olwer. The FOARE gathered its supporters in the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup> of April at the *Hemiciclo Juventino Rosas* in the Chapultepec Park where d’Olwer shared the stage with the president of FOARE José Mancisidor, the CTM secretary Fernando Amilpa, the secretary general of the PCM Dionisio Encina, and Dr. Manuel Márquez representing the Spanish section of the FOARE. After speeches by the journalist Arturo Mori, the engineer Adolfo Vázquez Humasqué of the *Izquierda Republicana*, the deputies of the *Cortes* Alfonso Pazos (*Unión Republicana*) and Alberto Fernández Ballesteros (Liberal), and Luis García Lago for the PSUC, the leader of the Mexican exile group of the PCE, Felipe Arconada, re-emphasised the unequivocal republican commitment of those present: “For our people, for Spain, there can be no other solution than the Republic. Neither Franco, nor the rule of any class. Neither a dynastic succession of the Bourbons, which the people rejected with disgust on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1931, nor of a Carlist branch because of which Spain saw a constant civil war during the past century.” He also referred to the separate commemorations of the anniversary of the Republic to which the Spanish communists had not been invited while claiming that “nobody has the right to present this day – the 14<sup>th</sup> of April – as a victory [of a particular group], because if anyone has that right it is the working class and the people.” Amilpa and Mancisidor reiterated their denunciation of political terror under Franco, demanded action by the United Nations, and renewed their general solidarity and support for the Spanish republican cause.<sup>244</sup> The same evening of the 13<sup>th</sup> of April, the *Centro Republicano Español* at calle Tacuba no. 15 staged a celebratory dinner where Luis Nicolau d’Olwer joined the president of the *Centro Republicano* Carlos Esplá, republican ex-minister Félix Gordón Ordás, general Llano de la Encomienda, consul Pablo de Tremoya, the

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243 Memorandum on the IV National Congress of the CTM by Inspector 5 (N.A.O.) and Inspector 37 (A.O.A.) (28 Mar 1947) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 96, exp. 1, fol. 117.

244 „Millares de emigrados reafirmaron su fé y su espíritu de lucha para reconquistar la República“, *España Popular* VIII/342 (18 Apr 1947), p. 2.

delegate of the Basque government in exile Germán Iñurrategui, Pedro Vargas for the *Izquierda Republicana*, and José Andreu Abelló and Antonio María Sbert for the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*. The poet Antonio Robles recited from the works of Antonio Machado, and Carlos Esplá contributed “a few magnificent pages” before d’Olwer concluded with a re-affirmation of the Spanish Republic and an homage to Mexico and to those countries that equally recognised the republican government-in-exile.<sup>245</sup> The following day, the Spanish embassy building at calle Londres no. 7 in the district of *Juárez* provided the venue for two distinct receptions: from noon to 2 o’clock, ambassador d’Olwer hosted a “public reception attended by representatives and personalities of the republican emigration”, while in the evening the embassy welcomed representatives of the Mexican government, intellectuals, and trade unionists as well as members of the diplomatic corps in Mexico City.<sup>246</sup>

Two weeks later, Indalecio Prieto gave his by now customary speech at the *Centro Republicano Español* on the evening of the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, the eve of May Day, which happened to be his own birthday. In it, Prieto reiterated his rejection of the Spanish republican government in exile as an “obstacle”, now under his socialist party comrade Rodolfo Llopis just as previously under his predecessor José Giral. Instead, he continued to advertise his proposal of a constitutional referendum in Spain, and he emphasised his understanding of Spain as a democratic “occidental” nation opposed to all attempts by the Kremlin to “orientalise” it.<sup>247</sup> The fact that Prieto then went on to explore possible areas of “cohabitation” with nationalist forces in Spain, even some “overlap” between his own thought and that of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the founder of the Spanish *Falange*, unsurprisingly provoked an angry protest from among the Spanish communists in Mexico. Their journal *España Popular* dissected his speech and accused Prieto of abandoning all principles of republicanism and socialism, even of sympathies with fascism. In their eyes, Prieto’s vision of an occidental “Spanish Solidarity”, based upon the principles of Spanish sovereignty, a European partnership with France, Italy, and Portugal under US-American leadership, access to US-American economic aid under the European Recovery Program, and the suspension of all industrial action amounted to a transformation of Spain into a “Yankee colony”.<sup>248</sup> With Prieto’s commitment to the US-American leadership of the West, the ideological confrontation between East and West was by now firmly established across the Spanish emigration in Mexico

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245 „XVI Aniversario – conmemoración del 14 de abril“, *Adelante* VI/122 (15 Apr 1947), p. 4.

246 „Actos en la embajada de la República, en México“, *España Popular* VIII/342 (18 Apr 1947), p. 2; „Conmemoración del 14 de abril“, *Adelante* VI/122 (15 Apr 1947), p. 4.

247 „Posibilidades de Convivencia pacífica en España. Discurso de Indalecio Prieto, pronunciado el 30 de abril 1947“, *Adelante* VI/123 (15 May 1947), pp. 1-2.

248 „Prieto predica el entendimiento con Falange y la conversión de España en colonia yanqui“, *España Popular* VIII/347 (23 May 1947), p. 2.

City.<sup>249</sup> The participation of the Spanish pro-Soviet faction of political parties and trade unions in the May Day demonstrations in the heart of the Mexican capital underlined the very public ideological confrontation among the Spanish exile community.<sup>250</sup> During the spring and summer, their organisations took to the stages of the Mexican capital and dominated the political scene of Spanish exile politics in Mexico City. From the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1947, the *Teatro de Telefonistas* at Calzada Manuel Villalongín no. 50 hosted the 5<sup>th</sup> plenary session of the PCE and its Catalan sister party PSUC. The main political theme of Felipe Arconada's speech was the celebration and support of the anti-fascist resistance movement inside Spain and the reverence paid to Dolores "La Pasionaria" Ibarruri, Spanish communist party leader in exile in France. Blas Manrique confirmed the solidarity in the name of the PCM. The meeting was accompanied by musical performances of the *Agrupación Musical Madrid*.<sup>251</sup> The following week, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May, the pro-Soviet wing of the UGT congregated at the *Teatro de Periodistas* at calle Zaragoza no. 8 in the district of *Gerrero* to express their solidarity with the strike movement of Bilbao.<sup>252</sup> On the 13<sup>th</sup> of June, the FOARE held a meeting at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* where the need to raise substantial financial resources in support of the Spanish resistance movement was noted, alongside a renewed campaign for the Spanish republican cause via Latin American governments (above all, Cuba) and the United Nations. The FOARE, supported by its allies from among the Mexican trade unions, agreed to plan for another prominent and public *Convención de Solidaridad* in Mexico City by early October.<sup>253</sup>

The *Convención de Solidaridad* of 1947 was, in fact, postponed until late November. In August, the institutional framework for Spanish republican politics in exile had changed dramatically with the retreat of the communists from the

249 Interestingly, the US embassy seems to have gathered information about Prieto's speech not from the Spanish exile press in Mexico City but from the Mexican right-wing journal *Excélsior* (2 May 1947) which, unsurprisingly, reported much more favourably on his ideas; see the enclosed newspaper clipping from dispatch no. 3594 (7 May 1947) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 800 Internal Affairs, s. fol.

250 See „Una gran columna republicana española en la manifestación del primero Mayo“, *España Popular* VIII/344 (2 May 1947), p. 2; pictures in *España Popular* VIII/345 (9 May 1947), pp. 3-4.

251 „El V Pleno de los comunistas españoles en México: Entusiasmo y combatividad para reforzar la lucha por la derrota de Franco y por la victoria de la República“, *España Popular* VIII/345 (9 May 1947), pp. 1-2; „Información final sobre el V Pleno en México“, *España Popular* VIII/346 (16 May 1947), p. 2.

252 „Llamamiento y Asamblea del Grupo Local de la UGT“, *España Popular* VIII/346 (16 May 1947), p. 1.; „Asamblea del Grupo Local de la UGT. Constitución de una comisión de solidaridad“, *España Popular* VIII/347 (23 May 1947), p. 2.

253 „El gran Pleno Nacional de la FOARE. La democracia mexicana eleva su voz contra el terror fascista en España. Adopción de importantes resoluciones“, *España Popular* VIII/351 (20 Jun 1947), p. 2.



government-in-exile after the PSOE had adopted a strictly anti-communist course which led to the collapse of the government of Rodolfo Llopió and his replacement by Álvaro de Albornoz of the *Izquierda Republicana*.<sup>254</sup> This separation from the Spanish communists who still maintained their collaboration with the republican government-in-exile opened up opportunities for Indalecio Prieto and the Spanish socialists to establish contacts with the Spanish monarchists in opposition to Franco to explore the possibility of replacing his regime with a compromise bridging the gap between republicans and monarchists. This initiative would later result in the *Pacto de San Juan de Luz* of 1948 and mark the end of the republican consensus in exile.<sup>255</sup> While Prieto travelled to London for talks with former CEDA leader José María Gil-Robles who tried to rally the right-wing monarchists into opposition to Franco<sup>256</sup>, the organisers of the republican *Convención de Solidaridad* in Mexico City were systematically trying to raise public attention to their meeting with a series of events staged by FOARE and the PCE – all this under the watchful eye of the US intelligence services. An internal report by the Central Intelligence Group (CIG) identified five key issues to be promoted by the convention: an appeal to the UN to break relations with the Franco regime, highlighting the ongoing human rights violations by the Franco regime, to support the new government-in-exile of Álvaro de Albornoz and to demand the inclusion of a communist politician in that government (either Dolores Ibarruri or Vicente Uribe) until the communists would be able to take over the representation of Spanish republicans in exile (the CIG even expected Juan Negrín to return to the front line of Spanish exile politics), to reject all attempts by Prieto to form a common *Junta* with the Spanish monarchists, and to organise support for the *guerrilla* activities in Spain.<sup>257</sup> On the 18<sup>th</sup> of September, the FOARE held a reception for their president José Mancisidor on the occasion of his return from a trip to Europe and thereby demonstrated the existing

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254 See: Xavier Flores: „El gobierno de la República en el exilio. Crónica de un imposible retorno”, *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, Serie V, Historia Contemporánea 14 (2011), pp. 309-50, esp. 328-31.

255 For a more detailed analysis of the PSOE’s relationship with the Spanish monarchists see Carlos Luis Hernando Noguera: *El PSOE y la Monarquía: de la posguerra a la transición* (Madrid, 2013), esp. ch. 2.

256 See: Carlos Luis Hernando Noguera: „Buscando el Compromiso: la negociación del Pacto de San Juan de Luz”, *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, Serie V, Historia Contemporánea 18 (2006), pp. 225-44, esp. 229-31; Miguel Ángel Yuste de Paz: „La República Española en el exilio y la alternativa monárquica a Franco desde el final de la II Guerra Mundial hasta la resolución de las Naciones Unidas de noviembre de 1950”, *ibid.*, pp. 245-60. Unsurprisingly, such an initiative was violently denounced in the Spanish communist press in Mexico: „Prieto acusado de »traición infame« con sus propios palabras”, *España Popular* VIII/365 (26 Sep 1947), p. 2.

257 See the report by the Central Intelligence Group (forerunner of the CIA): „Fourth Congress of FOARE” (3 Oct 1947), p. 1, at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R001000440007-9.pdf>; cf. also: memorandum “Plans for FOARE Convention” (12 Nov 1947), <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R001000820001-3.pdf>

international support for the Spanish republican cause: among the representatives of the diplomatic corps in the Mexican capital were the *Chargé d’Affaires* of the Soviet embassy Ivan Kumarian, the second secretary of the Polish Legation Józef Welker, Hinko Razpor as *Chargé d’Affaires* of the Yugoslavian embassy, colonel Juan B. Gómez of the Francisco Javier Mina Society, Bruno Pitha for the Czechoslovakian Legation, José Daniel Crespo from the embassy of Panama, and leading representatives of the Mexican and Spanish Left in Mexico City: Ricardo Castellote and Enrique Arreguín of the FOARE, Felipe Arconada for the PCE, and José Marroquín of the CTAL.<sup>258</sup> On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, the leadership of FOARE staged a press conference with a similarly international audience at the restaurant “Atlas” at Avenida San Juan de Letrán no. 21-B to promote the upcoming *Convención de Solidaridad*.<sup>259</sup> The PCE, for their part, held instructive “discussion meetings” at the *Teatro de Trabajadores de Periódicos* at calle Zaragoza no. 8 in the district of *Guerrero* on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of October.<sup>260</sup>

Between the 26<sup>th</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1947, the *IV Convención de Solidaridad* took place in the *Teatro de Telefonistas* at Calzada Manuel Villalongín no. 50 in the north of the district of *Cuauhtémoc*. In their invitation, FOARE president José Mancisidor, vice-president Enrique Arreguín, secretary general Jesús Lazcano, treasurer Fernando H. Carmona, and spokesman Manuel Popoca presented fascism in Spain as a regime in terminal crisis which sought to replace the dictatorship with a monarchist compromise. The FOARE urged Mexicans to stay at the side of the Spanish republicans, argued in favour of republican unity, demanded the freedom of all political prisoners in Spain, and warned against a fascist infiltration of Mexico as a consequence of economic relations with Francoist Spain. The convention was to present a report on the current situation in Spain, on the initiatives in support of the victims of the Spanish dictatorship, to reinforce the political solidarity with the republican Spanish institutions, and planned to elect a new national executive committee.<sup>261</sup> On the 26<sup>th</sup> of November, the FOARE leadership was joined by leading personalities of the Mexican and Spanish Left, among them Alberto Bremauntz as member of the Supreme Court, senator Manuel Palacios, PCM secretary general Dinisio Encina, Antonio Huitrón as representative of the governing state party PRI, numerous representatives of all sectors of the Mexican trade union movement, Felipe Arconada of the PCE and Luis García Lago of the PSUC, secretaries Kumarian and Ladzhin of the Soviet embassy, Bruno Pitha of the Czechoslovakian embassy, colonel Józef Welker of

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258 Ibid.; cf. „Agasajo al profesor Mancisidor“, *España Popular* VIII/365 (26 Sep 1947), p. 2.

259 „Conferencia de Prensa de la FOARE“, *ibid.*; cf. the report by the CIG: „Fourth Congress of FOARE“ (3 Oct 1947), p. 2.

260 „Asamblea de Discusión del P.C. de España en México“, *España Popular* VIII/367 (10 Oct 1947), p. 2.

261 „IV Convención Nacional de Solidaridad con la República Española. Convocatoria oficial“ (17 Oct 1947) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2985, 800 Internal Affairs, s. fol.

the Polish Legation, the ambassador of Panama, and the Spanish republican ambassador Luis Nicolau d'Olwer.<sup>262</sup> After three days of reports about the situation in Spain, public denunciations of crimes against humanity, and calls for international solidarity, the convention of about 500 delegates concluded with a resolution which in no uncertain terms positioned the Spanish republican cause in direct opposition not only to Prieto's attempts at a compromise solution with the Spanish right-wing monarchists but also to the leading powers of the Western coalition as it entered the global confrontation with the Soviet-dominated East.

The convention states [...] that the imperialist groups of the United States and England are striving to shore up the slavery and dependency of Spain according to their dark designs for world domination which, as a result, prevent the democratic rebirth of Spain. They try to rescue the fascist essence of the regime and substitute Franco with a Francoism without Franco. As those plans are met by the docile support and submission of the reactionary Spanish forces and defeatist elements in the republican camp, it is therefore necessary that the forces friendly to the Spanish people do their share to frustrate such intentions, denouncing the intrigues and machinations of those who conspire against the sovereignty and independence of Spain.<sup>263</sup>

Two weeks later, the Spanish communists used the same venue of the *Teatro de Telefonistas* for a celebratory meeting in honour of Dolores "La Pasionaria" Ibaruri on the occasion of her 52<sup>nd</sup> birthday. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, the leadership of the PCE and the PSUC gathered under the flags of the Spanish Republic, the communist party, the national banners of the Basques, Catalonia, and Galicia, and tied up the Spanish republican cause with the politics of the communist Zhdanov doctrine.<sup>264</sup> Felipe Arconada explicitly embraced the Belgrade declaration of the nine communist parties (the Cominform) and reiterated its significance for the situation of Spanish republicanism, now understood as a factor in the global confrontation between the two super-powers: "More and more, the problem of Spain merges with the struggle of the anti-imperialist and democratic forces against the plans of the imperialist forces that wish to maintain reactionary and fascist regimes for their goal of the subjugation of the world."<sup>265</sup> During the autumn of 1947, the Spanish communists and their allies of the FOARE and the Mexican trade union movement actively tried to claim the political and ideological control over the Spanish republican cause, an

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262 „Gran éxito de la IV Convención de Solidaridad mexicana con el pueblo español“, *España Popular* VIII/375 (5 Dec 1947), p. 1 & 2.

263 „Resolución de la Convención“, *ibid.*, p. 1.

264 „Magnífico y cariñoso homenaje a Dolores Ibaruri, guía de los trabajadores y del pueblo de España“, *España Popular* VIII/376 (12 Dec 1947), p. 1.

265 „El discurso del camarada Arconada“, *ibid.*, p. 2.

opportunity which opened up since the monarchist contacts of the Spanish socialists (under the direction of Indalecio Prieto) created a divided arena of Spanish exile politics as part of the unfolding Cold War. The impression that the Spanish communists were able to establish in Mexico City was that of a political hegemony over Spanish republican politics in exile, not the least as their celebration of Dolores Ibarruri presented fresh recruits for the communist party from among the Spanish republican exile in the city: Veneranda G. Manzano, Luis Fernández, Saturnino Gimeno, and Julio Luelmo addressed the meeting with short speeches declaring their political conversion to the communist party.<sup>266</sup>

Alongside the gradual disintegration of Spanish republicanism in exile during the onset of the global confrontation of the Cold War, another political group emerged from the left-wing opposition to the re-constructed government of the Spanish Republic in exile. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 1948, the Mexican section of *España Combatiente* met at the *Centro Andaluz* at calle Bolívar no. 57 in the city centre of Mexico City. The meeting was mainly concerned with statutory questions which would be debated at the congress of *España Combatiente* in Paris later that month.<sup>267</sup> Furthermore, the group intended to maintain an equal distance from both emerging international power blocks dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union, respectively. The leadership in Mexico consisted mainly of left-wing socialists of the *Círculo Cultural "Jaime Vera"*: Dr. Vicente Sarmiento as president of the meeting (in October 1942, he had been expelled from the *Círculo Cultural "Pablo Iglesias"* of the *prietistas* for failing to pay his contributions<sup>268</sup>), Enrique Angulo and Mariano Moreno Mateo of the *Círculo "Jaime Vera"*, the local UGT president Nicolás Jiménez Molina and UGT treasurer José Moreno Remacha (the latter was also president of the *Círculo "Jaime Vera"*), as well as the naval doctor and erstwhile spokesman for the *Unión Nacional Española*, Dr. Luis Martín Gromaz. The broader aim of *España Combatiente*, so their president Julio Álvarez del Vayo and secretary Antonio Velao had proclaimed in Paris at the end of 1947, was to campaign, "with the urgency which the current situation demands, [for] the establishment of a government formed according to the formula which during the war was regarded as the only [one] logical and possible and which preserves its complete validity until Spain shall be liberated: a government in which all political parties and union organisations loyal to the Republic appear and from which shall only be excluded those which, by way of abandoning the republican position, have excluded themselves."<sup>269</sup> The origins of the initiative for *España Combatiente* can be traced back to the initial days of José Giral's government-in-exile of 1945 when the

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266 „Salutaciones de los nuevos militantes“, *ibid.*

267 „España Combatiente se reúne“, *El Socialista* VI/36 (Jan 1948), p. 6; cf. the minutes of the meeting (3 Jan 1948) at BNAH, Archivo Histórico, fondo CTARE, Papeles Suelos, exp. 6598, s.fol.

268 „Círculo Pablo Iglesias – bajas en la Asamblea del 25 de octubre de 1942“, *Adelante* II/26 (15 Feb 1943), p. 2.

frustrated socialist followers of Juan Negrín began to explore the possibility of reassembling the broad national front coalition of Negrín's government.<sup>270</sup> The failure of Giral's government in 1947 had reignited such desires among the *Círculo "Jaime Vera"*. While Julio Álvarez del Vayo publicly rejected the government of Rodolfo Llopis from New York in April<sup>271</sup>, a preliminary meeting was held in Mexico City at calle Palma no. 30-112 in the city centre, organised by the local secretary of *España Combatiente*, Segundo Blanco.<sup>272</sup> The group constituted itself with Vicente Sarmiento as president, Luis Martín Gromaz as vice-president, while Segundo Blanco served as secretary and José Moreno Remacha as treasurer. A bulletin *España Combatiente* and a series of stand-alone publications disseminated the texts and activities of the group, among them a series of speeches given by Sarmiento, Gromaz, and Blanco in Mexico City on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 1947 which were directed mainly against Indalecio Prieto and all other attempts at a pragmatic compromise across the ideological factions of Spanish politics in exile which could open up an opportunity of bringing the Franco regime in Spain to an end. *España Combatiente* did not indulge in the rhetoric of compromise:

Fellow countrymen and friends: we will fight for the Republic until the end. The ideal and [our] conscience demand it. Come what may, may the circumstances be what they may be, as free men we will fight with all our powers for the freedom of our people. We will fight however we can, and wherever it may be, and, for the record, we do not and will not turn against any government as long as the government properly defends the Republic. We will always be on the side of the institutional powers and against those who work to surrender them.<sup>273</sup>

While insisting in the continuing legitimacy of the republican constitution of 1931, *España Combatiente* maintained its relative independence, both in terms of organisation and topographical manifestation, from the activities of the communist-dominated faction of Spanish republicanism in Mexico City. Apart from its publications, the group occasionally staged public events such as a speech

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269 „Declaración de España Combatiente“, *El Socialista* VI/36 (Jan 1948), p. 5.

270 See the correspondence and initial proposals for the organisation (1945-46) at FPI, Archivo Particular Ramón Lamonedá Fernández, ARLF 171-47, fols. 1-24.

271 „Confía en que caerá“, press report (8 Apr 1947) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 47, fol. 19.

272 „Documento del Círculo Cultural »Jaime Vera«. Sugerencias para la constitución de »España Combatiente«“ (2 Apr 1947) and the letter by Segundo Blanco to the *Círculo „Jaime Vera“* (9 May 1947) at BNAH, Archivo Histórico, fondo CTARE, Papeles Sueltos, exp. 6598, s.fols.

273 Segundo Blanco, speech on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 1947, in: *Por la República, Publicaciones de España Combatiente, sección de México*, no. 14 (México D.F., 1947), pp. 69-70.

of its president Julio Álvarez del Vayo in November 1949 at the *Teatro de Telefonistas* at Calzada Manuel Villalongín no. 50 in the north of the district of *Cuauhtémoc* which displayed the long-standing commitment of *España Combatiente* to an uncompromising insistence on the Spanish republican cause under increasingly difficult circumstances of international politics.<sup>274</sup>

The Spanish republican community of exile in Mexico could further rely on the support of their Mexican political allies, above all the FOARE and the leadership of the CTAL, the Latin American trade union movement. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1949, both organisations called a meeting of reaffirmation of their commitment to the Spanish republican cause at the seat of the Union of Newspaper Employees at calle Zaragoza no. 8 in the district of *Guerrero*. At 8 o'clock in the evening, around 300 attendees, mostly Spanish, had arrived to listen to the speakers: the Spanish communist Ricardo Castellote as president of the meeting, Federico Muñoz Otañón for the Miners' Union, the secretary general of the Union of Graphical Arts Enrique Ahumada, Eliseo Martínez Zebada as First Secretary of the Guatemalan embassy, José Minauro for the American Confederation of Teachers, and, finally, José Mancisidor for the FOARE who "had to wait a few minutes before he could commence with his speech, as he was received with a long and loud ovation." Placing the Spanish republican cause in its international context, Mancisidor emphasised the alliance with the rising fortunes of communist powers across the world, and the observers of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* noted that he was quoting "the example of the defeat of Chiang-Kai-shek and the triumphant advance of the Chinese communist armies. (lively applause) Furthermore he called Russia the »vanguard of all the peoples of the world« and accused the United States, England etc. of having violated the agreements of San Francisco and Potsdam, making a mockery of the other democratic nations."<sup>275</sup> During the spring of 1949, the Spanish republican community of exile in Mexico needed to position itself *vis-à-vis* the unfolding global confrontation of the Cold War. After the first World Congress of Partisans for Peace, dominated by the influence of international communism, had taken place in Paris during April, the leadership of *España Combatiente* in Mexico discussed the presence of three representatives of *España Combatiente* at the congress in Paris, among them Elfidio Alonso and Ángel Galarza, at a meeting at calle Palma 30-112 on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 1949. Their presence at the Paris congress appeared to contradict the group's insistence the previous year to stay clear of the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, as Vicente

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274 See the press reports „Álvarez del Vayo trató de manera amplia la cuestión española“, *El Nacional* (12 Nov 1949), press report „El Problema de España“ (11 Nov 1949) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 49, fol. 103; cf. also „Por una ofensiva republicana. España Combatiente“, *El Socialista* VII/50 (Aug 1949), p. 1.

275 Report on CTAL/FOARE meeting by Joaquín Rodríguez Rivero and Enrique Alba Calderón (13 May 1949) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 18, exp. 11, fols. 23-8, quote on fols. 25-6; see also: „Resolución aprobada en el mitin del apoyo al la democracia española celebrado en México el día 12 de mayo de 1949“, *ibid.*, fol. 29.

Sarmiento pointed out. Luis Martín Gromaz, on the other hand, would not characterise the World Peace Council *per se* as communist and declared he would be happy to cooperate with the organisation. Opinions remained divided over the relationship with the World Peace Council which, in fact, contained the persisting question over the possibility of cooperation of Spanish republicans with the representatives of international communism.<sup>276</sup> When two weeks later, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, Martín Gromaz reported his active involvement in a group around José Giral and Wenceslao Roces who were in the process of setting up a local committee of the Congress for Peace in Mexico, the debate resulted in a formal resolution of incompatibility of both organisations, and Martín Gromaz left (while letting know that Dr. Manuel Márquez had declared his solidarity with his position and, therefore, would also no longer participate in *España Combatiente*).<sup>277</sup> The Cold War now ran right through the Spanish republican organisations in Mexico City and made it increasingly difficult to maintain positions of equidistant non-alignment.

In the run-up to the Congress for Peace in Mexico City, the Spanish socialists of the *Agrupación Socialista*, for their part, staged an evening in honour of the French socialist Paul Rivet at the *Centro Republicano Español* in the evening of the 1<sup>st</sup> of September. The event was hosted by Indalecio Prieto, Antonio Cañizares, Alejandro Otero, and Manuel Albar as president and secretary of the PSOE faction in Mexico, alongside Belarmino Tomás and Pedro García of the UGT. Prieto introduced Rivet as the representative of the French Republic and as a fellow socialist. Rivet laid out his own vision of a future peace which would need to end a war which had begun in Spain in 1936 as an ideological war between democracy and the “totalitarian spirit”. That future peace would imply “abandoning national sovereignty in favour of a super-state, equipped with the necessary power to instill respect in its decisions and to implement them. It must be accompanied by military disarmament on the national level, putting an end to both violent and economic imperialism.” Rivet painted an idealised picture of international economic aid (doubtlessly referring to the US-American European Recovery Program) and socially progressive policies “to the point of erasing the very concept of class struggle.”<sup>278</sup> This programme outlined a utopian vision of a progressive European social democracy, firmly opposed to the “totalitarian spirit” and thereby unequivocally rejecting the Zhdanov doctrine.

The Continental American Congress for Peace took place in Mexico City between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1949 – just days after the Soviet Union had exploded its first nuclear weapon, an event which remained a closely guarded

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276 See the minutes of the meeting of *España Combatiente* of the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 1949 at BNAH, Archivo Histórico, fondo CTARE, Papeles Sueltos, exp. 6598, s.fols.

277 See the minutes of the meeting of 1<sup>st</sup> of June 1949, *ibid*.

278 „Para España también ha sonado ya la hora de la liberación“ (report by Juan B. Climent), *El Nacional* (2 Sep 1949).

secret until the end of the month when US president Truman alerted the world public. In his keynote address at the *Arena México*, Vicente Lombardo Toledano laid out the Manichean distinction of the Zhdanov doctrine that governed the proceedings of the congress:

The governments which act in accordance with the will of its people are also pacifist, though this fact does not indicate that they are followers of the government of the USSR or display any communist tendencies. The only governments in favour of war are the vulgar lackeys of the great monopolies which bring about tragedy. The camps are well-defined and there is no way of escaping the dilemma which events have placed before every human being: whether to be in favour of peace or in favour of war. A neutral attitude towards war and peace is inconceivable, both in theory and in practice.<sup>279</sup>

The congress had managed to enlist an impressive group of sponsors from across the American continent, among them former Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas, former US vice-president Henry A. Wallace, Charlie Chaplin and the singer Paul Robeson, nobel laureates Thomas Mann and Gabriela Mistral, and the Spanish communist leader Dolores Ibaruri.<sup>280</sup> On the board of the presidium, José Giral assumed the representation of the Spanish republicans in exile across the American hemisphere.<sup>281</sup> In his short opening address, Giral characterised the Spanish republican constitution of 1931 as fundamentally pacifist, “but this pacifist sentiment has not prevented the Spaniards, who were forced out of their own country, from fighting alongside the democracies during the past World War, although some of them sometimes forget this.” Giral saw Spanish republicanism as an integral part of the World Peace Council initiative: “We are not asking this Congress to support and help us, because we are counting in advance on your fervent adhesion to our cause. For that, with our heartfelt salute, also comes, in advance, our expression of gratitude; which is not a return for a commodity received, but representative of our solidarity in the struggle for human well-being and dignity.”<sup>282</sup> The congress progressed over five days sub-divided into 10 sections in six different locations across the city: the buildings of the *Universidad Obrera* at calle Eliseo no. 11, the Miners’ Union building at calle República de

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279 *Paz en la Tierra con agrado del Pueblo. Discurso de Vicente Lombardo Toledano en el Congreso Continental Americano por la Paz* (México D.F., 1949), p. 16; cf. on Lombardo Toledano’s initiative in organising the Mexican Peace Congress of 1949 see: Patrick Iber: *Neither Peace nor Freedom: the cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge Mass., 2015), pp. 71-4.

280 „Presidencia de Honor“ at AGN, Fondo Presidente Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 324, exp. 433/503, s. fol.

281 „Mesa Directiva“, *ibid.*, s. fol.

282 „Saludo al Congreso. Por el Dr. José Giral, Presidente de la Delegación Española“, *ibid.*, s. fol.



Colombia no. 43, the seat of the Latin American Confederation of Trade Unions (CTAL) at the Plaza de la República next to the *Monumento a la Revolución*, the building of the *Unión General de Obreros y Campesinos de México* (UGOCM) at calle Netzahualcóyotl no. 9, and the offices of the organising committee of the congress at Avenida Madero no. 47. The last section, in which the Spanish republicans were invited to present their case, was dedicated to those “persecuted by fascism” (or the “victims of fascism”) and took place at the FOARE headquarters at calle Bucareli no. 12-308, and the president of FOARE, José Mancisidor, hosted the section as member of the presiding panel.<sup>283</sup> In a more elaborate speech, Giral again addressed the congress on behalf of the Spanish republicans, reiterating an unequivocal rejection of any compromise with the monarchists or any other right-wing political currents of Spain: The “sell-outs” and “defeatists”, in his view, were “serving interests opposed to our nation, they want a Franquismo without Franco, disguised as a monarchy or dressed up as something else; that is to say, a regime which, domestically, continues to block the path of Spain towards democracy and which, internationally, maintains the vassal position of Francoism vis-à-vis those forces which breed war, openly prepare it, and dream of subjugating the world under their domination.” Without mentioning the United States, Giral thus managed to insinuate an alliance between the US and the Franco regime to the detriment of the Spanish people. The cause of world peace, so Giral argued, logically demanded the removal of the Franco regime.<sup>284</sup> Wenceslao Roces, in his contribution, went a step further when he called Franco “the instrument of the war-mongering Anglo-North-American forces with the same servility of a vassal with which yesterday he behaved towards Italo-German fascism.” He saw Franco’s regime as part “of that shameless instrument of aggression which is called the Atlantic Treaty”, the “anti-Soviet, anti-democratic, that is to say fascist Western block”, a “colony of the Anglo-North-American war-mongers”. The people of Spain would “never take up arms against its best friends and most loyal allies, the Soviet Union, the popular democracies and the free nations, against the forces that guarantee democracy, progress and world peace, and, as something inseparable from this, the liberation of our homeland.”<sup>285</sup> Unlike Giral, Roces placed his strategic vision of Spanish republicanism during the early stages of the Cold War quite openly in the Soviet camp.

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283 „Locales donde funcionarían los Comités“ *ibid.*, s. fol.; „Mesa Directiva de cada una de las comisiones de trabajo del Congreso“, *ibid.*, s. fol.

284 „Discurso del Dr. José Giral, presidente de la delegación española“, *ibid.*, p. 3.

285 „Discurso pronunciado por Wenceslao Roces, secretario de la delegación española“, *ibid.*, pp. 1,2 & 4; Roces’ remarks stood in marked contrast to the expectations by the CIA which observed the strategy of the Cominform with regard to activities in Latin America and had expected that the Latin American communists would „replace their belligerent line with one of apparent inoffensiveness and should emphasize pacifism and broad social reform in order to attempt to regain the support of those individuals who formerly gave aid and comfort to the Communist front organisations.“, CIA memorandum on „Argentina/Latin America; Communist Party Program for Congress for Peace and Democracy in Mexico“ (8 Jun 1949), <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R002800460002-3.pdf>.

The Mexican Congress for Peace was followed three weeks later by a meeting organised by the Spanish republican Commission for Peace in Mexico. Conflicting sources exist with regard to the venue of the meeting of the 30<sup>th</sup> of September (either the *Teatro de Electricistas* at calle Artes no. 45 or the *Teatro de Telefonistas* at Calzada Manuel Villalongín no. 50).<sup>286</sup> The stage was presided over by, among others, Honorato de Castro who was now recorded as president of the Spanish republican Commission for Peace in Mexico, former republican prime minister José Giral, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez as former government minister of Cuba, Wenceslao Roces as secretary of the commission, the Mexican painter Diego Rivera, and FOARE president José Mancisidor. About 400 attendees listened to speeches by Roces, Mancisidor, Rodríguez, the Chilean communist deputy César Godoy Urrutia, the poet Juan Rejano who read a message of support by Pablo Neruda, and José Giral: “All, without exception, committed to the defense of the cause of the Spanish Republic, violently attacked the Franco regime the downfall of which they desire, thanked for the hospitality of Mexico and Cuba and Chile and other nations [...] they dealt with the situation created by the confrontation between the democracies called occidental and the popular [democracies]; they violently attacked the imperialist nations which once again try to go to war against the USSR, which they praised, as usual.” As the observer for the *Secretaría de Gobernación* noted: “It is noteworthy that not one of these speakers referred in any way to the government of Sr. Lic. Alemán.”<sup>287</sup> The Mexican government of Miguel Alemán had already cold-shouldered the Mexican Congress for Peace two weeks earlier and was now evidently maintaining a demonstrative distance from the pro-Soviet Spanish republicans, too – a significant shift away from the attitude of his predecessors and a clear indication of where the loyalties of the Mexican government would be anchored from now on.

The Spanish Committee for Peace also made its presence felt in the historic city centre of Mexico City, above all at the venue of the *Centro Cultural Republicano Andaluz* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 57. In February 1949, a protest meeting was held there against the granting of US-American loans to the Franco regime, and the date chosen was the anniversary of the Popular Front victory of 1936, the 16<sup>th</sup> of February. On this occasion, the Catalan parliamentarian José Folc y Folc, the engineer Adolfo Vázquez-Humasqué, the writer Juan Rejano, and José Giral publicly denounced the “shameful support of Francoism by the North-American reactionaries” and promoted the “creation of a powerful and extensive Movement for Peace among the Spanish republicans.”<sup>288</sup> In March

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286 See the press announcement „Acto de Republicanos Españoles, hoy a las 20 horas“, *El Nacional* (30 Sep 1949); and the surveillance report by an observer, „El Delegado“, of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* (1 Oct 1949) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 18, exp. 11, fol. 32.

287 Ibid., pp. 32-3.

288 „Comisión Republicana Española para la Defensa de la Paz“ at AEM, Acervo Histórico, Impresos Sueltos 3, fol. 19.

1950, a group of former *negrinistas* around Giral, Honorato de Castro, Wenceslao Roces, Mariano Ruiz Funes, Manuel Márquez, and Felipe Arconada published an “Appeal to the Mexican Public” to maintain and defend its commitment to the anti-fascist cause and to the right of asylum for the Spanish republicans.<sup>289</sup> During the summer of 1950, the outbreak of the Korean War finally cemented the ideological battlefronts of the Cold War for the coming four decades, and the global dimension of this confrontation led to a further disintegration of the Spanish exile community in Mexico City. Such fragmentation found its paradoxical expression in another initiative for a broader unification of Spanish republican forces in the Mexican capital: in the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 1950, the *Centro Cultural Republicano Andaluz* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 57 was the venue of a meeting of “more than 70” associates hosted by the law professor Julián Calvo Blanco, the poet León Felipe, the writer Juan Rejano, Alfonso Pazos of the *Unión Republicana*, Gabriel Morón and Antonio Pacheco of the PCE, and the accountant Marcial Frigolet Romero from the Spanish expatriate community in Mexico City. The purpose of the meeting was to transform the *Centro* into the *Casa de España Republicana*, a meeting place for “those Spanish residents in Mexico who love the republic, democracy, and peace, and who are enemies of Franco.” The intention to limit the membership of the organisation to only those who possessed the Spanish nationality caused some controversy at the meeting but was left to be resolved at the discretion of the organising commission. In addition to the conveners of the meeting, the commission included Álvaro Pascual Leone of the *Unión Republicana* (formerly a collaborator in the *Junta Española de Liberación*), the architect Roberto F. Balbuena, Miguel Rangel of the *Centro Andaluz* and a former organiser of its support group for the *Junta Suprema*, colonel Mariano Ramón, the former sub-secretary of the Spanish republican navy captain Benjamín Balboa, Joaquín Abella of the *Juventudes Libertarias*, UGT leader Peregrín Gurrea, his wife Amelia Martín de Gurrea of the *Unión de Mujeres Españolas* “*Mariana Pineda*”, the journalist Emilio Criado y Romero, the surgeon Dr. Mariano Cajal Peyrona, the diplomat Rafael Sánchez Ventura, and Eligio Rodríguez, an organiser of the Galician community in Mexico.<sup>290</sup> The group of the *Casa de España Republicana* engaged in a systematic campaign of raising public awareness to the continuing resistance to the Franco dictatorship in Spain, for example on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 1951 when a meeting was held at Avenida San Juan de Letrán no. 100 on the western perimeter of the *Centro Histórico* (the new domicile for the group since February<sup>291</sup>) in support of the strike movement in Barcelona. Peregrín Gurrea spoke for the UGT alongside the Catalan parliamentarian Martí Rouret, the vice-

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289 „Los Republicanos Españoles a la Opinión Mexicana“ (17 Mar 1950) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 50/53, fol. 47.

290 Report by Juan Caccia Bernal on the foundation of the *Casa de España Republicana* (23 Nov 1950) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 11, fol. 65; cf. „Se funda hoy la »Casa de España Republicana«“, *El Popular* (22 Nov 1950).

291 „Firme política de México con respeto a España“, *El Popular* (12 Feb 1951).

president of the Spanish Commission for Peace Ramón Ruiz Rebollo, José Tapia for the CNT, and Luis García Lago in the name of the PCE and the PSUC.<sup>292</sup> Such activities were echoed two weeks later by a meeting at the *Teatro de Telefonistas* where José Mancisidor, general Heriberto Jara, Dionisio Encina of the PCM, and the former Mexican education minister Luis Sánchez Pontón joined José Giral on stage.<sup>293</sup> The *Casa de España Republicana* maintained its public profile through the commemoration of republican anniversaries<sup>294</sup>, protest meetings and declarations against the developing cooperation and alliance between the USA and the Franco regime<sup>295</sup>, a public homage to Josef Stalin following his death in April 1953<sup>296</sup>, and a number of cultural events.<sup>297</sup> During the course of the 1950s, the

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292 „Mitin de solidaridad con los heroicos obreros de Cataluña“, *El Popular* (19 Mar 1951); „Grandioso mitin de solidaridad con los heroicos antifranquistas de Barcelona“, *El Popular* (25 Mar 1951).

293 „Hoy es el mitin de solidaridad con los heroicos huelguistas catalanes“, *El Popular* (3 Apr 1951).

294 „Reunión de la Casa de España Republicana“, *El Popular* (19 Apr 1951); „Resolución adoptada por los miembros de la Casa de España Republicana“, *El Nacional* (20 Apr 1951); „En conmemoración de la victoria democrática del 16 de febrero de 1936“, *España Popular* XIV/646 (13 Feb 1953), p. 1; „Conmemoración del 14 de abril en el XXII aniversario de la proclamación de la República. Gran Mitin de Unidad Antifranquista“, *España Popular* XIV/654 (10 Apr 1953), p. 3; „Gran Acto de Unidad Antifranquista por la paz, la independencia y la democracia“, *España Popular* XIV/669 (24 Jul 1953), pp. 1-2; „Lunch conmemorativo del aniversario de la primera República y del aniversario del triunfo electoral del 16 de febrero de 1936“, *España Popular* XV/699 (19 Feb 1954), p. 2; „XVIII aniversario de la heroica defensa de Madrid“, *España Popular* XV/736 (5 Nov 1954), p. 2; „Acto en la Casa de España“, *España Popular* XVI/751 (18 Feb 1955), p. 2; „Gran sentimiento republicano patriótico en la celebración del XXIV aniversario de la proclamación de la República en España“, *España Popular* XVI/760 (22 Apr 1955), p. 1; „Se conmemora en México el 18 de julio“, *España Popular* XVI/773 (22 Jul 1955), p. 2; „El siete de noviembre: una página viril de nuestra historia. Acto en la Casa de España Republicana“, *España Popular* XVII/789 (18 Nov 1955), p. 1; „XXV aniversario de la República Española“, *España Popular* XVII/810 (13 Apr 1956), p. 2; „Actividades de la Emigración. Acto de convivencia nacional“, *España Popular* XVII/823 (13 Jul 1956), p. 3; „Conmemoración del 14 de abril“, *España Popular* XVII/847 (1 May 1957), pp. 2 & 7.

295 „Declaración de la Casa de España Republicana contra la entrega de España a los Estados Unidos“ (7 Aug 1951), at AEM, Acervo Histórico, Impresos Suelos 2, fol. 35; „Declaración de la Casa de España Republicana contra el pacto de guerra yanqui-franquista“ (30 Sep 1953), AEM, Acervo Histórico, Impresos Suelos 2, fol. 39; Ramón Ruiz Rebollo appeared in the name of the *Casa de España Republicana* at the protest meeting at the *Teatro Arbeu* on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 1953, see: „Gran Mitin en el »Arbeu«,“ *España Popular* XIV/680 (9 Oct 1953), p. 1; „Repulsa de los emigrados españoles al pacto yanqui-franquista al año de su firma. Declaración de la Casa de España Republicana“, *España Popular* XV/731 (1 Oct 1954), p. 2.

296 „Españoles antifranquistas rinden homenaje póstumo al camarada Stalin“, report of the meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> of April 1953, in: *España Popular* XIV/656 (24 Apr 1953), p. 2.

297 See e.g. „Gran recital de poesias“ featuring León Felipe, Pedro Garfías, and Juan Rejano on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1951, at AEM, Acervo Histórico, Impresos Suelos 5, fol. 20; „XV aniversario de la muerte del gran poeta español Antonio Machado. Conferencia del escritor

domicile of the *Casa de España Republicana* changed from the Avenida San Juan de Letrán during the early 1950s to calle de López no. 39 south of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* during 1953/54, and on to calle General Prim no. 15 in the district of *Juárez* from December 1954 onwards.<sup>298</sup> The connections with the pro-Soviet camp of Spanish republicanism in Mexico City and the Spanish Commission for Peace remained close and thereby provided an institutional counterweight to the ongoing activities of the *Centro Republicano Español*.

The preliminary apex of the activities of the Spanish republican Commission for Peace occurred during the summer and autumn of 1951 after, in the wake of the Korean War, the Franco regime had been granted admission to the United Nations sub-organisations in November 1950, and the establishment of diplomatic relations with, and full international recognition of, Franco's government made considerable headway while benefiting from the not-so-tacit support by the US government.<sup>299</sup> In July 1951, an official consultation between Franco and the US Chief of Naval Operations, Forrest P. Sherman, had resulted in a preliminary agreement on military cooperation between the USA and Spain. In August, the Spanish republican Commission for Peace in Mexico City launched its own fortnightly journal *España y la Paz* from their offices at calle Bucareli no. 107-507 under the direction of León Felipe and explained its *raison d'être* in times of "highest importance for the fortune of our country and for world peace":

An anti-national regime, arisen from the Nazi-fascist war, is now selling our country, in tatters, to the war plans of the new Nazis: the Yankee militarists and imperialists. [...] The pact sealed in Madrid between Franco and Sherman is the complete and unconditional sell-out of Spain, of its soil and blood of the Spaniards, for a war which the North-Americans prepare against humanity.

Against such a perceived policy of submission to "international imperialism", the journal hoped to mobilise support for the World Peace Congress and "the force and immovable policy of peace by the nations and governments for which peace is their unalterable path. Leading them, the Soviet Union. In their firm post of peace, the victorious peoples' republics. [...] The Spanish people, together with all [the

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Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez", AEM, Acervo Histórico, Impresos Suelos 6, fol. 15; a lecture series to mark the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of „Don Quijote“ took place in 1955: „Comemoración del CCCL aniversario de la aparición del »Quijote«“, *España Popular* XVI/756 (25 Mar 1955);

298 „Nuevo local de la Casa de España Republicana en México“, *España Popular* XV/739 (26 Nov 1954), p. 2.

299 See the press coverage of the Spanish republicans' reaction to the diplomatic advances by the UN towards Franco: „Los Republicanos Españoles están furiosos ante el Reconocimiento al General Franco“, *Últimas Noticias*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (28 Dec 1950); „El Reconocimiento de Franco por EE.UU. causa descontento“, *El Nacional* (29 Dec 1950); „La Posición de Franco es ahora muy firme“, *Excélsior* (29 Dec 1950).

nations] of the world, occupies its post of honour in the struggle for peace.”<sup>300</sup> The front page illustration of this first edition by José Renau showed a map of Spain bound in chains, kept in place and locked by the US-American dollar, while the Spanish territory appeared covered with US-American flags. The journal, from the start, left little doubt as to where its loyalties lay during the early years of the Cold War. In September the Spanish Commission for Peace campaigned for the Peace Pact of the Five Great Nations and issued invitations for the Spanish Congress for Peace scheduled to take place in the early days of November. The appeal was meant to unite all Spanish organisations “may their ideas and opinions be what they may, who love peace and want to see it firmly established in the world, and who want for Spain, in peaceful coexistence of states and nations, a regime of peace, independence, and national integrity. For world peace, for the national sovereignty of Spain, against the conversion of our country into a colony of war of the Yankees [...]”. The commission was headed by José Giral, Dr. Manuel Márquez, Honorato de Castro, Ramón Ruiz Rebollo, León Felipe, Antonio Ruiz Hidalgo as vice-presidents, and Wenceslao Roces as secretary general.<sup>301</sup>

The programme for the three-day congress was simple and left no room for committee work or debate. The organisers claimed to have received about 150.000 endorsements from among the Spanish republican community (64.000, far exceeding the total number of republican refugees, in Mexico alone) and counted on the support of the Latin American Movement for Peace which boasted about 400.000 signatures to their appeal.<sup>302</sup> More than 1.600 delegates assembled in the *Teatro de Telefonistas* at Calzada Manuel Villalongín no. 50 in the evening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 1951 to hear José Giral’s opening speech. Giral not only placed the Spanish republican congress in Mexico City within its international context of the global campaign of the World Peace Movement, but also pointed out that “the cause of peace is today, while it is the most universal and humane, the most Spanish, the most patriotic of causes.” Against the backdrop of the devastation by the Civil War and the ongoing economic crisis in Spain, Giral complained about “the Yankee industries sending their raw materials over there to transform and refine them, almost for nothing, and then put the products on the world market, in repugnant dumping immersed with the blood and hunger of our brothers. At the same time, a handful of oligarchs and criminals in the service of the Yankees and their housekeepers of the Falange are amassing fabulous fortunes.” Alongside such economic imperialism, Giral denounced the military cooperation between the Franco regime and the USA, “the daily and feverish preparation of the instruction and equipment of new divisions aiming for an atomic slaughterhouse for all the

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300 „Nuestra Razón de Ser“, *España y la Paz* I/1 (15 Aug 1951), p. 1-2.

301 „Congreso Español de la Paz. México D.F., 2-4 noviembre 1951“, AEM, Acervo Histórico, Impresos Suelto 5, fols. 41-2.

302 „Resolución del Congreso Español de la Paz“, *Congreso Español de la Paz: México, 2-5 noviembre de 1951: ¡Por la Paz y la Independencia de España!* (Paris, 1951). p. 21.

Spanish youth under the supervision of their purchasers, the gentlemen of the Pentagon [...].” Against such a scenario, Giral declared categorically:

The Spanish people – I repeat it from this place – will never wage war against the Soviet Union. The Spanish people is not the División Azul, which today is installed in the [Spanish] war ministry at the service of the Yankees; [...] No. the Spaniards will never discharge their arms against a country towards which they harbour only feelings of gratitude, (lively applause) not in the service of the Yankees who have amply proven, in the past and present, their intentions to impair and suppress the interests of Spain. Neither in their service, nor in that of any other foreign power. Starving, enslaved, bleeding from a thousand wounds under the yoke of Francoism, [...] the sense of the Spaniards of national shame and dignity remains intact. (applause)<sup>303</sup>

There could be no doubt that the congress represented an unequivocal condemnation of the United States’ policies which, in Giral’s words, “while violating shamefully the principles codified in the Atlantic Charter, at Yalta and at Potsdam, in the Charter of San Francisco, today allow the re-militarisation and re-nazification of one part of Germany” and resulted in the rehabilitation of the Franco regime, “sanctioning its crimes and prolonging, disgracefully, the captivity of the Spanish people.”<sup>304</sup> Wenceslao Roces, in his speech, brought home this accusation of strategic continuity of the Western policy of anti-communist containment when he referred to the US-Spanish military agreement as “the total incorporation of Franco and his regime into the war plans of the Yankees”:

Days later, as a logical consequence of the meaning of that pact, the war criminal [Antonio] Muñoz Grandes, commander of the band of outlaws called the División Azul, was designated as Franco’s minister of war, in the service of new masters, having only recently stripped off his uniform of a Nazi general and still showing off the Iron Cross First Class which the Führer had awarded him for his crimes.

Roces praised Stalin’s foreign policy and the Soviet nuclear weapons programme as a decisive factor in achieving global disarmament and urged the congress to commit to the uncompromising struggle for the liberation of Spain which, for the delegates of the Spanish Congress for Peace in Mexico City had a clear geo-strategic objective in the context of the Cold War: “In Barcelona, the Spanish people called out loudly and without ambiguity: »North-Americans out of Spain!« And this call is a sacred mandate of the struggle for all sons of Spain, since it is the profound and honest voice of the fatherland which resonates in it. (lively

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303 „Discurso de Apertura de Don José Giral“, *Congreso Español de la Paz: México, 2-5 noviembre de 1951: ¡Por la Paz y la Independencia de España!* (Paris, 1951). pp. 10-3.

304 Ibid., p. 15.

applause)<sup>305</sup> Such ideological commitments were passed by the congress as a manifesto and a resolution, and as a message to the United Nations, while a Spanish Peace Council in Mexico was established under the leadership of José Giral.<sup>306</sup> The congress proudly presented endorsements from Mexican and international supporters, such as former Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas, Pablo Neruda, the president of the Mexican Commission for Peace Enrique González Martínez, Ignacio García Téllez (the first elected president of the UNAM and former general attorney, minister for education, for labour and welfare, and former *Secretario de Gobernación*), the economist Jesús Silva Herzog<sup>307</sup>, and from artists and intellectuals, among them León Felipe, Gabriel García Narezo, Rafael Alberti, Pedro Garfias, and Juan Rejano.<sup>308</sup> The activities of the Spanish Peace Council and its publication *España y la Paz* continued until the mid-1950s when the full international recognition of the Franco regime by its accession to the United Nations rendered the international politics of exile of Spanish republicanism almost meaningless, although the exile organisations continued to exist pro-forma. Simultaneously, the process of De-Stalinisation originating from the 20<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Soviet Communist Party of 1956 dealt a fatal blow to the international reputation of Soviet communism, so too among the community of exile in Mexico. The Spanish communist journal *España Popular*, once a rich weekly chronicle of pro-Soviet Spanish republican politics in Mexico appeared less and less frequently, lost much of its readership during the second half of the 1950s and gave way to new forms of Spanish republican politics.

The surge of pro-Soviet Spanish republicanism during the late 1940s and early 1950s in Mexico City must also be seen against the backdrop of Cold War anti-communism in the Mexican capital which mirrored the “Red Scare” of the McCarthy era in the United States and took aim at a broad range of Spanish republican organisations and individuals in the Mexican capital. The long-standing opposition to the governments of Lázaro Cárdenas and Manuel Ávila Camacho by the Catholic-conservative and pro-business communities once again took issue with the presence of European left-wing refugees in the country, as it had been in evidence ten years earlier upon the arrival of the anti-fascist republicans in the wake of the Spanish Civil War. Particularly active in the opposition against the community of exile in Mexico was the *Partido*

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305 „El Movimiento Mundial y la Lucha de los Españoles por la Paz. Discurso de Wenceslao Roces“ *España y la Paz* I/7 (extraordinario, 15 Nov 1951), p. 3.

306 *Congreso Español de la Paz: México, 2-5 noviembre de 1951: ¡Por la Paz y la Independencia de España!* (Paris, 1951), pp. 19-30. Cf. also the CIA report „Spanish Pro-Paz Activities“ (2 Feb 1952), online resource at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP82-00457R010000270002-3.pdf>.

307 „Grandes Amigos del Pueblo Español saludan al Congreso“, *España y la Paz* I/7 (extraordinario, 15 Nov 1951), p. 7.

308 *Ibid.*, pp. 12-3.



*Nacionalista*, headed by the artillery colonel José A. Inclán and the cavalry officers Andrés Porfirio Urbano and César Amaya. In 1947, Inclán and his associates waged a public campaign in Mexico as part of the “global campaign against communism”. They explicitly referred to the situation in Greece, China, Turkey, the anti-communist turn in France, Italy, and Brazil to raise their protest against the Mexican government: “Only Mexico, the kingdom of the Soviet fifth column in America, does not move against communism. [...] Is Mexico with Russia?”<sup>309</sup> Shortly after, on Independence Day, their response was simple: “The Partido Nacionalista supports the anti-communist policies of the United States, and time and again states that it will fight relentlessly against that Soviet fifth column everywhere, because it poses a threat to the peace of Mexico, of America, and all the world.”<sup>310</sup> In an appeal to the Mexican public, the group launched an indiscriminate attack against the Mexican trade union movement and leading figures of the post-revolutionary elites, such as as Vicente Lombardo Toledano, former education minister Narciso Bassols, the editor of *El Popular* Alejandro Carrillo, the diplomat Luis Quintanilla, Ignacio García Téllez, former communist leaders Valentín Campa and Hernán Laborde, as well as the painters Diego Rivera and David Álfaro Siqueiros. They accused the progressive elites of “the grave crime of treason against the fatherland” by means of “hunger, corruption, indiscipline, and their attacks on private property, the liberty of religion, education, the press etc., and particularly violently on democracy [...]”. They saw themselves as the true defenders of the constitution and the nation against the “Soviet fifth column”, the “red danger which threatens the world: the totalitarianism of Moscow.”<sup>311</sup>

José A. Inclán was no newcomer to the right-wing reactionary opposition to the post-revolutionary regime in Mexico. In the summer of 1939, he had signed up publicly to the protest by the ultra-nationalist opposition of small business owners against the offer of asylum extended by the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas to the Spanish republicans.<sup>312</sup> One year later, during the presidential campaign of Manuel Ávila Camacho, he had included his small but committed political group into the alliance in support of the candidacy of Juan Andreu Almazán.<sup>313</sup> During 1943, after Mexico’s entry into the Allied coalition against Nazi-Germany, he had led a military insurgency in defiance of military

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309 „Boletín no. 52“ (18 Jun 1947) at AGN, Archivo Presidencial Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 568, exp. 544.61/5, s. fol.

310 „Partido Nacionalista. Boletín no. 55“ (16 Sep 1947), *ibid.*

311 „Partido Nacionalista a la Nación“ (23 Jun 1947), *ibid.*

312 See: José Antonio Matesanz: *Las Raíces del Exilio. México ante la guerra civil española* (México D.F., 1999), p. 283.

313 See: Martha Beatriz Loyo: „El Partido Revolucionario Anti-Comunista en las Elecciones de 1940“, *Estudios de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea de México* 23 (2002), pp. 145-78, online resource: <http://www.historicas.unam.mx/moderna/ehmc/ehmc23/284.html>

conscription in the federal state of *México* just north of the capital city before being detained “after a shootout in the streets of Mexico City”.<sup>314</sup> His anti-communist campaign of 1947 was explicitly directed against “the Jews, the Spanish refugees, the arrogant Spanish [gachupines] monopolists, and the nouveau-riche Mexicans” who allegedly were “allies of the communists in the black market.” He went so far as to claim that “the Soviet fifth column in Mexico has as its leader and chief [former president] Lázaro Cárdenas who is the great traitor in the service of Stalin.”<sup>315</sup> Given such outright hostility to the post-revolutionary politics of Mexico and its support for the cause of European anti-fascists, it comes as little surprise that a number of fervent anti-communists would use any allegations against members of the Spanish community of exile in Mexico City as an opportunity for concerted campaigns which they took to the Mexican authorities of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* and the US embassy in the Mexican capital. When in autumn 1948 a personal business dispute between Adolfo León Osorio and the Spanish republican refugee Antonio Jiménez Campaña resulted in the deportation of the latter<sup>316</sup>, those who had assisted Jiménez financially became, in turn, targets of an anti-communist campaign of denunciations: the Spanish writer and erstwhile co-founder of the PSOE in the Canary Islands and collaborator of *España Nueva*, José Rial Vázquez, and the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist Pedro Rodríguez Rojas soon found themselves accused of “communist activities” in “cafés and meeting places” where they allegedly argued “that general Lázaro Cárdenas (whose patriotism nobody can question) needs to take over power and establish in Mexico a communist regime. That they, José Rial and Pedro Rodríguez Rojas would have people to help with such a movement etc. etc.”<sup>317</sup> José A. Inclán and his associates even took out public announcements in the Mexican press to spread their campaign against Rial and Rodríguez.<sup>318</sup> However misguided and malicious such personalised attacks may have been, they reveal much about the hostile perception that the life and activities of the Spanish republican community of exile in Mexico City attracted during the late 1940s. The denunciations mentioned “secret meetings in México [City] at calle Tacuba no. 15”<sup>319</sup> – the address of the *Centro Republicano Español*, hardly a communist

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314 Thomas Rath: *Myths of Demilitarization in postrevolutionary Mexico* (Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2013), p. 65.

315 „Partido Nacionalista a la Nación“ (23 Jun 1947) at AGN, Archivo Presidencial Miguel Alemán Valdés, caja 568, exp. 544.61/5, s. fol.; see also the full memorandum on the Rial-Rodríguez investigation by the Director General of IPS Lamberto Ortega Peregrina at AGN, DGIPS, caja 333, exp. 41, fols. 36-41.

316 See the report by „El Delegado“ (10 Nov 1948) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 333, exp. 41, fol. 13.

317 Letter to *Secretario de Gobernación* Adolfo Ruiz Cortínez (19 Oct 1948) by José A. Inclán for the *Partido Nacionalista* at AGN, DGIPS, caja 333, exp. 41, fol. 7.

318 „Sr. Sretario de Gobernación, Sr. Srio. de Relaciones Exteriores: ¿Para qué sirve el Artículo 33?“ (by José G. Cavazos, José A. Inclán, Rubén Rodríguez), *El Universal* (26 Oct 1948).

319 Report by Carlos A. Gómez (7 Oct 1948) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 333, exp. 41, fol. 2.

stronghold – and brought to the attention of the authorities that José Rial would spread agitation “in all the cafés, most of all in the Tupinamba” and talked of a “Bogotazo” to be expected in Mexico, an allusion to the political riots in Columbian capital Bogotá earlier that year. Adolfo León Osorio let it be known that Pedro Rodríguez Rojas owned a workshop as a mechanic and “dedicates himself to the construction of bombs” and that Rial allegedly burned secret communist correspondence in his private home.<sup>320</sup> Adolfo León Osorio, like José Inclán, was a veteran of right-wing xenophobe politics in Mexico City, as he had acted as public speaker for the *Partido de Salvación Pública* in June 1939 when he had addressed a crowd protesting against the arrival of Spanish republican refugees calling the Mexican offer of asylum “illegal” and announcing an “active campaign” against this government policy.<sup>321</sup> About a week later he had led another public protest into violent clashes with political opponents and the police.<sup>322</sup> So the hostility against the Spanish community of exile that emerged from the anti-communist campaigns of the late 1940s can be seen as a revival of long-standing resentment and ideological conflicts which the Cold War reactivated after a period of relative calm during the Second World War. Inclán and his associates of the *Partido Nacionalista* knew how to exploit such feelings to the full:

We denounce once again the communistoid [sic!] activities and complicity of various Spanish [gachupines] refugees, who call themselves exiled [desterrados] politicians, who are well-known to the Spanish police and who are secretly waiting to act as arsonists in the communist uprisings. José Rial, Pedro Rodríguez, Jiménez Campaña and other adventurers, harmful to the country, who need to be expelled without any time to waste. And we have said it before and we repeat it now: the rabble that came to us from Spain must be thrown out of our [national] territory. The whole of Mexico supports our work, and we hope for the day when the relations with the Motherland [Spain] will be restored in order to purge the environment of the undesirable refugees.<sup>323</sup>

To some, the activities of such “leftist elements” who “make public demonstrations against the United States” required nothing less than “deporting them from the country and all American nations to prevent that they might exploit

320 Report by „El Delegado“ (7 Oct 1948) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 333, exp. 41, fols. 9-10.

321 „Mitin de protesta contra los refugiados, disuelto anoche“, *La Prensa* (21 Jun 1939).

322 „Zafarrancho entre dos grupos políticos“, *La Prensa* (30 Jun 1939); see also the report by M. Tomás Rincón C. (30 Jun 1939) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 132, exp. 41, fol. 14.

323 „El Partido Nacionalista. Boletín no. 66“ (signed by colonel José A. Inclán, general Gumaro Manzanares, colonel Andrés Porfirio Urbano, general Hermenegildo Salazar, Feliciano Carabantes, and colonel César Amaya, Sep 1948) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 800C-800N, s. fol.

certain opportunities, which could arise from global instability, to stir up the masses.”<sup>324</sup> Alongside such politically motivated campaigns against the Spanish republican refugees in Mexico, hostility also originated from groups that claimed to defend the ethno-national legacy of the Mexican revolution against outside interference in the economic sector and in society at large. One such group was the “Restauradores de la Mexicanidad”, also known as the “Unión Gran Luz Azteca” which existed since the 1920s and from its offices at calle Donceles no. 32 in the historic city centre promoted a crudely xenophobic post-colonialism of Mexican post-revolutionary identity politics. Their main ideological denominator was their hostility to Spanish culture, the cultivation of the *náhuatl* idiom, the celebration of Aztec history and royalty (above all, the last emperor Cuauhtémoc), and the rejection of the elevated role played by Spanish immigrants (unfailingly referred to by the derogatory term of “gachupines”) in trade and commerce as well as among the educated elites.<sup>325</sup> The Spanish republican refugees were routinely included in this negative perception of “human trash”, as was ex-president Lázaro Cárdenas, “who, in good faith, committed the tremendous error that the predatory »refugees«, these ghoulish vultures without human spirit, no mental training or moral discipline, and, as such, lacking the concept of gratitude, bold and apprentices of everything, entered the country and invaded positions of teaching, in the trade unions, administrative jobs, on editorial boards of newspapers, and though they hold monstrously aberrant positions in the economy, in politics, pedagogy, and the radio, where the speakers pronounce the »z« in a repulsive way and vomit crazy ideas.”<sup>326</sup> In more measured terms, their “Principles of the Restauradores de la Mexicanidad” complained “the Spanish emigrants called »refugees«” had arrived to continue the suppression and exploitation of the Mexican people:

They have come to invade physically the editorial boards of newspapers, positions of teaching, in the trade unions, and many administrative jobs, with the absurd consequence that those elements are still here, as one can in no way assume that they contribute loyally and in the constructive spirit which the Mexican nation demands, to the solution of the social problems of the country.<sup>327</sup>

All positions of service in state, media, and business should, thus, be reserved to those deemed to be true Mexicans, but the radical defenders of *Mexicanidad* also

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324 Letter by Carlos Viesca Castillo to the US ambassador (27 Sep 1948), *ibid.*

325 Cf. Lina Odena Güemes: „Los Restauradores de la Mexicanidad“, in: Raquel Barceló, María Ana Portal, and Martha Judith Sánchez (eds): *Diversidad Étnica y Conflicto en América Latina. El indio como metáfora en la identidad nacional*, vol. 2 (México D.F.: 1995), pp. 197-214.

326 „¡Mexicanos! A la Restauración de la Patria“ (Nov 1949) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 320, exp. 80, fol. 2.

327 „Exposición de Principios de los Restauradores de la Mexicanidad“, undated, *ibid.*, fol. 15, p. 6.

had very specific complaints to raise about the behaviour of individual Spanish republican refugees in the Mexican capital, for example against a refugee named Álvarez Vega, “who obscenely insulted Mexico and the Mexicans in the Café Do Brasil, provoking the wrath of our people and who is apparently being protected by the police as a reward for his insults to our nation; the communist refugee gachupines who, led by Giral, Ruiz Funes, Mije, and others, sheepishly serve the Russian machinations, trying to provoke popular unrest;”<sup>328</sup> This form of nativist post-colonial xenophobia therefore transported more than radical cultural and economic nationalism, but also had a very distinct political meaning during the evolving ideological confrontation of the Cold War. On the occasion of the 425<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Cuauhtémoc in February 1950, the “Unión Gran Luz de Azteca” held public meetings in front of the cathedral of Mexico City and at the monument of Cuauhtémoc. The violently anti-Spanish speeches were greeted by shouts of “Long live Mexican dignity!” and “Down with communism!”. The size of the audience remained limited, estimated at about 100 by the observer of the *Secretaría de Gobernación*, although the folkloric dance displays attracted some more people, “there were 200 when it ended, consisting of a number of American tourists who gathered after being attracted by our folklore.”<sup>329</sup> For the time being, the Mexican authorities saw no reason to intervene in such animosities between Mexican cultural nationalism and the refugee community in the city.

In other cases, however, when the actions of members of the Spanish community of exile came into conflict with the law, the Mexican police and security services swiftly sprang into action: On the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1948, the police apprehended four young men who were in the process of covering the corner of Avenida Francisco I. Madero and Monte de Piedad, facing onto the central plaza of the *Zócalo* directly opposite the *Palacio Nacional*, with political posters, “propaganda directed at the young generation and public opinion, but it is a fact that in it the government is being attacked.” The four men were three Spaniards, Floreal Ocaña Sánchez and Francisco Rosell Rosell, both from Barcelona, Octavio Alberola Suriñach from Menorca, and one Mexican, Manuel González Salazar, from Veracruz. The police found further political campaign material in their possession and established that “those four individuals held meetings in the Café Betis, situated in calle 16 de Septiembre next to the Cine Olimpia, in which café they made the sketches of the pamphlets which they had printed. They met in this place to exchange impressions and organise the group named »Juventudes Libertarias«, but as the four students state, they are the only ones who make up that organisation.”<sup>330</sup> González Salazar, as the Mexican of the

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328 „La Actitud de los Gachupines en México, es ya intolerable“ editorial of the journal *Todo*. no. 884 (17 Aug 1950), *ibid.*, s. fol.

329 Report „Actos en honor de Cuauhtémoc, organizados por la »Unión Gran Luz Azteca«, más bien conocida por »Restauradores de la Mexicanidad« (27 Feb 1950), *ibid.*, fols. 7-9.

330 Report by agent no. 165 (Rubén Dare García) and the Chief of the *Primer Grupo* (Felipe Sotomayor Olvera) (21 Sep 1948) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 114, exp. 4, fol. 4.

group, accepted responsibility for the initiative<sup>331</sup>, and all four admitted having shared the cost of 130 pesos for 3.000 pamphlets which were printed at a print shop close to the university at calle Donceles.<sup>332</sup> The political programme which they had tried to publicise, was one of youthful and vague revolutionary radicalism: “[...] it is necessary in these times, more than ever, to form a genuinely revolutionary conscience among the workers in order to oppose the advance of all regressive political forces and to fight for the elementary principles of justice which are being denied. In order to struggle against the economic, political, and moral oppression, the Juventudes Libertarias are rising from the people as an expression of their rebellion against all established powers.” In opposition to the government, the Church, the communist party, the trade union movement, and the press, the young men presented their ideological vision as revolutionary syndicalism opposed to capitalism, the state, the military, and religion. What had earned them their arrest at the police headquarters of calle Bucareli no 113 was certainly their general swipe against the Mexican government:

It is the government as representatives of capitalism, speaking in the name of a betrayed revolution, who enrich themselves at the cost of the people, who vote for them, and which favours the enemies of the worker. The economic plan of “industrialisation of Mexico” exclusively benefits Mexican capitalism which rests on ever greater poverty of the working class. Protected by that “patriotic” plan the government asks greater sacrifices from the people, and capitalism considers the demands of the proletariat as a crime of a dumb nation. They have turned Mexico into one of so many lackeys of Yankee imperialism.<sup>333</sup>

Such statements clearly violated the provisions of Article 33 of the Mexican constitution which forbids foreigners to get involved in the “affairs of the nation”, but the culprits of this poster campaign in September 1948 successfully obscured their own role in the *Juventudes Libertarias*, the youth organisation of the Spanish anarchists of the CNT which anything but an unknown entity in Mexico City. In July 1944, Floreal Ocaña and Francisco Rosell had been elected as vice-secretary and spokesman, respectively, of the *Juventudes Libertarias*<sup>334</sup>, and in April 1946

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331 Report of interrogation of Manuel González Salazar (1 Oct 1948) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 114, exp. 6, fol. 1.

332 Report by agent no. 165 (Rubén Dare García) and the Chief of the *Primer Grupo* (Felipe Sotomayor Olvera) (21 Sep 1948) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 114, exp. 4, fol. 4; report of 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1948, *ibid.*, fols. 1-2; a later report also mentioned „a Chinese café in calle Bolívar between [calle] Venustiano Carranza and [calle Rep. de] Uruguay“ as a regular meeting place, see the report of 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1948, *ibid.*, fol. 14.

333 „A la Juventud. A la Opinión Pública en General“, *ibid.*, fol. 8.

334 „J.J. LL. En el Exilio – Nuevo Comité“, *Solidaridad Obrera* III/56 (19 Jul 1944), p. 7.

Rosell had signed in the name of the anarchist youth a public protest statement against human rights violations by the Franco regime.<sup>335</sup> More importantly, as early as in June 1942 Floreal Ocaña Sánchez had appeared on a membership list in a survey of Spanish anarchists in Mexico conducted by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* when he was characterised as a “first-class leader”<sup>336</sup>, an assessment which the US embassy intelligence unit shared when they identified him in June 1943 as a “principal director” of the CNT in Mexico and registered his contributions to the anarchist journals *Solidaridad Obrera*, *Tierra y Libertad*, and his role as editor of the monthly magazine *Inquietudes* in September 1945.<sup>337</sup> The link of the group of young men with the CNT and the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50, therefore, was hardly a secret. As it happened, the detained Spanish anarchists had benevolent supporters from among the Mexican trade union movement who lobbied the secret police chief Lamberto Ortega Peregrina and the *Secretario de Gobernación* himself, Adolfo Rúa Cortines, on behalf of the prisoners: Rafael Ortega and Nicolás Llanas of the *Confederación de Obreros y Campesinos de México* quoted the liberty of speech to suggest that “in our understanding and in compliance with our system of justice, they have not committed any crime.”<sup>338</sup> Enrique Rangel as secretary general of the *Federación Proletaria del Distrito Federal* pointed to the grave danger which would result from the deportation of the three Spaniards since their families had entered Mexico as political refugees and their return to Spain would “endanger their lives because of the political circumstance of the regime.”<sup>339</sup> When questioned about the reasons for his involvement, Rangel denied any connections of his union with the Spanish prisoners, claiming that the CNT in Mexico “only exists symbolically and has not developed any activities. The same can be said of the »Juventudes Libertarias« which is not an organisation with any membership, consisting of four or five individuals, among them the detained. [...] In reality, the organisations in question do not exist”. His own involvement Rangel explained by humanitarian motives to support the case Floreal Ocaña’s father, Rafael, and his concern for the lives of the three young men, should they be deported to Spain.<sup>340</sup> The interventions were successful: secret police chief Ortega Peregrina filed his recommendation that the three might be let go with a “severe

335 „La Juventud Española a la Opinión“, *Solidaridad Obrera* V/91 (20 Apr 1946), p. 4.

336 See the entry at AGN, DGIPS, caja 142, exp. 01, fol. 532.; it also seems that, for reasons unknown, he had tried to pass off María Ocaña Sánchez (presumably his sister) as his wife.

337 „Intelligence survey of Spanish activists“ (20 Jun 1943), p. 17, at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson) Jun-Aug, s. fol.; report on the „Centro-Cultural Ibero-Mexicano“ (21 Sep 1945), p. 5, at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 (Gibson), s. fol.

338 Letter by Rafael Ortega and Nicolás Llanas (secretary general and secretary for organisation and propaganda of the *Confederación de Obreros y Campesinos de México*) to *Secretario de Gobernación* to Adolfo Rúa Cortínez (28 Sep 1948) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 114, exp. 4, fol. 9.

339 Letter by Enrique Rangel (secretary general of the *Federación Proletaria del Distrito Federal*) to *Secretario de Gobernación* to Adolfo Rúa Cortínez (30 Sep 1948) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 114, exp. 4, fol. 22.

warning”, which was issued on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1948 after “the President of the Republic magnanimously stipulated that for this once they are pardoned [...], advising them that if they should take up again activities for which they were detained on this occasion, they will, inexorably, sent back to their country, that is, to Spain.”<sup>341</sup> It seems that none of the three Spanish anarchists re-offended, but instead continued as active members of a new generation in the Spanish anarchist movement in Mexico City.<sup>342</sup>

During the weeks preceding the incident of the poster campaign by the young Spanish anarchists, the Franco regime had taken new steps towards the re-opening of trade relations with Mexico, albeit through informal channels as the Mexican government maintained its policy of non-recognition of Franco’s government in Spain. In June 1948, a new unofficial diplomatic representative of the Franco regime had arrived in Mexico City with the task of facilitating trade relations between Mexico and Spain, José Gallostra y Coello de Portugal.<sup>343</sup> His arrival sparked the curiosity of the US diplomats in Mexico City over whether the government of Miguel Alemán contemplated a change in its attitude towards a normalisation of relations with the Spanish dictatorship. In August, George F. Scherer met with the head of the consular division of the Mexican foreign ministry, Vicente Sánchez Gavito, and inquired “what José Gallostra y Cuello [sic] was doing in the country. When he shrugged his shoulders in reply, I asked, if he could give me any information concerning a possible change in Mexico’s attitude towards Spain. He said: » There is no change in Mexican policy and there has been no rapprochement between the Franco and Mexican Governments.« He added that this policy had cost Mexico a lot of money, but we were interrupted

340 „Entrevista al Sr. Enrique Rangel, Srio. Gral. de la Federación Proletaria del D.F.“ (12 Oct 1948), *ibid.*, p. 23-4.

341 „Opinión“ by Lamberto Ortega Peregrina (1 Oct 1948), *ibid.*, fol. 15; protocol of caution and release of Floreal Ocaña Sánchez, Francisco Rosell Rosell, and Octavio Alberola Suriñach (18 Oct 1948), *ibid.*, fol. 26.

342 Ocaña Sánchez continued as secretary of the editorial board of *Solidaridad Obrera* and redactor for the *Juventudes Libertarias*, see: „Redacción“, *Solidaridad Obrera* V/115 (11 Apr 1949), p. 3; also as spokesman for the CNT, see: „Nuevo Comité“, *Solidaridad Obrera* X/136 (Feb 1954), p. 3; he also appeared as speaker at CNT events in Mexico City during the 1950s: „Obra Cultural de la CNT. El Estado y el Anarcosindicalismo“, *Solidaridad Obrera* XIV/147 (5 Mar 1956), p. 2; „Interesante Ciclo de Conferencias. El Anarcosindicalismo en la sociedad futura“, *Solidaridad Obrera* XV/166 (Dec 1957), p. 4; Alberola Suriñach, likewise, worked on the editorial board of *Solidaridad Obrera*, see: „La Ciencia no es culpable“ and „En la Asamblea General“, *Solidaridad Obrera* V/126 (31 Jul 1951), p. 3; „Nuevo Comité“, *Solidaridad Obrera* X/136 (Feb 1954), p. 3; „Comunicado“, *Solidaridad Obrera* XV/175 (May 1959), p. 3; he also spoke at later CNT events, see: „Obra Cultural de la CNT. El Estado y el Anarcosindicalismo“, *Solidaridad Obrera* XIV/147 (5 Mar 1956), p. 2.

343 On Gallostra’s mission cf. Ricardo Pérez Montfort: “La Mirada Oficiosa de la Hispanidad. México en los informes del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores Franquista, 1940-1950“, in: Clara E. Lida (ed.): *México y España en el primer franquismo, 1939-1950. Rupturas formales, relaciones oficiosas* (México, D.F., 2001), pp. 106-11.



before we had a chance to pursue the matter further. I presume the major cost to Mexico of its Government's Spanish policy has been in a loss of trade."<sup>344</sup> What the US diplomats failed to communicate to the Mexican government – “in view of Mexico's deep involvement with the Spanish Government-in-exile and the remote likelihood of a different attitude” – is that the US government was, indeed, itself considering a change of policy in favour of recognising Franco's regime in Spain:

The Embassy considers it may be undesirable to indicate to the Mexican Government the possibility of a change in our position, since there is a chance that the [Mexican] Foreign Office might undertake a campaign throughout the hemisphere in opposition to us.<sup>345</sup>

For the next 18 months Gallostra made contacts with the Mexican and ex-patriate Spanish business communities, closely watched by the Spanish republican community in exile. By January 1950, it appeared that his activities had become more extended, as “the Francoist elements have increased in numbers. The offices which Franco's »unofficial ambassador«, Señor José Gallostra, occupies have been enlarged over the past few days. They now have been extended by a commercial attaché, Señor Jiménez Arau, and two secretaries, Señores Mestas and Bermejo.” These observations, which appeared in the Mexican press, were accompanied by further press reports and persisting rumours among the Spanish republican community in the city “that the government in Washington contemplates the possibility of re-establishing diplomatic relations with Generalissimo Francisco Franco. Such news have reverberated in our Spanish circles, especially when one considers that the representation of Franco in Mexico has, indeed, maintained very good commercial relations, although not diplomatic ones.” Such reports, the journal *Novedades* hastened to add, “originate from the Spanish centres and have been fully confirmed.”<sup>346</sup> As these developments coincided with a crisis of diplomatic representation of the Spanish republican government-in-exile in Mexico (Luis Nicolau d'Olwer resigned as republican ambassador), the position of Spanish republican politics in Mexico seemed at a critical and dramatic juncture exacerbated by internal personal animosities.<sup>347</sup> Gallostra, on his part, used the opportunity to outline areas of stronger economic ties between Mexico and Francoist Spain to the Mexican press, such as in tourism, which were to be facilitated by his collaborator Luis Bolín who was opening offices in Mexico City in coordination with the Mexican *Comisión Nacional del*

344 „Memorandum of Conversation“ by George Fulton Scherer (17 Aug 1948) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 800N-Y, s. fol.

345 Secret Airgram by US ambassador Walter Thurston to the US Secretary of State (18 Aug 1948), *ibid.*

346 „Renuncia el embajador republicano español y crece el personal extraoficial de Franco“, *Novedades* (17 Jan 1950).

347 Cf. „Fué aceptada renuncia del embajador de la República Española: habla el dimitente“, *Novedades* (18 Jan 1950).

*Turismo*. Gallostra dutifully praised the living conditions in Spain, and added that Mexico was revered by the Spanish people who wished for “less politics and more fraternity” between both countries. He blamed the “anarchy” and “terror” of the Spanish Republic for the Civil War while now the people of Spain would “live in peace, work quietly, and there does not exist the slightest fear that there might be a rebellion against the existing government, in spite of everything the enemies of Franco’s government are saying.”<sup>348</sup>

The worst fears of the Spanish community of exile were realised when on the next day, the 19 of January 1950, the US government issued a press release quoting a letter from US Secretary of State Dean Acheson to US Senator Tom Conally, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which amounted to a complete revision of US foreign policy regarding the Franco regime in Spain. Acheson complained that “organized propaganda and pressures have kept this controversy alive both here and abroad and have served to stimulate more emotional feeling than rational thinking. [...] A clarification of some of the issues might help now to put this question in its proper framework in relation to the broader aspects of our policy.” He continued that “the Franco Regime in Spain is not a threat to peace [...]” and that its international isolation had only “strengthened the position of the present regime”. Acheson’s conclusion dealt a heavy blow to any Spanish republican aspirations towards regime change in Spain:

The policy of the United States toward Spain is based on the recognition of certain essential facts. First, there is no sign of an alternative to the present Government. Second, the internal position of the present regime is strong and enjoys the support of many who, although they might prefer another form of government or chief of state, fear that chaos and civil strife would follow a move to overthrow the Government. Third, Spain is part of Western Europe which should not be permanently isolated from normal relations with that area.

Acheson defined the goal of US foreign policy as “to facilitate normal business and trade with Spain”, and he therefore rejected any “moral significance to the maintenance of full diplomatic relations through the return of Ambassadors”<sup>349</sup> In other words, the character of the existing government in Spain presented no obstacles to a pragmatic integration of the Franco dictatorship into the Western anti-communist alliance, short of full membership in NATO. The Spanish

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348 „Opina Gallostra sobre la retirada republicana“, *Últimas Noticias* (18 Jan 1950).

349 „Return to Normal Exchange of Diplomatic Representation With Spain Urged“, press release (19 Jan 1950) of a letter from Secretary of State Dean Acheson to Senator Tom Conally, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *The Department of State Bulletin*, vol. XXII, no. 552 (30 Jan 1950), pp. 156-9

republican embassy in Mexico City responded with a press conference on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January, and the reaction in the public sphere of Spanish republican politics in exile was predictably fuelled with anger and frustration.<sup>350</sup> Others complained about the approving press coverage which the diplomatic move by the US government received in the Mexican press, above all in *Excélsior*, and in some of their readers' comments. Fermín Zugazagoitia was a member of the editorial board of *Renovación*, the journal of the Spanish *Juventudes Socialistas* in Mexico, and tried to remind the readers of *Excélsior* that the Spanish people had not so much suffered from the international isolation of the Franco regime but from the isolation of the Spanish Republic:

Spain, if by that we understand the people, has been hurt much, how very much!, by isolation, not in the diplomatic field, but in trade which was approved by the League of Nations when they ordered non-intervention, whereby the government of the Spanish Republic, constituted legally and in the most civil form which history has seen, was prevented from buying military equipment which would have enabled it to confront a military uprising.<sup>351</sup>

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 1950, José Gallostra left his offices at the *Edificio Hispano-Americana* on Paseo de la Reforma for his lunch break at around one o'clock when he was confronted in a heated argument at the corner of calles Artes and Ignacio Ramírez by Gabriel Fleitas Rouco, a Spanish republican in exile, who eventually shot him twice in the head with a pistol from close range. Gallostra died on the way to hospital, and Fleitas Rouco was apprehended by the police. All institutions involved in "the Spanish question" in the Mexican capital were quick to deny any involvement with or even knowledge of Fleitas Rouco. Pablo de Tremoya, for the Spanish republican embassy, speculated that personal motives might have been to blame for the murder and that Fleitas may have belonged to Gallostra's staff and that his nationality may be Cuban. The Soviet embassy and the Mexican Communist party denied all knowledge of Fleitas or any plan to assassinate Gallostra. The *Casino Español* held a service of mourning at their venue of calle Isabel la Católica no. 29 which united thousands of members of the ex-patriate Spanish business community in the city before Gallostra's body was taken for funeral to Spain.<sup>352</sup> Meanwhile, in custody Fleitas had referred to himself as a "free-thinker" and an enemy of the Franco regime. The political motives of

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350 See: „Declaraciones de Don Álvaro de Albornoz a la prensa“, *Izquierda Republicana* VIII/57 (10 Feb 1950), p. 4; „Contradicciones. Mr. Acheson y su posición ante España“ (by Indalecio Prieto), *Adelante* VII/163 (1 Mar 1950), p. 1, reprinted in: *Renovación. Órgano de la Juventudes Socialistas de España en el Exilio* V/44 (Mar 1950), pp. 4-5; „Editorial“, *Las Españas* V/14 (29 Feb 1950), p. 2.

351 „El Asunto Español“, *Excélsior* (1 Feb 1950); on Zugazagoitia's role in the *Juventudes Socialistas*, see: „Redacción y Administración de »Renovación«, Tacuba no. 15 altos“, *Renovación. Órgano de las Juventudes Socialistas de España en el Exilio* V/42 (Aug 1949), p. 5.

his crime were obvious and filled the Mexican press for days with comment and debate. The self-destructive logic of his act of political violence was beyond doubt even for sympathetic observers: “he has done more damage to the republican cause than the one he struck down so cruelly.”

The republican cause is in itself legitimate. More than that: it seemed to become part of the historical development of that admirable nation. But individuals of lousy ilk have corrupted it. To the extent that righteous men who took part in the conflict, certainly very numerous, feel betrayed. We will not forget the words of Azaña, shortly before his death in exile, poor and full of premature ailments: “I am dying of shame and disgust.”<sup>353</sup>

Others used the opportunity to place the political violence among the Spanish colony in Mexico City in the context of global confrontation between East and West in which the Spanish republican community of exile was to be seen as a sinister source of ideological subversion and possible unrest:

When the gates of Mexico, always generously open to foreigners, opened up even more to let in an uncontrollable flood of Spanish refugees, they came with their would-be government piggyback not to settle in this country, not to reconstruct their lives which were ravaged by defeat, but with the political goal to continue that fruitless conflict to reconquer power – that of Spain – from which they had fallen under the weight of blood and their own incompetence. And so it happened that international malefactors settled in Mexico whose gaze wanders back and forth between Madrid and Moscow from where they await orders to continue the communist cause which was interrupted by the victorious arms of Generalissimo Francisco Franco.<sup>354</sup>

And the right-wing opposition in Mexico resorted to their demand for public order, as “Mexico cannot allow that its soil is turned into a battlefield” while the government had “taken the bread from its own nationals and offered it to the refugees”. Nonetheless, the inability of the Franco regime to provide for a government of national unity was also addressed as a possible source for exasperation among the Spanish community of exile which might, over the years, have contributed to “blindness and madness”.<sup>355</sup> Within days after the murder of Gallostra, calls grew louder to restore official diplomatic relations with the Franco

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352 Press report „Peregrina Versión“ (23 Feb 1950) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 50/53, fols. 36-7.

353 Press comment „Perifonemas. Crimen incalificable, Táctica contraproducente“ (21 Feb 1950), at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca España y el Mundo 50/53, fol. 52.

354 „Enseñanzas de un Crimen“, Sección Editorial, *Universal Gráfico* (21 Feb 1950).

regime.<sup>356</sup> And for José Vasconcelos, the murder of Gallostra, “a complete gentleman; tall and distinguished in appearance; affable in gesture, kind in his intentions, and in practice dedicated to accomplish a generous mission”, by a representative of “the shiftless mob of the enemy who today threatens the whole of civilisation” amounted to a confrontation with “a doctrine which ridicules loyalty and honour; a doctrine which uses brutality and cowardice as a tactic – the preferred tactic because it does not imply great risks – that must result in the fall of man to a level below the beasts.” For him, the situation called for nothing less than the reintroduction and application of the death penalty, since: “The Anglo-Saxon civilisation demands that a life be paid for by another.”<sup>357</sup> From among the Spanish republican community of exile in Mexico City, the denunciation of political violence was equally strict: “All violence repulses us, and the death of Señor Gallostra does not imply any exception.” But the socialist journal *Adelante* continued to address the attitude of the “hypocrites” of the ex-patriate Spanish community who never protested against the ongoing political violence in Spain:

What qualifications can those present who, after watching the Civil War from afar and, consequently, must have stayed exempt from fratricidal passions, have had no single word of piety for the unfortunate hundreds of thousands which Franco sacrificed in cold blood after the end of the conflict? None. Silence is what suits them. Silence and the shame of their conduct.

Gallostra, so the Spanish socialists concluded “represented and served a government of assassins.” His death was “neither more nor less than the consequence of a bestial regime which, politically, is precisely defined by the fact that the Spaniards who are inside Spain would like to but cannot leave, and that we who we are outside would like to but cannot enter.”<sup>358</sup>

The character of Gallostra soon became a major public issue when in March a document which Gallostra had in his possession apparently as a first draft of a report to be sent back to Madrid was leaked to the press from the police investigation. In it, a crude panorama of Mexican society was developed referring to sub-sections of the “old society” of the former Spanish colonial elite, the “café society” of the ethnically-mixed majority, the political, military, and bureaucratic

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355 „Precaución Indispensable“, página editorial, *Excélsior* (22 Feb 1950). For a more exhaustive survey of Gallostra’s murder and the Spanish and Mexican press coverage, see: Carlos Sola Ayape: „El poder mediático del exilio español en el México de los años cincuenta: en torno al asesinato del representante de Franco, José Gallostra“, *Historia Mexicana* 63/3 (2014), pp. 1309-76.

356 „Necesidad de Relaciones Oficiales“, página editorial, *Excélsior* (24 Feb 1950).

357 „Caballero sin Tacha“, article by José Vasconcelos (3 Mar 1950) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca España y el Mundo 50/53, fol. 4.

358 „Coro de Fariseos. La Muerte del Señor Gallostra“, *Adelante* VIII/163 (1 Mar 1950), p. 4.

elites, the “people”, and the Spanish ex-patriate and refugee communities, as well as shorter sketches of cultural life, the academic elites, and the church. Throughout this account, a profoundly racist perception of Mexico’s post-colonial society prevailed, and a picture of ubiquitous and rampant corruption devoid of any political or moral principles or values emerged.<sup>359</sup> The popularity of US-American lifestyle was deplored and the text displayed elements of anti-Semitism and hostility towards the Masonic lodges. Describing members of the political elite as varieties of uneducated and corrupt gangsters, *rancheros*, and *pistoleros* betrayed a fundamentally neo-colonial and supremacist attitude towards the post-colonial society of Mexico. In his account, the ex-patriate Spanish colony appeared as distant, isolated, and largely immune to the decadence of the Mexican elite, while the Spanish republican refugees in the city appeared as little more than a caricature which could have inspired the satires of Max Aub or Simón Otaola:

Some are working quietly at their laboratories and teaching posts, others eat the bread of exile with tears of bitterness, sighing for their return to the homeland, and a small group is scattered throughout the cafés “Tupinamba”, “El Papagayo” and “Campoamor”, hopeful day and night while knowing full-well that their embassy is a ghost, that their government does not exist, and, however, making fun of everyone with their jokes, having debates with raised voices while some indigenous waitresses and “pleasing girlfriends” are pouring them cups of Café-con-Leche, which is all that keeps them feeling Spanish or madrileño in those environments.<sup>360</sup>

It is little wonder that Mexican public opinion on friendly terms with the representation of the Franco regime quickly questioned the authenticity of the manuscript<sup>361</sup>, while others presented the result of a graphological expertise which pointed towards Gallostra as the author.<sup>362</sup> Gallostra’s killer was meanwhile depicted by the press reading with satisfaction the reports about the document which had caused grave insult to the Mexican public.<sup>363</sup> The Franco government in Madrid did nothing to dispute the authorship of Gallostra but instead insisted that

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359 See the full text: „Revelador Documento del Diplomático Franquista“, *La Prensa* (10 Mar 1950); *El Universal* (10 Mar 1950).

360 „Documento de Gallostra que lo exhibe como enemigo de México“, press report (10 Mar 1950) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca España y el Mundo 50/53, fol. 6rev.

361 See: Fernando Díez de Urdanivia: „Gallostra y los Mexicanos“, *Excelsior* (13 Mar 1950).

362 „La Autenticidad del Documento Insultante“, *El Popular* (11 Mar 1950); „Resulta Auténtico el Manuscrito del Agente Gallostra“, *El Nacional* (11 Mar 1950); „Es Auténtico el documento, dice el procurador C.F. Sodi“, *El Universal* (11 Mar 1950); „Se confirma la autenticidad del documento de Gallostra“, *La Prensa* (11 Mar 1950).

363 „Fleitas Rouco reafirma que Gallostra ofendió a México“, *La Prensa* (11 Mar 1950).

the incriminated text represented nothing more than “private notes” by the representative of Franco in Mexico.<sup>364</sup>

The pro-Soviet faction of Spanish republicans in Mexico, centred around the *Casa de España Republicana* and led by José Giral, Honorato de Castro, Mariano Ruiz Funes, and Wenceslao Roces, responded to this situation to issue an appeal to the Mexican public in defense of the right to asylum, praising the solidarity and hospitality received by a succession of Mexican governments and hinting at a *cui bono?* behind the Gallostra scandal:

That sacred right of asylum which has opened to us the gates of Mexico is what certain dark forces, arising from deeds as dark as they themselves and covering the Spanish republican emigration with insults and slander, want to see violated. The perfectly synchronised promptness with which they strive to capitalise on those events, trying to profit from them impudently, makes one think, in accordance with other antecedents of the case, that its inspiration and its acting hand may not reside very far from the provocation of the deed itself of which they now aim to benefit. The republican emigration has nothing to do, at all, with the action of certain murky elements, given to regular contact with the representatives of Franco and sustained by them.<sup>365</sup>

The public excitement by the murder as well as its unexpected scandalous fall-out in the spring of 1950 also motivated one of the first comprehensive monographic accounts of the Spanish republican immigration to Mexico and its achievements, above all in the academic, intellectual, and cultural sectors. Its author, Mauricio Fresco, thus presented the asylum of Spanish republicans in Mexico as a “victory for Mexico” while explicitly referring to the Gallostra murder and its impact on the public position and image of the Spanish immigration.<sup>366</sup> Fresco explained much of the internal hostilities among the Spanish colony by a difference in historical circumstance and social composition of the national and republican groups of immigration, not without a degree of intellectual snobbery: the earlier immigrants, in his account, “naturally did not influence the destiny of Mexico. Their thinking did not alter, neither raise nor debilitate, the thinking of Mexico.

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364 „Que las anotaciones de Gallostra eran de uso personal“, *El Universal* (15 Mar 1950): „Hasta Madrid reconoce que sí eran de Gallostra las »Notas«“, *La Prensa* (16 Mar 1950).

365 „Los Republicanos Españoles a la Opinión Mexicana“ (17 Mar 1950), AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 50/53, fol. 47; see also in *Excelsior* (18 Mar 1950).

366 Mauricio Fresco: *La emigración republicana española: una victoria de México*, (Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2001; orig. México D.F., 1950), pp. 15-26, online resource: <http://bib.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/12482624229024847421624/index.htm> [19 Aug 2013].

With their contribution of manual labour, the wealth of the country did not increase.”<sup>367</sup> He recognised only a few distinguished individuals among the Spanish business community and contrasted the earlier immigration sharply with the republican refugees:

The Spanish immigration, since 1939, was completely different from the earlier one. No longer the burly man of the fields; no longer the profiteer from years of sacrifice behind the counter of a grocery shop or from brutalizing the indigenous labourers of the haciendas; no longer the youngsters, almost children, who arrived to this country in the coves of the Spanish vessels and disembarked in Veracruz like animals.<sup>368</sup>

Fresco celebrated the achievements of the Spanish republican immigration in terms of its scientific, academic, and cultural contribution to Mexican intellectual life and education, thus presenting the influx of Spanish republicans as a great leap forward in economic, scientific and cultural development for Mexico. The Franco regime, by contrast, had just revealed its neo-colonial attitude towards a society despised by the Spanish nationalists: “The document of Señor Gallostra [...] is a true reflection of the Spanish ideology which guides the current government of Spain.”<sup>369</sup> Against such ideological hostility towards Mexico, only the Spanish republicans would benefit Mexican society. Such campaigning in favour of the position of Spanish republican refugees in Mexico went hand-in-hand with continued efforts to expose and scandalise the activities of the unofficial representatives of the Franco regime in Mexico:

With evident impertinence, a so-called representation of the Franco regime operates in this country, consisting of individuals named Berdejo, Jiménez Arau, Mestas, Ibáñez Serrano and others, representatives who perform illegal functions and who try to obtain international currency for Franco’s regime and to initiate economic, commercial, cinematographic, and sporting exchanges etc., beneath the cover of which anti-democratic work is being done.<sup>370</sup>

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367 Ibid., p. 27.

368 Ibid., p. 28.

369 Ibid., p. 30.

370 Public statement by the UGT, *Centro Cultural Andaluz, Unión de Mujeres Españolas, Patronato de Ayuda al Pueblo Español, Sindicato General de Trabajadores del Petroleo de España, Centro Cultural de Combatientes Republicanos Españoles, Agrupación Musical Madrid, Casal Catalá, Grupo Vasco de la UGT, Agrupación Profesionales y Escritores Españoles en el Exilio, Federación del Transporte, Pesca e Industrias Marítimas de España, Grupo Socialista de Ayuda al Pueblo Español y en Defensa de la Paz*, as quoted in: „Nueva condenación de las maniobras de agentes falangistas en nuestro país“, *El Popular* (11 May 1950).



All the more important appeared the continued public support of the Spanish republican government-in-exile by Mexican governing officials, as on the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Spanish Republic, commemorated on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1950 with a banquet at the restaurant “Majestic”. The president of the Mexican Supreme Court, Luis Cataño Morlet, attended the occasion alongside the Mexican ambassador to UNESCO, Manuel Martínez Báez, and the foreign ministry official Alfonso Guerra while the assembled festive crowd applauded messages of adherence by the *Secretario de Gobernación*, Adolfo Rúa Cortines, and sub-secretary Manuel Tello of the Mexican foreign ministry. From among the Spanish republicans, Abel Velilla spoke as former magistrate of the Spanish Supreme Court, Mariano Joven as ex-governor of Madrid, and Antonio Sbert as ex-councillor of the *Generalitat de Catalunya*. Main speaker of the event was Spanish prime minister-in-exile Álvaro de Albornoz who “in an inspiring speech of beautiful images expressed the never-ceasing gratitude of the republican emigrants to Mexico and praised the virtues of the people that make up the Spanish community with the great Catalonia and the Basque country.”<sup>371</sup>

The investigation of Gallostra’s murder had led to Fleitas being identified as a member of the Spanish anarchist group<sup>372</sup>, and a number of possible co-conspirators from among the anarchist group, evidently a list of professional hit men, were investigated.<sup>373</sup> All traces appeared to be leading to the *Centro Cultural Ibero-Mexicano* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50 where the Spanish anarchists and other independent left-wing groups maintained offices and a venue for public events. The investigation of the premises conducted by the *Secretaría de Gobernación* evidently met with a community of political activists who were well-prepared for the suspicious scrutiny by the authorities which Fleitas’ crime had provoked a week earlier. The staff of the bar informed the investigator that “of this centre nothing more is left than the restaurant and the bar – no-one shows up any more; just some Spaniards come in during the afternoon to play domino and chess.” The police agent was able to observe that the restaurant was “practically full with all the tables occupied, in the majority Mexicans, mainly young women employed by commercial and private offices, but not the bar which was completely empty.”<sup>374</sup> A couple of days later, the bar seemed occupied by about a dozen Spaniards, playing domino until 9 p.m.. The agent was told that the majority of those present were Catalans in exile, politically loyal to the

371 „Celebraron Ayer el Aniversario de la República Española“ (15 Apr 1950), press report at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 50/53, fol. 52.

372 Confidential report on Salvador Gabriel Fleitas Rouco by „Delegado O. D. de G.“ (23 Feb 1950) at AGN, DGIPS, caja 130, exp. 34, fol. 1; a copy exists at AGN, DGIPS, caja 122, exp. 25, fol. 21.

373 Report by „Agente especial Agustín Daroca Ponsa“ (28 Feb 1950) at AGN, DGIPS, exp. 315, exp. 11, fols. 46 & 47.

374 Confidential Memorandum by „Delegado F.L.P.“ (25 Feb 1950), *ibid.*, fol. 43.

government-in-exile of Álvaro de Albornoz, blue-collar and white-collar workers “on the fringes of politics, dedicated to making a living.” The impression was one of general rejection of “totalitarian systems, and therefore we are enemies of Franco.” The agent’s interlocutor summarized the situation thus: “We are all the same kind of dog, but with different leashes.” The premises, so he continued, were only used for social and family occasions, and the agent added that during his visit “no politics was being discussed, and everybody was preoccupied with their interest in playing domino.”<sup>375</sup> However well-rehearsed this presentation of the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* may have been (and/or however much the Mexican police agent may have sympathised with, and therefore downplayed the political activities of the centre in his report), the ideological solidarity with, and even direct support for Fleitas by the Spanish anarchists at the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* was soon hardly a secret and publicised in the Mexican capital. In July, the journal *Solidaridad Obrera* claimed that “Fleitas’ deed was an act of legitimate self-defense, as the pimp of the Falange made a move to draw his gun to eliminate Fleitas after having insulted all Spanish refugees and the Mexican public.” The Spanish anarchists organised an aid campaign “among the comrades, organisations, individuals, and groups” to contribute financially to the legal defense of Fleitas.<sup>376</sup> During the four months since March, that legal aid fund had collected over 11.000 pesos.<sup>377</sup> “Fleitas responded in a manly manner to the killings of Franco and his sadistic cohort”, the paper commented, and against the terror of dictatorship and the “international conspiracy of governments” there would still remain “the direct means of action as a prelude to the struggle for the complete liberty of man [...]”.<sup>378</sup> In October, the Mexican anarchists of *Tierra y Libertad* based at the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* likewise urged for “moral and material solidarity” with Fleitas. The arrival of a counsel to the prosecution from Franco’s Spain caused concern that the Spanish regime would significantly influence his trial. “The forces of fascism conspire day and night so that our comrade may end his days in prison. [...] The money of tyranny needs to be opposed by the support of those who love freedom.”<sup>379</sup> Evidently, a political assassin such as Gabriel Fleitas Rouco could count on considerable sympathy and support from the transnational network of anarchists centred around the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* at calle Venustiano Carranza no. 50.

The remaining majority of the Spanish republican community in exile continued to oppose and fight the ongoing trend of international recognition for the Franco regime, with dwindling results. In September 1953, the US-Spanish

375 Confidential Memorandum by „Delegado F.L.P.“ (27 Feb 1950), *ibid.*, fol. 44.

376 „El Proceso Fleitas Rouco. Una obra de intensa solidaridad“, *Solidaridad Obrera* V/123 (Jul 1950), p. 2.

377 „La Obra Solidaridad de la C.N.T. en el Destierro. Balance Administrativo“, *ibid.*, p. 3.

378 „Fleitas Rouco“ by G. Salazar, *ibid.*, p. 2.

379 „¡Solidaridad!“, *Tierra y Libertad* VIII/116 (Oct 1950), p. 1.

bilateral military alliance sparked a new round of angry protests from the Spanish republicans in exile in Mexico, led by a public protest meeting at the *Teatro "Arbeu"* at calle República del Salvador no. 55 in the historic city centre on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October. The communist journal *España Popular* reported "hundreds of Spaniards of all political persuasions and ideologies" who braved the "torrential rain" of that evening to gather at this somewhat less prominent venue. The meeting was presided over by José Diéguez of the PCE, the poet Juan Rejano, Ignacio Ferretjans for the left-wing Spanish socialists, Ramón Ruiz Rebollo for the *Casa de España Republicana*, Armonia García Huerta for the JSU, and representatives for the Guatemalan and Mexican communists. Under the slogan "Yankees out of Spain!" illustrated by José Renau across the back of the stage left-wing socialist Gabriel Morón of the *Centro Andaluz* "denounced the criminal behaviour of the Franco regime in selling Spain to the Yankee imperialists and related such ignominious conduct to that of past eras of our history when the governing classes never hesitated to throw themselves into the arms of foreign invaders in fear of being overrun by the wrath of the people." While praising Stalin's speech at the 19<sup>th</sup> party congress of the CPSU, Morón emphasised that "it is the communist party which collects and flies the flag of the fight for national independence, the flag of the fight for democratic liberties, the flag of the fight for the salvation of Spain."<sup>380</sup> Luis García Lago for the Catalan communists of the PSUC praised the Soviet Union as "a lively example of liberty and democracy for the oppressed masses of the capitalist and colonial nations, a permanent stimulus in the fight against their oppressors." He continued:

Our Spain, that of Cervantes and Goya, of our discoverers, which has made exceptional contributions to the world; that Spain will be a democracy again, and the Spaniards will, once again, know and appreciate a government of liberty, of democracy, and peace. Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia will rise up again in the fullness of their national rights. [...] With us is the invincible camp of peace, led by the Soviet Union, with us are the democratic labour movements of all nations, the best elements of the American nations. We count on that solidarity, but we need to justify it, earn it, with our never-ceasing effort, with our unity.<sup>381</sup>

Finally, Wenceslao Roces completed the list of speakers with a call for unity of all anti-Franco Spanish republican forces in exile which, nevertheless, contained explicit attacks against Indalecio Prieto, Félix Gordón Ordaz, Diego Martínez Barrio, and the Spanish socialists of the PSOE for their friendly attitude towards the United States and NATO.<sup>382</sup> The US-Spanish military alliance thereby

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380 „Gran Mitin en el »Arbeu«, *España Popular* XIV/680 (9 Oct 1953), pp. 1-2.

381 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

382 *Ibid.*

rendered Spanish republican unity in exile an impossibility given the geo-strategic realities of the Cold War. The *Teatro "Arbeu"*, during those days, continued to serve as a venue for meetings of the pro-Soviet wing of the Spanish republican community in Mexico City, as in November 1953 for the commemoration of the Defence of Madrid.<sup>383</sup>

Two years later, however, it seemed that for a brief moment the ideological gulf across the Spanish republican spectrum could be bridged when the United Nations granted full membership to the Franco regime – the final blow to Spanish republican politics in exile which removed the basis for any hopes for the international isolation of the Spanish dictatorship. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1955, the Spanish Peace Council organised a public protest meeting at the *Salón Orquidea* at Avenida Álvaro Obregón no. 241 in the district of *Roma Norte*, a rather inconspicuous venue of low public profile. Against all realistic probabilities, José Giral tried to encourage the audience with his assertion that “the fight has not ended, it has hardly yet begun”, and he placed his hopes in “larges groups of friends in all countries” which would continue to support the Spanish republican cause.<sup>384</sup> While this protest meeting united the familiar faces of the Spanish Peace Council and the pro-Soviet wing of Spanish republicans in Mexico City, among them Ignacio Ferretjans, Ramón Ruiz Rebollo, Honorato de Castro, Antonio Ramos Espinós, Wenceslao Roces, and Juan Rejano, a week later the whole range of political factions of Spanish republicans in exile in Mexico signed a protest note addressed to the UN Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjöld. The document referred to international agreements and understandings relating to the self-determination of nations since the Atlantic Charter of 1941 to state the legitimacy of the Spanish republican cause and was, therefore, far less politically controversial in order to allow the whole range of the political spectrum of Spanish republicans in Mexico to lend their signature: alongside the cultural and regional associations in the city, the list of signatories included Faustino Ballvé for the *Ateneo Liberal*, general José Miaja for the *Movimiento de Liberación Española*, Antonio Roldes for the *Centro Republicano Español*, Ramón Ruiz Rebollo for the *Casa de España Republicana*, Ignacio Zugadi for the *Asociación Liberal*, Mariano Joven for the *Izquierda Republicana*, general Francisco Llano de la Encomienda for the *Unión Republicana*, general Juan Pérez for the *Partido Republicano Federal*, Juan Ruiz Olazarán for the *Agrupación Socialista Española*, Juan José Manso as secretary general of the PCE in Mexico, Enrique Canturri for the *Ezquierda Republicana de Catalunya*, Luis Nicolau d’Olwer for the *Acción Catalana Republicana*, Tomás de Etxabe for the *Acción Nacionalista Vasca*, Horacio Casas for the *Partido Galleguista*, José Vila Cuenca for the UGT,

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383 „XVII Aniversario de la Heróica Defensa de Madrid. Gran Mitin Teatro Arbeu“, *España Popular* XIV/685 (13 Nov 1953), p. 1.

384 „Por la Paz y la Independencia Nacional. Gran acto de protesta contra el pacto yanqui franquista“, *España Popular* XVI/784 (14 Oct 1955), p. 1.

and Juan Gallego Crespo for the anarcho-syndicalists of the CNT.<sup>385</sup> Unity, so it seemed, had been achieved among the Spanish republicans in Mexico at the very moment when the international campaign for the republican cause had finally been lost.

Out of this sense of failure of Spanish republican politics of exile at the end of the 1950s, brought about by internal ideological divisions and the geo-strategic conflict of the Cold War that helped to stabilise the Franco regime under the hegemony of the United States, an unexpected resurgence of Spanish republican activism originated from two events that ignited the political enthusiasm of a new generation of Spanish anti-fascism in exile in Mexico. In January 1959, the victory of the Cuban revolution appeared to illustrate new possible avenues in which an insurrectionist *guerrilla* campaign was capable to overcome a US-backed authoritarian regime after all. Castro's triumph in La Habana in January presented an inspiration for Spanish republicans not the least because the Castro brothers and their inner circle of revolutionaries had spent their exile during 1955/56 in Mexico. Fidel and Raúl first met the Argentinian medical doctor Ernesto Guevara de la Serna, who had arrived in Mexico City from Guatemala after the military coup of 1954, in the *Tabacalera* where they shared an apartment at calle José de Emparán no. 49 and later stayed in an apartment at calle Pedro Baranda no. 18 in the same city district. The group used the café "La Habana" on the corner of calle Bucareli and Avenida Morelos in the north of the district of *Juárez* as a regular meeting place.<sup>386</sup> The Cuban revolutionaries had been well-connected among the Spanish republican military in exile in Mexico, above all with Alberto Bayo Giroud, a Cuban-born officer of the Spanish republican forces and veteran of the Spanish Civil War who had led an unsuccessful counter-invasion of Mallorca in August 1936.<sup>387</sup> In 1941, Bayo had arrived in Mexico and during the Second World War served as a navigation instructor at an aviation school in Guadalajara where he also assumed the presidency of the *Casa de la Democracia Española*, "a leftist group composed principally of Spanish republican elements", as the intelligence unit of the US embassy duly observed. In 1944, their impression of Bayo was that of a "ruthless unprincipled person with a very strong force of character", as he appeared "fanatically devoted to the Soviet in the furtherance of the interests of

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385 „Franco y las Naciones Unidas“, *CNT* I/2 (Nov 1955), p. 2.

386 See: Paris Alejandro Salazar: „Los lugares de Fidel Castro en la Ciudad de México“, online resource: at <https://lasillarota.com/los-lugares-de-fidel-castro-en-la-ciudad-de-mexico/131111>; Mónica Redondo: „Los 5 lugares en México donde Fidel Castro planeó la Revolución“, online resource: <https://hipertextual.com/2016/11/fidel-mexico-revolucion>; cf. also: „Fidel Castro se ocultó en estas casas durante su exilio en la Ciudad de México“, *El Universal*, online resource: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zJsSV3fQZdE>

387 Michael Alpert: *The Republican Army in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 175-6.

Communism.”<sup>388</sup> Meanwhile in the Mexican capital, his son, also named Alberto, frequented the *Hogar de la Juventud Española* at calle Versailles no. 50 in the district of *Juárez*, since 1943 a popular meeting place for social and educational events for the political youth movement of the Spanish republican left wing.<sup>389</sup> A decade later, Bayo the elder began to train Castro’s core group of *guerrilleros* during 1955/56 in insurrectionist warfare before they left Mexico to launch their Cuban campaign in November 1956.<sup>390</sup>

Shortly after Castro’s victory in 1959, a second incident added an element of outrage to these new revolutionary hopes: In a move echoing the celebrations of Franco’s victory in April 1939 by the “Plato Único” at the *Casino Español*, Franco’s representative in Mexico, Manuel Oñós de Plandolit, planned a celebration of the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Franco’s fascist military uprising of the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 1936 at the very same location – possibly conceived as a provocative counterpoint to the popularity of the military insurrectionist Fidel Castro, especially among the younger generation, and certainly a calculated affront to the Spanish republican community in the Mexican capital. A group of young Spanish second-generation republicans responded to this challenge with a series of spontaneous meetings, first in the home of the painter Xavier de Oteyza and later at the *Casal Català* to debate different options for direct action against the planned celebrations of Franco’s military coup, including even the idea of kidnapping Oñós de Plandolit.<sup>391</sup> Eventually, in the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> of July, the *façade* of the unofficial representation of the Franco regime in Mexico was filled with painted slogans and insults against the Franco regime.<sup>392</sup> Against all odds, the public protest succeeded in stopping the planned celebrations after the intervention of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* which persuaded Franco’s representative not to proceed with the controversial event.<sup>393</sup>

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388 Personal memorandum on „Alberto Bayo Giroud“ (15 Nov 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02 Military Operations, Intelligence, s. fol.

389 See the report, including a list of affiliated members „Hogar de la Juventud Española“ (6 Aug 1943) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2894, 820.02 Jun-Aug, p. 5.

390 See: Robert C. Goldston: *The Cuban Revolution* (Idianapolis / New York, 1970), pp. 78-81.

391 Aurelio Velázquez Hernández: „El Movimiento Español 1959: Entre la revolución cubana y los servicios secretos mexicanos“, *Latinoamérica. Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos* 61, num. c., (Oct 2015), pp. 129-56, esp. 134-5.

392 María Fernanda Mancebo (en nombre de Elena Aub): „Historia del Movimiento Español 1959 (ME/59)“, in: *El Exilio Valenciano en América. Obra y Memoria*, ed. by Albert Gironai Albuixec and María Fernanda Mancebo (Valencia, 1995), p. 216; Jorge de Hoyos Puente speaks of the offices of Franco’s representative in Mexico being „attacked and almost completely destroyed“, id.. *La Utopía del Regreso. Proyectos de Estado y sueños de nación en el exilio republicano en México* (México, D.F., 2012), p. 258.

393 Aurelio Velázquez Hernández: „El Movimiento Español 1959: Entre la revolución cubana y los servicios secretos mexicanos“, *Latinoamérica. Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos* 61, num. c., (Oct 2015), p. 136.

Using the momentum of this unexpected success, the group of protesters constituted themselves as the *Movimiento Español 1959*, also known by its acronym “ME/59”.<sup>394</sup> Their “Declaration of Principles” which was published in their own newsletter in December 1959 plainly stated that “it needs to be accepted that the emigrant community displays, in its vast majority, a picture of expectant passivity.” The group rejected the often repeated position that the liberation of Spain would have to be the work of the resistance movement inside the country and appealed to youthful activism: “We believe, on the contrary, that nothing that we could do will be enough.” While confidently announcing the politics of exile of a “new generation”, the declaration carefully avoided any suggestion of divisions of age or ideological persuasion:

This, and nothing else, is our demand: unity of action of all anti-Franco forces in exile with all those inside Spain in one solid representative and patriotic front which expresses to the world the closed ranks of opposition of the nation to the dictatorship. We do not discriminate in any way within the anti-Franco camp. We feel solidarity towards any group, party, or organisation which shares our one goal: the toppling of Francoism and the establishment of necessary basic conditions so that the sovereign will of the Spanish people can manifest itself freely.<sup>395</sup>

Elena Aub, daughter of the Spanish writer Max Aub, recalled: “We were a group of different ages, social backgrounds, and political tendencies, but we succeeded in what was regarded as impossible: to unite in one active, generous setting, full of high hopes, the last rebels, who, from Mexico, wanted to help Spain regain its freedom.”<sup>396</sup> The first membership list of 1959 displayed close links with the *Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas* (JSU), the *Hogar de la Juventud*, and, above

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394 On the movement see the protagonists’ recollections in: Elena Aub: *Historia del ME/59: una última ilusión* (Palabras del Exilio 5) (México D.F., 1992). The history of the *Movimiento Español 1959* has been explored by María Fernanda Mancebo (en nombre de Elena Aub): „Historia del Movimiento Español 1959 (ME/59)“, in: *El Exilio Valenciano en América. Obra y Memoria*, ed. by Albert Gironai Albuixec and María Fernanda Mancebo (Valencia, 1995), pp. 215-20; Eduardo Mateo Gambarte: „El Movimiento Español de 1959“, *Estudios de Ciencias Sociales* 6 (1993), pp. 107-16; Manuel Aznar Soler: “Movimiento Español 1959: literatura y política de la segunda generación del exilio”, in: Id. and José Ramón López García (eds): *El Exilio Republicano de 1939 y la Segunda Generación* (Sevilla, 2012), pp. 143-98; Aurelio „Velázquez Hernández: El Movimiento Español 1959: Entre la revolución cubana y los servicios secretos mexicanos“, *Latinoamérica. Revista de Estudios Latinoamericanos* 61, num. c., (Oct 2015), pp. 129-56; Cf. also: Patricia W. Fagen: *Exiles and Citizens. Spanish Republicans in Mexico* (Austin, 1973), pp. 142-4; Jorge de Hoyos Punte: *La Utopía del Regreso. Proyectos de Estado y sueños de nación en el exilio republicano en México* (México, D.F., 2012), pp. 258-60.

395 „Movimiento Español 1959: Declaración de Principios“, *Hoja de Información* (Dec 1959) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 45, exp. 441, fol. 1; reprinted in: *Boletín de Información. Unión de Intelectuales Españoles* V/11 (Mar 1960), p. 3.

all, the alumni of the *Instituto "Luis Vives"* which had educated many of the second generation of Spanish exile in Mexico City.<sup>397</sup> Years earlier, the *Instituto "Luis Vives"*, at the time located at the corner of calle Gómez Farías and calle Sadi Carnot in the district of *San Rafael*, had established a reputation for Spanish republican militancy among its students when in September 1947 the students of the neighbouring *Colegio "Cristóbal Colón"*, popular among the pro-Franco expatriate Spanish colony in the city, launched a "flag-war" over the display of the Spanish republican colours which had resulted in a veritable street battle between the two schools which needed to be broken up by the Mexican riot police with tear gas.<sup>398</sup> José Miguel García Ascot was one of the alumni of the *Instituto "Luis Vives"* who joined the leadership of the *Movimiento Española 1959*. In a reflection on the value of cultural and political traditions among the Spanish republican community, he criticised the petrified rituals of politics in exile: "With supreme skill of a long tradition and long training we successfully acquired a sense of active and participating beings, without doing or participating in anything." His response was one of existential glorification of political activism:

We know that "the moment" has come. We do not, perhaps, know why, but we feel once again something has transformed the historical moment into one of those moments when one needs to act, into one of those moments when one needs to *be*. And to be with everything and everyone.

Above all, García Ascot deplored the ideological political infighting among the Spanish republicans which, in his eyes, had replaced the fight against Franco and amounted to an act of treason against the republican cause. And his inspiration for a renewed mobilisation of Spanish republicanism betrayed a more revolutionary than democratic impulse:

When I see today some such cases [of treason] I cannot but compare them with my personal experience of two months in Cuba. There, six million people *freely and voluntarily reject and postpone* elections in order to avoid political intrigue, campaigns, parties, and differences, and to consolidate in a united form the work of their extraordinary revolution. Here, a number of individuals prefer such same intrigues,

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396 Elena Aub, as quoted in: *El Exilio Valenciano en América. Obra y Memoria*, ed. by Albert Gironai Albuixec and María Fernanda Mancebo (Valencia, 1995), p. 215.

397 See the list at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 45, exp. 441, fols. 12-3.

398 „Criminal provocación falangista en México“, *España Popular* VIII/364, p. 1; see: José Pascual Buxó: „12 de septiembre de 1947: gachupines versus refugachos“, in: *Los Colegios del Exilio*, exhibition catalogue ed. by María José Millán (Residencia de Estudiantes, Madrid, 2005), pp. 115-29; Julia Tuñón Pablos: „Los niños-conflicto del Instituto Luis Vives en la conyuntura del enfrentamiento con el Colegio Cristóbal Colón (1947)“, in: María Eugenia Sánchez Calleja and Delia Salazar Anaya (eds): *Los Niños. El hogar y la calle* (Ciudad de México, 2013), pp. 275-302.



parties, groups, and differences to a common effort for the freedom of Spain. And this so it may not be a “political” effort with a struggle for power and control! And this so that the affiliation to some group or party may be preserved in all its integrity! Do we never learn? Do we *deserve* to be in exile? Is this what we intend to contribute to a liberated Spain?<sup>399</sup>

Under the leadership of García Ascot, Mariluz Conde, Fernando Medrano, Federico Álvarez, Xavier de Oteyza, Manolo Meda, Julián Zugazagoitia, and Justo Somonte the group developed a diverse campaign of political activism, ranging from renewed protests against human rights violations in Spain directed at the UN Human Rights’ Commission to public meetings and a protest march on the US embassy on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1959 in response to US president Eisenhower’s visit to Franco in Spain.<sup>400</sup> The protesters, among them the Mexican writers Fernando Benítez and Carlos Fuentes, staged a “silent demonstration” before symbolically laying wreaths “to the US soldiers who have fallen in the war against Nazi-fascism” and sticking pictures at the embassy front door showing Franco and Hitler shaking hands.<sup>401</sup> Another successful political event was a meeting in protest of the continuing policy of repression in Spain and for the release of the writer Luis Goytisolo from prison staged at the *Cine Versailles* at calle Versailles no. 27 in the district of Juárez on the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 1960, just a few steps from the former *Hogar de Juventud* at no. 50. Experienced leaders of the Spanish republican community in exile shared the stage with the young activists of the *Movimiento Español 1959* and the younger generation of Mexican intellectuals: Alongside the painter Xavier de Oteyza, Ignacio Villarias, and the former JSU activist Federico Álvarez, the presidium included the poet León Felipe, Joaquín d’Harcourt as president of the *Ateneo Español*, and the Mexican writers Carlos Fuentes and Fernando Benítez.<sup>402</sup> Mariano Granados denounced the Franco regime as a former ally of European fascism and the Western policy of cooperation with Spain. Juan Rejano paid tribute to the imprisoned young Goytisolo of only 24 years as an example of a whole new generation of Spanish artists who suffered under the Franco regime and, under such circumstances, particularly welcomed the activities of the *Movimiento Español 1959*. Antonio María Sbert, a text sent in by Max Aub, and Daniel Tapia in various ways pointed

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399 José Miguel García Ascot: „Tradición y Traición“, *Hoja de Información* (Dec 1959) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 45, exp. 441, fol. 4.

400 María Fernanda Mancebo (en nombre de Elena Aub): Historia del Movimiento Español 1959 (ME/59), in: *El Exilio Valenciano en América. Obra y Memoria*, ed. by Albert Gironai Albuixec and María Fernanda Mancebo (Valencia, 1995), p. 216.

401 „La emigración española y la entrevista de Madrid“, *Hoja de Información* (Dec 1959) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 45, exp. 441, fols. 2-3.

402 María Fernanda Mancebo (en nombre de Elena Aub): „Historia del Movimiento Español 1959 (ME/59)“, in: *El Exilio Valenciano en América. Obra y Memoria*, ed. by Albert Gironai Albuixec and María Fernanda Mancebo (Valencia, 1995), p. 217.

out continuities between their own experiences as Spanish anti-fascists and the efforts of the younger generation before José de la Colina closed the event in the name of the *Movimiento Español 1959* with a speech that, even more than thirty years later, was remembered as “moving everybody”<sup>403</sup> when he spoke about the victims of persecution in Spain:

They are suffering over there right now, in this very moment, in this very span of time that we are living in. Which group or party ideology, however noble it may be, could be held above that tortured, injured, and humiliated flesh? Think of it: they acted against Francoism, not in an environment of respect for life and liberty, not in an environment as we enjoy it, not from exile, bitter as it may be, but surely: they acted under a supreme commitment which could cost them their freedom or their life. They are Catholics, free-thinkers, republicans, freemasons et cetera. But they all suffer for their love of Spain. And while a human being moans in prison, while a human being dies, while a family of a human being is left helpless, can we [please] stop thinking of their ideology? Is not a human being, the simple human being persecuted and beaten, be he catholic or communist or socialist, a human being and someone who fights against Franco?

He reiterated the appeal to suspend all ideological and party differences in favour of a united effort to remove the Franco dictatorship from power. The *Movimiento Español 1959*, as “a group of many ideologies”, would have no ideology other than the “confidence in the future of the Spaniards, in the sensibility and constructive capacity of the Spanish people to regain its dignity and freedom.” His conclusion was thus simple: “Unity in the struggle against Franco! Total support for the Spaniards in Spain! That is the ideology of the *Movimiento Español 1959*. We trust that it is also yours. That’s all.”<sup>404</sup> But despite such high-minded rhetoric, some initial achievements in re-mobilising public awareness for the republican cause, and despite considerable international support for the new group, the *Movimiento Español 1959* did not escape the fate of internal ideological division and eventual disintegration.<sup>405</sup> One destabilising factor was the devotion of its leadership to the Cuban revolution which became evident again in July and August 1960 when a delegation of 12 activists, among them Federico Álvarez, Ignacio Villarías, and Xavier de Oteyza, joined José Miguel García Ascot in La Habana to represent the Spanish republican youth at the *Congreso*

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403 Ibid., p. 218.

404 See the full text of all speeches: „Acto de Protesta contra las últimas detenciones de antifranquistas españoles y por la Libertad de Luis Goytisolo“, *Boletín de Información. Unión de Intelectuales Españoles* V/12 (Jun-Jul 1960), pp. 29-38.

405 María Fernanda Mancebo (en nombre de Elena Aub): Historia del Movimiento Español 1959 (ME/59), in: *El Exilio Valenciano en América. Obra y Memoria*, ed. by Albert Gironai Albuixec and María Fernanda Mancebo (Valencia, 1995), p. 217.

*Latinoamericano de Juventudes*. Such ostentatious display of ideological commitment to the Cuban revolution led to the exit of the libertarian (i.e. anarchist) youth and eventually sealed the fate of the movement.<sup>406</sup> Some activities continued, such as a theatre play and a series of lectures by Manuel Cocho Gil on “New political forces and the future of Spain” at the *Ateneo Español de México* in 1960/61<sup>407</sup>, but the second generation of Spanish republicans in exile in Mexico City ultimately shared the experience of their parent generation of ideological conflict and political disintegration.

#### d. Politics into Culture

The profound failure of Spanish republican politics in exile was accompanied by a broad, influential, and lasting cultural legacy of the Spanish republican emigration in Mexico. From its earliest days in the Mexican capital, the educated elite of Spanish republicans had ventured to promote their cultural output and Spanish cultural life in general. Among the many literary and cultural publications of the early phase of exile the two journals (both launched in February 1940) *España Peregrina*, edited by the *Junta de Cultura Española* under the direction of José Bergamín from its domicile at calle Dinamarca no. 80 in the district of Juárez, and *Romance*, edited by Juan Rejano from the more central Avenida Juárez no. 95, immediately stood out.<sup>408</sup> Such initiatives were conducted and well-connected among an international context of Spanish republican intellectuals in exile both in Europe and in the Americas but remained largely directed at the educated elites within those networks of exile. The faltering attempts to promote the republican cause on the international political stage led to more prominent public displays of cultural activities which were aimed at claiming the true cultural heritage of Spain for the republican cause. Among the most important idols of the Spanish republican reservoir of cultural references was Miguel de Cervantes and his monumental *oeuvre* of “Don Quijote” which regularly featured in the cultural calendar of exile. The tragic-comic analogy of Quijote – the knight errant driven into madness by his reading habits and into a delusional odyssey in search for glory, honour, and fame, only to be defeated time and again and brought down by shrewd and cynical contemporaries – turned Cervantes’ anti-hero into the “secular

406 See footnote 7 in: Mady Letamendi and Juan Rodríguez: „La segunda generación del exilio y la gráfica cubana: Rafael Morante, Eduardo Muñoz Bachs y José Luis Posada“, in: Manuel Aznar Soler and José Ramón López García (eds): *El Exilio Republicano de 1939 y la Segunda Generación* (Sevilla, 2012), pp. 407-30; see also: „Intervención de la Delegación Española en el Primer Congreso Latinoamericano de Juventudes“, *Boletín de Información. Unión de Intelectuales Españoles* V/13 (Oct-Nov 1960), pp. 6-8.

407 See the invitations to „La Barca sin Pescador“ and to Cocho Gil’s *Ciclo de Conferencias* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 45, exp. 441, fols. 9-11.

408 Francisco Caudet: *El Exilio Español en México: Las revistas literarias (1939-1971)* (Madrid, 1992); Id.: *Cultura y Exilio. La Revista “España Peregrina” (1940)* (Valencia, 1976); M. Teresa Ferriz Roure: “*Romance*”, *una revista del exilio en México* (Sada, 2003).

patron saint of the wandering republican exiles and of the permanency of their inspiration and their strong ideals”, something that was not entirely lost on the Spanish community of exile and added to his symbolic value.<sup>409</sup> The aim of the public invocation of *Don Quijote* for Spanish republican politics was to emphasise the popular quality and appeal of Cervantes’ work in order to reject its utilisation by the propaganda of cultural *hispanidad* by the Franco regime. The 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cervantes’ birth in 1947 was marked by numerous lectures and other events at the Spanish republican embassy in Mexico City as well as the *Universidad Obrera*, and across Latin America<sup>410</sup>, conveying an image of Cervantes as the author of the Spanish people who directed his literary legacy against any form of political oppression:

Cervantes remains present in us because he knew how to live the life of the people, of his people; because he knew how to understand them; because he dreamed by dreaming of them. Hence, his once immovable presence and his unending spear-throwing at those clouds of hatred and death that float above Spain remains alive. Cervantes continues to fight, to attack, and Francoism is vomiting its hatred by accusing him of being “the first great maverick of hispanidad”.<sup>411</sup>

Instead, particularly the Spanish communists in exile in Mexico emphasised such a popular image of Cervantes and associated their cause with him, since “the creation of Cervantes is the work of a progressive man, opposed to the reactionary spirit of the minority casts which today, as in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, live like parasites at the cost of the Spanish people. When Franco wants to exploit the memory of Cervantes he is faced with the fact that the work of the immortal son of Alcalá de Henares is an investigation of injustice and traditional degradation, as embodied today by Francoism.”<sup>412</sup> Against any claims to Cervantes’ legacy by the Franco regime, they held him up as a role model for the persecuted republicans:

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409 Miguel Cabañas Bravo: “Don Quijote entre los artistas del exilio“, *eHumanista/Cervantes* 3 (2014), pp. 419-49. quote: p. 419; see also: Id.: „Quijotes en otro suelo. Artistas españoles exiliados en México“, in: Miguel Cabañas Bravo, Dolores Fernández Martínez, Noemi de Haro García, and Idoia Murga Castro (eds): *Analogías en el arte, la literatura y el pensamiento del exilio español de 1939* (Madrid, 2010), pp. 25-50; cf. Jorge de Hoyos Puente: *La Utopía del Regreso. Proyectos del estado y sueños de nación en el exilio republicano en México* (México D.F. / Santander, 2012), pp. 274-6.

410 „Noticias del Cuarto Centenario de Cervantes“, *Las Españas. Revista Literaria* II/5 (29 Jul 1947), p.2.

411 See, e.g., „Cuarto Centenario de Don Miguel de Cervantes“, *Las Españas. Revista Literaria* II/5 (29 Jul 1947), p.1.

412 „El fascismo español trata de explotar a su favor la obra de Cervantes“, *España Popular* VIII/371 (7 Nov 1947), p. 2.

Cervantes was a son of the Spanish people. As such, he lived and died enduring misery and hardship, although he was already famous and his work known and praised everywhere. In that society corrupted by the feudal land-owning nobility, by the clergy and the Inquisition, Cervantes was forced to work under the most pitiful conditions in order to make a living and thus to be able to write his unparalleled work. From all that is known, a good part of “Quijote” was written in prison, because Cervantes knew the prisons of the Spanish monarchy, as he knew ruthless terror from his captivity in Algiers.

Cervantes could, thus, serve as a reference point for “the road to progress and freedom”, as he and the characters he created appeared as “flesh and blood of Spain, of the Spanish people, which is ours”, now to be defended by the anti-Franco *guerrilla* in Spain, the strike movement in the Basque country, or the republican intellectuals.<sup>413</sup>

In the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 1947, the *Unión de Intelectuales Españoles* (UIE) used the stage of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* to celebrate Cervantes’ birthday as an “homage to the government and the people of Mexico”.<sup>414</sup> The evening consisted of two scenic displays of interludes by Cervantes, “EL Viejo Celoso” and “La Guarda Cuidadosa”, separated by the performance of a madrigal choir performing texts by Cervantes and his epitaph, set to music by Adolfo Salazar, Rodolfo Halffter, and Luis Sandi.<sup>415</sup> Mariano Ruiz Funes spoke the introductory words in the name of the UIE, taking “from the pages of Cervantes texts and scenes which express the Spaniards’ love of freedom, their hatred of tyranny, their contempt for the forces of evil, their bravery in confronting lawless authority, and their energetic and indomitable will-power to fight and resist those who try to enslave them.”<sup>416</sup> The highlight of the evening, however, was the presence of the Mexican president Miguel Alemán Valdés, alongside the foreign secretary Jaime Torres Bodet, and Fernando Casas Alemán, chief of the department for the *Distrito Federal*. At a time when the administration of Alemán Valdés, at its highest levels, was increasingly hesitating to be identified publicly with the Spanish republican politics of exile, the celebration of Cervantes provided a legitimate occasion for an appearance by the president, but the Spanish communists were quick and eager to claim some political benefit from his presence:

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413 „La obra de Cervantes pertenece al pueblo, jamás a los franquistas“, *España Popular* VIII/370 (31 Oct 1947), p. 2.

414 Invitation to „Centenario del Nacimiento de Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra“ at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 45, exp. 433, fol. 146.

415 See the programme, *ibid.*, fols. 147-8.

416 „Un gran acto de la Unión de Intelectuales Españoles. Homenaje a Cervantes y al Gobierno y pueblo de México“, *España Popular* VIII/371 (7 Nov 1947), p. 2.

When appearing on the balcony, a manifestation of affection and gratitude broke loose. The hall was packed to the limit. All the republican emigration had heeded the call of the Unión de Intelectuales Españoles. And that mass of an enormous audience – aware of the political significance which the presence of the highest Mexican official implied in republican and Spanish solemnity – stood to give Lic. Alemán one of the loudest and most enthusiastic, sincerest and most grateful ovations which he surely has ever heard. The Vivas! to Mexico and to the Spanish Republic reverberated through the enormous hall while the anthems of Mexico and the Republic were applauded, too. And the president, standing and greeting the audience, was unable to hide his feelings at such explosions of enthusiasm.<sup>417</sup>

Eight years later, when the World Peace Council in Stockholm included the publication of the first part of Cervantes' *Quijote* in a list of literary anniversaries to celebrate, the Spanish Peace Council in Mexico was quick to politicise Cervantes' testament of the "universality of the Spanish spirit" and the "human community of all cultures, root and base of peace and collaboration of all nations":

For us, the Spaniards true to the living truth of Spain, trampled down today by "nationalists" who open up the country to the barbarians and nuclear war, the commemoration of Quijote is a banner of reconquest of national authenticity and universal peace.<sup>418</sup>

During the spring of 1955, the *Casa de España Republicana* dedicated a lecture series to the legacy of Cervantes' *Quijote*: on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 1955, the painter and draughtsman Augusto Fernández "described in moving words the places in Algiers where Cervantes used to be imprisoned which Augusto Fernández got to know, equally exiled, in 1939." Fernández went on to draw on his experiences as the inspiration for him becoming an illustrator for Cervantes' work.<sup>419</sup> Juan Rejano continued the series with the question: "What is the Quijote, what is its significance, its intention?" After a survey of literary criticism inspired by Cervantes' work, Rejano "approached the topic from the viewpoint of historical materialism, presenting a short essay of an interpretation of Quijote in light of our theory." He emphasised the element of social critique in the work of Cervantes

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417 Ibid.

418 „Commemoraciones de figuras y obras de la Cultura Universal“, *España y la Paz* V/48 (15 Jun 1955), p. 8.

419 „Commemoración del CCCL aniversario de la aparición del »Quijote«. Conferencia del pintor Augusto Fernández“, *España Popular* XVI/756 (25 Mar 1955), p. 2.; see also: Miguel Cabañas Bravo, Noemi de Haro García, and Idoia Murga Castro: „Augusto Fernández, ilustrador de *Don Quijote* en el exilio mexicano“, *Anales Cervantinos* XLIII (2011), pp. 117-43.

and its resulting “human, universal, and immortal quality”.<sup>420</sup> Finally, José Mancisidor presented the conversations of Quijote and his companion Sancho as incidents of “a profound and transcendental dialectical game between the ideal and the material”.<sup>421</sup> The republican politics of culture could, thus, capitalise publicly on the legacy of Cervantes and his *Quijote* in a politicised, yet uncontroversial way.

In 1948, such public manifestations of the cultural politics of exile were advanced further by a group centred around the journal *Las Españas*, founded in 1946 by Manuel Andújar, José Ramón Arana, and Anselmo Carretero with offices at Avenida Yucatán no. 34-A.<sup>422</sup> Under the direction of José Luis de la Loma, Jesús Ruiz del Río, and Jiménez Botey, the *Amigos de “Las Españas”* established their home at the domicile of José Bergamín’s *Editorial Séneca* at calle Varsovia no. 35 in the district of Juárez and organised public talks, literary readings, and other cultural events.<sup>423</sup> In the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1948, the group organised the “*Acto en Defensa de la Cultural Española*” in the *Sala de Conferencias* of the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*. In the presence of the Spanish republican ambassador Luis Nicolau d’Olwer and the former prime minister José Giral, Anselmo Carretero first introduced the theme of universal humanism as the guiding principle of cultural life in exile:

It was of vital importance, and it remains so, that we began to talk unassumingly from the human point of view, of our human and Spanish race, and not from those monstrous objectifications which lead to hate, to de-personalisation, to the image of man as a cog-wheel without worries or warmth such as ours. It was necessary to tell one another that we are the same as yesterday; that the bitter and hard crust which covers us is something artificial, something rained down on those who survive physically their deepest death: it was necessary to tell ourselves that we are the same in our generosity, in our dreams, in our hopes; but even more firmly, more secure, with a much clearer vision of our people and its history.<sup>424</sup>

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420 „Conferencia del poeta Juan Rejano sobre »El Quijote«, *España Popular* XVI/759 (15 Apr 1955), p. 3.

421 „CCCL aniversario de la aparición del Quijote. Conferencia del Prof. José Mancisidor“, *España Popular* XVI/762 (6 May 1955), p. 3.

422 See the letter of introduction of the journal *Las Españas* (Oct 1946) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 46, exp. 446, fol. 3; cf. James Valender and Gabriel Rojo Leyva: *Las Españas. Historia de una revista del exilio (1942-1963)* (México D.F., 1999).

423 See the self-characterisation of the *Amigos de „Las Españas”* at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 46, exp. 446, fols. 30-1.

424 „Acto den Defensa de la Cultura Española“, *Las Españas* III/10 (29 Sep 1948), p. 1.

José María Gallegos Rocafull, described as “an example of a catholic intellectual who is loyal to the democratic institutions”<sup>425</sup>, explored the humanitarian value of culture as a shared heritage of the Hispanic world, not as a “relationship between mother and daughters but as sisters, all daughters of the same mother, the old Spain, whose tradition and culture we need to defend against the common enemies with the same determination at all times.”<sup>426</sup> In a historical survey, the former director of the National University of Mexico and of the Institute of Fine Arts, Antonio Castro Leal, traced the reconstruction of Spanish culture since the collapse of its colonial empire within its European context and saw it culminating during the Second Republic, only to be abandoned by its European neighbours and the new world powers of the post-war period. Still, he saw hope for the republican cause: “All true culture is exploration and daring and originality; and those values, which are the essence of the Spanish spirit, are the worst enemies, sworn enemies, of any regime that fears ideas of change, of novelty, and of adventure. [...] Sooner or later that regime will be over, because history can make a nation suffer, but not condemn it forever.”<sup>427</sup> Finally, the French socialist Marcel Baitallon contrasted humanitarian values as part of Spanish culture with the rule of “naked force” and emphasised their universal qualities:

That is the Spanish culture which I feel prepared to defend, not for it being specifically Spanish, but for being human, and illustrated by the finest examples of humanity who came out of Spain. [...] Before going out in defense of culture we all must always defend it in ourselves against all tendencies of cowardice. The words we have heard here convince us that among the Spanish exiles there is no shortage of the necessary test of conscience, the fortitude of truly cultivated men. The defense of Spanish culture is in good hands.<sup>428</sup>

Such cultural politics of exile soon achieved a more sustainable institutional foundation and consequently more permanent presence in the intellectual, artistic, and academic life of the Mexican capital through the foundation of the *Ateneo Español de México* the following year. The idea of a permanent centre for the artistic and academic elite among the community of Spanish republican exiles reached back across the preceding decade: already in July 1940, an initiative from among the circle around the journal *España Peregrina*, edited by the *Junta de Cultura Española* under the direction of José Bergamín, had issued an invitation to its domicile at calle Dinamarca no. 80 in the district of *Juárez* with the intention of discussing “the establishment of an association of intellectuals which could call itself the *Ateneo Español*”. Their concept had stated the goal of such an institution

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425 Ibid.

426 Ibid., p. 2.

427 Ibid., p. 4.

428 Ibid.



as to “unite the Spanish residents in Mexico for the defence and continuity of culture which today is being perverted on Spanish soil.” Politically, such an *Ateneo* of intellectuals should achieve “unity above all party allegiance with rigorous exclusion of all politics within the association” while demanding “loyalty to the Spanish cause, to the struggle of the Spanish people as an integral part of its culture.” The internal structure of such an organisation was to consist of separate sections, such as for literature, visual arts, science, medicine, law, architecture and engineering, education, music, film, and others. The initiative was promoted by León Felipe (the most prominent poet of Spanish exile in Mexico), the historian Ramón Iglesia<sup>429</sup>, the philosopher and literary scholar Agustín Millares (who belonged among the founding members of the *Casa de España* and the *Colegio de México* and who also served as Latin teacher at the *Academia Hispano-Mexicana*), the writer and painter José Moreno Villa, later active in the *Unión de Intelectuales Españoles*, and the painter José Renau, publicly active later in the pro-Soviet politics of exile, for example among the leadership of the Spanish *Comisión de Ayuda a la URSS*, and in the Spanish Peace Council.<sup>430</sup> The politics of this group, thus, clearly leaned towards the SERE/CTARE camp of *negrinistas* in Mexico. The meeting was scheduled to take place on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 1940 but evidently did not result in any further concrete steps. Years later, in January 1944, these initiators of the idea of a republican *Ateneo Español* in Mexico (except for José Moreno Villa) belonged to an extensive group of Spanish republican intellectuals who opposed Indalecio Prieto’s *Junta de Liberación Española* (JEL) for its policy of excluding pro-Soviet tendencies from any attempts at unifying the Spanish republican politics of exile: “If one truly tries to unify the Spaniards in exile, we need an organisation which reflects the reality of exile and in which all can feel represented. The old quarrels need to be drowned in the shared disgrace of expatriation and in the light of the danger which still surrounds Spain.”<sup>431</sup> The signatories not only included the prominent leadership of the exiled Left, such as José Giral, Manuel Márquez, Mariano Ruiz Funes, and Wenceslao Roces, but also the medical professor Joaquín d’Harcourt. After the renewed efforts in defence of Spanish culture in exile originating from the circle around the journal *Las Españas* during the late 1940s, d’Harcourt advanced to take on the key role in establishing the most important institutional nucleus of Spanish republican intellectual life in Mexico.<sup>432</sup>

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429 Cf.: Sebastiaan Faber: „En Defensa de la Historia (y IV). El historiador que no quería escribir para sus colegas. El exilio de Ramón Iglesia (1905-1948)“, *Conversaciones sobre la Historia* (9 Sep 2019), <https://conversacionsobrehistoria.info/2019/09/09/en-defensa-de-la-historia-y-iv-el-historiador-que-no-queria-escribir-para-sus-colegas-el-exilio-de-ramon-iglesia-1905-1948/>

430 See the invitation and preliminary layout of an *Ateneo Español* in Mexico (9 Jul 1940) at BNAH, fondo CTARE, rollo 140, ep. 6597, s. fol.

431 „Llamado a la Unificación“, *El Nacional* (22 Jan 1944).

432 See: *Memoria del Ateneo Español de México, 1949-2019*, by José María Espinasa (Ciudad de México, 2019), p. 33-41; see also: José María López Sánchez: „El Ateneo Español de México y el exilio intelectual republicano“, *Arbor – Ciencia, Pensamiento y Cultura* 185/735 (2009), pp.

Alongside the momentum from among the *Amigos de "Las Españas"*, the foundation of the *Ateneo Español de México* also relied on the cooperation with the *Ateneo Ramón y Cajal*, the association of Spanish republican medical doctors in Mexico, which had originated from the need of homologation of Spanish medical degrees in Mexico.<sup>433</sup> D'Harcourt proved to be the ideal moderator of different strands of Spanish republican intellectual life during the late 1940s as a medical professor and former Chief Surgeon of the republican army during the Civil War. During his years in exile in Mexico, he had never engaged in high-profile political activities, although in 1944 he had belonged to the pioneers of the communist-dominated *Comisión de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional* in Mexico and later in 1945 had been a spokesman for its successor, the Mexican branch of the *Unión Nacional Española*.<sup>434</sup> It is likely that such political appearances had caused the intelligence unit of the US embassy already in July 1944 to count d'Harcourt among "individuals [...] affiliated with the Communist Party of Spain, Delegation in Mexico, but [...] not regarded as important members".<sup>435</sup> But such third-party suspicions did not call into question his leadership during the foundation of the *Ateneo Español de México* in early 1949 which committed itself to the "liberation of the Spanish people and the establishment of a republican regime in its territory, based on freedom and democracy."<sup>436</sup> When the foundation *socios* of the *Ateneo* congregated at their new domicile at Avenida Morelos no. 26 in the far west of the district of *Centro* on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 1949 for the official inauguration ceremony, its first president Joaquín d'Harcourt characterised the *Ateneo Español de México* as a descendant of the *Ateneo de Madrid* which had "formed the political conscience of the masses of Madrid in distressing times for our country. Its great example, of clean and humane conduct, will constitute the most valued standard to follow for our *Ateneo*." He stated the intention of the new institution as to "bring together the greatest possible number of Spanish republicans while respecting their personal political ideology" in a "climate of spiritual and cultural coexistence" for which

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41-55; Francisco Javier Elvira Guinda: „Fundación del Ateneo Español de México" (ITESM, 2012), [https://www.academia.edu/11321891/Fundación\\_del\\_Ateneo\\_Español\\_de\\_México](https://www.academia.edu/11321891/Fundación_del_Ateneo_Español_de_México)

433 See: José María López Sánchez: „El Ateneo Español de México y el exilio intelectual republicano", *Arbor – Ciencia, Pensamiento y Cultura* 185/735 (2009), pp. 42-5.

434 „Se crea en México una comisión provisional de Ayuda a la Junta Suprema“, *España Popular* V/194 (16 Jun 1944), p. 1; „Vibrante mensaje a la Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional“, *España Popular* V/199 (21 Jul 1944), p. 3; „Un año de Junta Suprema de Unión Nacional“, *España Popular* V/208 (22 Sep 1944), p. 3; „Resolución aprobada sobre los principios políticos y orgánicos del movimiento de Unión Nacional Española en México y candidatura“, *España Popular* VI/245 (15 Jun 1945), p. 4.

435 Memorandum on „Partido Comunista Español – Delegación en México (Communist Party of Spain – Delegation in Mexico“ (20 Jul 1944) at USNACP, RG 84, UD2895, 820.02, pp. 2-3.

436 Statutes of the *Ateneo Español de México* (1949), as quoted in: José María López Sánchez: „El Ateneo Español de México y el exilio intelectual republicano", *Arbor – Ciencia, Pensamiento y Cultura* 185/735 (2009), p. 45.

Spanish republicanism served as the common denominator. He defined the *Ateneo Español* as a place of active engagement with the Spanish republican community of exile, not as an academic ivory tower:

With that we want to indicate that we are open to all currents of intellectual and artistic renewal, loyal to our republican conviction. In this way, the work of our Ateneo will not be limited to the potential of a circle of intellectuals, a category which in itself would already limit the [range of] collaborators, but instead we will aspire to contribute to the cultural and political formation of our people, accepting, or rather, asking for contributions not only by professional intellectuals but by all liberal persons, interested in the growth and refinement of the fount of popular culture.<sup>437</sup>

Ceferino Palencia served as vice-president of the *Ateneo Español* and reminded the audience of the long history of the *Ateneo Madrid* since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and that “the cruel and inexorable reality gets in the way of burning-hot Quijotesque fantasy, in this case the reality of the times” – all the more reason for him to offer sincere gratitude to Mexico as the host nation of Spanish republican exile, represented on this occasion by the sub-secretary of the Mexican foreign ministry, Manuel Tello.<sup>438</sup> Finally, Alfonso Reyes spoke as president of the *Colegio de México* of his own personal recollections of the *Ateneo Madrid* which he characterised as the finishing school of his own intellectual and political coming-of-age. Against his personal experience of trans-Atlantic Hispanic intellectual culture, he wished for a lively exchange between the *Ateneo Español* and the intellectual environment in Mexico: “These walls will not indicate a frontier of separation, but a zone of amalgamation where the climates of American Spain and Spanish America may blend and find their new balance.”<sup>439</sup>

The actual work of the *Ateneo Español* was carried out by its sections which covered the areas of the visual arts, medical and biological sciences, philosophy, economy, and history, literature, theatre and cinematography, as well as music and radio. Together with events of a “general character”, the *Ateneo* opened its doors for lectures, art exhibitions, musical performances, and other events several times per week, e.g. during 1950 for 129 separate events.<sup>440</sup> The number of *socios* who joined the *Ateneo* rose from almost 700 during the first year

437 „Discurso pronunciado por el Dr. Joaquín d’Harcourt el 16 de marzo de 1949“, AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 52, exp. 510, fols. 11-4.

438 „Discurso pronunciado por Don Ceferino Palencia el día 16 de marzo de 1949“, AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 52, exp. 510, fols. 15-24.

439 „Discurso pronunciado por el Lic. Alfonso Reyes el día 16 de marzo de 1949“, AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 52, exp. 510, fols. 25-30.

440 See the overview „Resumen de los Actos celebrados en la entidad durante el año de 1950“, AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 53, exp. 513, fol. 11.

of its existence to more than 1.300 by the end of the 1950s, although a significant number of resignations from the *Ateneo* makes it difficult to come up with an accurate membership record against substantial fluctuation throughout the decade.<sup>441</sup> Still, the *Ateneo* certainly represents the most successful and sustained effort to unite and promote the intellectual potential of the Spanish community of exile under a distinct political commitment to republicanism beyond the pitfalls of ideological polarisation during the global confrontation of the Cold War. In September 1950, the *Ateneo* directed a petition of protest to the United Nations, demanding not to recognise the Franco regime in Spain in no uncertain terms:

We appeal to the representatives of the United Nations who are true democrats to honour their liberal convictions and to proceed with broad vision with regard to the case presented before them by the last remains of Nazi-Fascism, embodied by the government of Franco, the survival of which is an embarrassment to universal conscience.

The *Ateneo* spoke in the name of the political exiles “who represent the will to resist the terrorist dictatorship installed in their country.” And the global context did not elude the leadership of the *Ateneo*, although they skillfully avoided to name any specific culprits:

The opinion of dictatorial governments notwithstanding, which unfortunately for the progressive march of humanity have flourished in several parts of the globe, some powers which still dress up as acting democracies dare to defend the Spanish regime of Francisco Franco, justifying their more or less clandestine support with a strategic necessity of a very doubtful virtual nature and with the feeble argument that they may not meddle in the internal politics of a nation which for a decade has a dictatorial regime while the popular forces, which are suffering under it, have not achieved any change.<sup>442</sup>

In November 1951, Joaquín d’Harcourt, Antonio Rodríguez Luna, and José Luis de la Loma signed a message to the Spanish Peace Congress in Mexico City in the name of the *Ateneo Español*, “a cultural institution alien to party politics”, carefully worded to stay clear of any ideologically charged rhetoric but emphatic about the political function of culture. As “representatives of the progressive and liberal feelings of the Spanish people” they expressed their “desire to defend for itself the great traditions, as far as they are generous and forging the Spanish and world civilisations, and to state their firmest rejection of all acts which pretend to invoke those traditions to conceal a propaganda in favour of systems of government so far removed from what they represent that such invocation is

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441 See the membership records at AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fols. 29-40 and 119-44.

442 „Ofensiva contra Franco, del Ateneo Español de México“, *Excelsior* (28 Sep 1950).

laughable.” Pointing at economic despair and political oppression, the leadership of the *Ateneo* denied the Spanish regime the right to pose as defenders of art and culture “which can only prosper in a climate of liberty, missing today from that unfortunate country.”<sup>443</sup> In September 1953, d’Harcourt and de la Loma joined the public protests by the Spanish republican community in exile against the US-Spanish military pact by which they saw Spanish sovereignty over “important parts of the national territory” ceded to a foreign power “in exchange for hypothetical economic aid.” In a bizarre rhetorical parody of post-imperial Spanish nationalism they deplored a “humiliating situation of colonisation” and accused those who “proclaim cravings for imperialism and demand the reintegration of Gibraltar into Spanish sovereignty” of handing over control over “naval bases and airports precisely to the very nation which ignominiously robbed Spain of pieces of its territory half a century ago.” Such a pact signed by a regime supported by force rather than by the will of its people they regarded as null and void.<sup>444</sup>

However prominently and actively the *Ateneo Español* presented itself as the voice of the educated elite of the Spanish republican community in exile, its position was not uncontroversial. Some outside observers even believed to detect a fundamental conflict between the *Ateneo* and the *Unión de Intelectuales Españoles* (UIE). While the Mexican government had indicated evident approval of the foundation of the *Ateneo Español* and the latter surely maintained close political connections with the pro-Soviet faction of Spanish politics in exile, it is nevertheless untrue what an agent of the *Secretaría de Gobernación* reported at the end of 1950, namely that the UIE had been founded in explicit opposition to the political moderation of the *Ateneo*<sup>445</sup> – the UIE had already existed in Mexico since 1947. And while some leading members of the UIE, such as the journalist Ricardo Castellote or the poet León Felipe, participated in unmistakable displays of their communist affiliation, for example at a public birthday homage to Josef Stalin in December 1950<sup>446</sup>, others, such as Emilio Criado y Romero, belonged to the founding circle of *socios* of the *Ateneo*, some signed up later and became active contributors to its activities, as the UIE’s president Mariano Ruiz Funes, and even those who never joined the *Ateneo*, such as León Felipe or the writer Juan Rejano, agreed to present lectures and read from their works there. If the

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443 „Nota del Ateneo Español de México“, *España y la Paz* I/7 (15 Nov 1951), p. 15.

444 „Protesta del Ateneo Español“, press report (Sep 1953) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, fondo Tomás Bilbao, Hemeroteca del Exilio 50/53, fol. 87; the invocation of the US-Spanish War of 1898 may have reflected the fact that d’Harcourt had himself been born in Cuba as the son of a Spanish colonial officer and may also have been intended as a rhetorical device to appeal to anti-US-American feelings among the ex-patriate Spanish colony in Mexico, or even the wider Mexican public which vividly remembered the US-Mexican War of 1846-48.

445 Confidential memorandum „Unión de Intelectuales Españoles en México“ (28 Dec 1950), at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 11, fol. 81.

446 Memorandum „Comunismo“ (22 Dec 1950), at AGN, DGIPS, caja 315, exp. 11, fols. 74-5.

*Ateneo* was facing open political hostility from among the Spanish republican community of exile in Mexico, it originated from the Spanish communists proper: In 1952, the PCE complained to the directors of the *Ateneo* about an invitation extended to an organisation named *Acción Socialista* in their attempts to forge broad anti-Franco alliances among the exile community, a group of ex-communists which the PCE characterised as “human debris [...] who act in the service of the north-American imperialists, the Yugoslav fascists, and the Falange.”<sup>447</sup> One year later, the *Ateneo*’s nationalistic defense of Spanish sovereignty against the US-Spanish military pact did not find favour with the Spanish communists who accused the *Ateneo*, alongside the *Casa Regional Valenciana*, of “inadmissible compromises with the tormentors and enemies of our people.” In particular, their journal *España Popular* scandalised their cooperation with the activities of the *Junta Española de Covadonga*, a charitable organisation of the nationalistic Spanish ex-patriate colony in Mexico. Under the misleading label of “apolitical” charitable work, so the paper argued, the *Ateneo* would lose sight of the subversive tactics of the Franco regime, particularly in the area of charitable activities: “The objectives which the Francoist promoters of such intrigue pursue are not of any philanthropic, but of a clearly political nature at the service and in support of the Franco regime.” The Spanish republican community in exile should therefore remain “alert and vigilant” and “unmask such criminal activities” in order not to be trapped by those who “seek to slow down the struggle against the Franco regime and provide support for their reactionary intrigues and the prolongation of his dictatorship.”<sup>448</sup> But such accusations of collaboration with supporters of the Franco regime did not prevent the ongoing collaboration of the *Ateneo* with the pro-Soviet faction of the Spanish intellectual community in exile. Only weeks after the attacks by *España Popular*, Joaquín d’Harcourt, José Luis de la Loma, and Ceferino Palencia signed a public declaration against the US-Spanish military pact by the *Unión de Intelectuales Españoles* which invoked 500 years of Spanish civilisation as a “mother of nations” and integral part of universal culture, but “today, by that shameful pact, subjected and converted into a docile instrument of the war plans of a foreign power.”<sup>449</sup>

It was precisely the relative political openness and flexibility of the *Ateneo*’s position as a forum for debate among the republican community of exile which brought it, with some regularity, into conflict with those currents of republican politics in exile which regarded themselves as the guardians of ideological purity, above all the Spanish communists. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 1955, the *Ateneo* opened its venue to a speech by Máximo Muñoz López, a former follower of Indalecio Prieto’s *Agrupación Socialista*, who developed the central

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447 Quoted after: José María López Sánchez: „El Ateneo Español de México y el exilio intelectual republicano”, *Arbor – Ciencia, Pensamiento y Cultura* 185/735 (2009), p. 51.

448 „ALERTA contra las maniobras de Falange“, *España Popular* XIV/675 (4 Sep 1953), p. 1.

449 *Declaración de la Unión de Intelectuales Españoles en México* (Oct 1953) at AEM, Acervo Histórico, Impresos Suelos 2, fols. 40-1.

argument of anti-totalitarianism with regard to the situation of the Spanish republican emigration in Mexico.<sup>450</sup> He diagnosed the fundamental political failure of Spanish republicanism in exile as a consequence of its ideological fragmentation which needed to be overcome by a new unification of republican political currents in the form of a *Partido de la Democracia Española*. Above all, however, both fascism and communism needed to be rigorously rejected for being equivalent and potentially violent enemies of democracy and the Spanish nation. He detected in communism “no other goal than to spread hatred against the United States” which guarded its zone of influence just as the Soviet Union did: “It suffices to look at the slavery under which the great nations of Poland, Romania etc. are living.” Communism, however, could not be regarded as anything but an ideological brother of fascism, “and they understand each other well.” His speech also included strong personal attacks against Indalecio Prieto whom he accused of financial enrichment and of neglecting his duties as defense secretary during the Civil War and who could “never return to Spain under any government.”<sup>451</sup> Predictably, the Spanish communists referred to his lecture as that of an “agent of the FBI and north-American imperialism”.<sup>452</sup> They accused Muñoz of neglecting the domestic resistance movement to the Franco regime under communist leadership, of attempting to undermine the political organisations of Spanish republicanism, and of trying to appear a more forceful anti-communist than the Spanish *Falange*. As a result, the journal *España Popular* deplored the fact that the *Ateneo Español* had provided a platform for “an undesirable who tries to deepen the divisions in the heart of the Spanish emigration with the aim of impeding the emigrants’ patriotic struggle against the invaders of our home country at whose service he is working.”<sup>453</sup> In a strongly worded letter to the *Ateneo*’s president Joaquín d’Harcourt, the PCE’s secretary general in Mexico, Juan José Manso, reiterated the complaint and ended on a somewhat patronising note: “We ask you, Señor President, to let the Junta Directiva of your prestigious

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450 Cf. Juan Antonio Muñoz Castillo: *Máximo Muñoz: el hombre que sabía demasiado y quiso ver más allá. Una visión alternativa del exilio republicano en México* (Editorial Académica Española, 2018); 15 years earlier, Muñoz López had been an employee of the Mexican consulate in Marseille and was evidently involved in forging and selling Mexican visa, see: Daniela Gleizer: *Unwelcome Exiles. Mexico and the Jewish Refugees from Nazism* (Leiden, 2014), p. 210.

451 „Máximo Muñoz hace un elogio de los Republicanos“, *Excelsior* (24 Feb 1955), pp. 4 & 13; cf. also Máximo Muñoz López: *Acusación. (la gran traición a España y al socialismo español): mensaje al VI Congreso del Partido Socialista, en Toulouse (Francia)* (México D.F., 1955).

452 This characterisation was probably motivated by the fact that Muñoz had repeatedly and publicly played host to John W. Dulles, the son of the US-American Secretary of State John F. Dulles and nephew of CIA director Allen W. Dulles, in his home at Avenida México no. 55 in the district of *Hipódromo*: „Comida al Sr. John W. Dulles“, *Excelsior* (18 Mar 1953); „Reunión Social en la Residencia del Ingeniero Máximo Muñoz“, *Excelsior* (17 Jul 1954).

453 „Conferencia de un agente del imperialismo norteamericano“, *España Popular* XVI/753 (4 Mar 1955), p. 2.

institution know of our disgust and respectful protest against the event we commented on. An event which we would like to think has happened as a consequence of having been surprised in your good faith in the mentioned subject.”<sup>454</sup> Adding to the ill-feelings that his speech produced was the fact that Muñoz had his lecture printed as a booklet entitled “Grandeza y Tragédia de la Emigración Republicana Española” and distributed it in Mexico City, complete with the name of the *Ateneo Español* and claiming to having been introduced on that occasion by the *Ateneo*’s secretary José Luis de la Loma. In a letter to Muñoz, both, de la Loma and the *Ateneo*’s president Joaquín d’Harcourt, registered their “profound displeasure and strongest protest” against the appearance of responsibility for his lecture, as “the *Ateneo* had nothing to do with the organisation of the event and only ceded to you its platform, following its traditional line of respect for the freedom of expression.”<sup>455</sup> But however much the *Ateneo* tried to distance itself from Muñoz, his “particular points of view” and his “personal problems”<sup>456</sup>, it is worth noting that Muñoz was listed by the *Ateneo* as no. 15 among 87 “selected members”.<sup>457</sup> De la Loma forwarded a copy of their protest to Santiago Gilabert, the managing director of *España Popular*, where the *Ateneo*’s protest was reprinted two weeks later. The communists’ response, however, did little to put the scandal to rest:

The sad, the painful thing in this case is that a prestigious cultural centre such as the *Ateneo Español de México* provides a platform to a type of such moral outlook as Muñoz. We applaud the zeal with which the *Ateneo* defends the free expression of thought. But the free expression of thought has nothing to do with adventurism, much less so with paid-for provocateurs. May this experience – this instructive experience – be useful to all the republican emigration that they will not let themselves be surprised and stay alert against this class of dangerous subjects, sold to the promoters of nuclear war, voracious colonisers of Spain.<sup>458</sup>

In the polarised ideological conflict of the Cold War, the *Ateneo Español* could do little to avoid being caught, time and again, in the political crossfire between the opposing camps. Still, in October 1955, the *Ateneo* was the venue for the meeting which produced the message of protest by all Spanish exile organisations in

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454 „Carta del Comité del Partido Comunista de España en México al presidente del *Ateneo Español*“, *España Popular* XVI/754 (11 Mar 1955), p. 2.

455 Letter by Joaquín d’Harcourt and José Luis de la Loma to Máximo Muñoz López (1 Apr 1955) at FPI, Archivos Particulares, Julián Borderas Pallaruelo, AJPB 479-21, fol. 18.

456 *Ibid.*

457 „Socios seleccionados del *Ateneo Español de México*“, AEM, Acervo Histórico, caja 50, exp. 492, fol. 150.

458 „Las maniobras de un provocador“, *España Popular* XVI/759 (15 Apr 1955), p. 2.



Mexico against the accession of the Franco regime to full UN membership, addressed to UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld.<sup>459</sup> Even the Spanish communists did not hide their “true satisfaction” with the fact that the *Ateneo* served as the rallying point for “this first action of a united struggle of all republican forces in exile.”<sup>460</sup>

In the midst of the political and ideological conflict surrounding Muñoz’ appearance at the *Ateneo Español*, its secretary José Luis de la Loma marked the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Ateneo* in March 1955 with a speech which, once again, placed the *Ateneo* in the tradition of the *Ateneo Madrid*. But while the cultural life of Spain had succumbed to the ideological requirements of the Franco regime, this tradition needed to be renewed in Mexico: “[...] an Ateneo is not a building, nor a name; an Ateneo without its own spirit, with its activity restricted and a code of conduct, is not an Ateneo.”<sup>461</sup> It had therefore fallen to a “fourth generation” of members of the *Ateneo* to re-create the tradition against all material obstacles and against all forms of “political passion, or rather political poisoning.” As the institution did not subscribe to any ideologically specific brand of Spanish republicanism in exile, “suspicion was universal”. Against the polarisation of ideological conflict, de la Loma once again identified the role of the *Ateneo* as to “defend and promote, in the cultural field, the Spanish artistic, literary, and scientific work and to stimulate its new manifestations; in the political field, to defend the cause of the Republic and of freedom in Spain.” In a scarcely veiled reference to the heated public debate during the recent days, he continued that “it is clear that the unbending exercise of tolerance and respect for the freedom of opinion has not always been well received and that, on one occasion or another, has caused small outbreaks of intransigence and incomprehension.” But against all difficulties, he saw the new generation of *Ateneistas* on the way towards creating an “archive of serenity”.<sup>462</sup> He also acknowledged the contributions of Latin American intellectuals and the growing involvement of women in the activities of the *Ateneo*. But one fundamental problem remained, as de la Loma was forced to acknowledge:

The current generation of *Ateneistas* faces one great drawback, the lack of young blood. It is sad to acknowledge it, but the Spanish youth has not joined in to the extent which this generation of the *Ateneo* had hoped for. [...] When, during the events held at the *Ateneo*, one looks from the podium across the room, it gives cause for some grief, mixed

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459 „Franco y las Naciones Unidas“, *CNT I/2* (Nov 1955), p. 2.

460 „Un primer paso ampliamente unitario“, *España Popular XVI/784* (14 Oct 1955), p. 1.

461 José Luis de la Loma: *La cuarta generación del Ateneo. Discurso leído el día 24 de Marzo de 1955* (México D.F., 1955), p. 3.

462 *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

with a feeling of profound sympathy, to see how white heads dominate almost completely.<sup>463</sup>

De la Loma saw the relative failure to attract younger members rooted in a fundamental generational divide of experience across the Spanish republican community of exile in Mexico. Those who had not actively participated in the political and cultural life of the Spanish Republic or fought during the Civil War had not developed any personal attachment to the republican cause or even to Spain in general. De la Loma saw them as part of a global post-war generation without belief in any values or any interest in neither past nor future, simply dedicated to “live the present moment in the best way possible, without worry about a future which may not even arrive to be lived.” In the case of the Spanish youth, he also detected a specific element of generational experience which turned the younger generation away from their parents’ cultural life of the Spanish republicans in exile:

Spain, for them, is a childhood far away from home, without toys or candy, with hunger and cold, disrupted by the howling of sirens, by the buzzing of planes, the roaring of explosions; a sad childhood, lived under terror, and beyond that, the dawn of Mexico, with its light, its parks, its dedication to freedom.

And their parents’ continuous obsession with the Franco regime would not result in any positive impression of Spain either: “In such an environment, it is no wonder that many of our youngsters turn their back on anything Spanish.”<sup>464</sup> Even in the young artists of the Spanish republican emigration in Mexico de la Loma detected, and deplored, that “their work has a universalist character”, and their interests were more of a personal and “peculiar artistic” nature, instead of producing “objects of collective projection or of clearly Spanish creation which would contribute to the continuation of the Hispanic cultural tradition. In any case, those youngsters generally live detached from all things Spanish, at the margins of the cultural and political problems of Spain and, from that position, except for some valuable exceptions, far from the activities of the Ateneo.”<sup>465</sup> But instead of succumbing to pessimism, de la Loma suggested to celebrate the achievements of the fourth generation of the *Ateneo* and closed with the words of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century writer and diplomat Ángel Ganivet:

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463 Ibid., p. 10.

464 Ibid., p. 11.

465 Ibid., p. 12.

“It is better to abandon one’s country than to dishonour it; a nation that produces sons who flee from it to avoid any compromise with injustice is all the greater for those who leave than for those who stay.”<sup>466</sup>

The essential function of the *Ateneo* for the cultural politics of exile was highlighted in November 1958 by Mariano Moreno Mateo who developed the history of the Spanish Republic, the nature of the Franco dictatorship in Spain, and the task of the restoration of the democratic republic over a three-part lecture series. His insistence on the republican cause, rejecting both Franco’s restoration of the Spanish monarchy or any constitutional settlement by a referendum, delivered to an aging audience of Spanish republicans who had been exiled in Mexico for almost two decades, may not have carried much political weight in the real world, but it came with a clear recipe for the construction of a broad republican political consensus that included a vital role for the cultural politics of the *Ateneo Español*:

I said before that I have achieved my peace, but mine is only a certain tranquility of conscience, very different from what I desire for Spain, from what all we Spaniards desire, but what cannot be achieved because of a lack of will and initiative. This peace, in its profound meaning, is a pact, an agreement, and mutual consent with the need to construct the future of the nation, the shared thought and feeling in its realisation, without considering ourselves therefore obliged to the same pattern of action and thought, to limiting creativity or ideas, to the suppression of the divergence of opinion, or to ending the variety of solutions, limiting horizons, setting definite goals for progress or to unifying colour to suppress nuances, because all of that is the function of art, of science, of thinking about that intangible, invisible, immaterial something, as essential for life as the air that we breath. That something is freedom.<sup>467</sup>

In this way, Moreno conceived of the diversity and liberty of the arts and sciences at the *Ateneo Español* as a necessary counter-balance to, if not a prerequisite for a united political effort to regain the republican political order of Spain – even if this vision can be said to have materialised at least a decade too late. José Luis de la Loma reiterated that idea in an article for the *Boletín de la Unión de Intelectuales Españoles* in 1960. De la Loma was able to point to “more than a thousand” events that had taken place in its cultural activities, including an annual lecture course on Spanish history by Rubén Landa, “directed at the younger

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466 Ibid., p. 14; the original quote in Ángel Ganivet: *Los Trabajos del infatigable Pío Cid*“, vol. 2 (Madrid, 1898), p. 99.

467 Mariano Moreno Mateo: *La República Española. Conferencias pronunciadas en el Ateneo Española de México los días 24, 26 y 28 de noviembre de 1958* (México D.F., 1959), p. 61.

generations of exile.” He characterised its political outlook as a persistent “attack, by the means at its disposal, against Francoism and the Falange which shackle, bathe in blood, and sell out Spain against the legitimate interest of the Spanish people.” In this endeavour, there existed the “greatest respect for all ideologies which are compatible with the republican ideal.”<sup>468</sup> Among the achievements of the *Ateneo*, de la Loma counted the creation of its “relatively modest” library of, at the time, “little more than 10.000 volumes” which was dedicated to the collection and documentation of the whole range of publications by the Spanish republican community in exile in Mexico. At the time, the activities of the *Movimiento Español* 1959 (which included some events at the *Ateneo Español*) may have given rise to the hope of reviving the liberal political vision of the *Ateneo* and of passing it on to a new generation committed to the republican cause. As it turned out, the library and the archival collections of the *Ateneo Español* remained its most important and lasting contribution to the legacy of Spanish republicanism in exile in Mexico.

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468 José Luis de la Loma: „El Ateneo Español de México“, *Boletín de la Unión de Intelectuales Españoles* V/12 (Jun/Jul 1960), p. 9.

# Conclusion

## **Politics of exile in a transnational metropolis**

The experience of European political refugees in Mexico City betrays a wide variety of contributory factors that help contextualise the experience of exile in the political, social, and cultural fabric of its time. As little as most of the refugees may have known about Mexico and its capital city before they arrived on the shores of Veracruz and other ports of entry, they quickly began to perceive and interpret their new environment in ways that appeared meaningful to them. The very first encounter with the country often involved amazement and wonder over the natural and cultural riches of Mexico, particularly after the experiences of persecution, Civil War, and internment in Europe. The paradise-like land of plenty on the tropical shore, however, contrasted significantly with the metropolitan experience of the capital which brought social inequality and the unfamiliar post-colonial socio-cultural mix of its population into sharper relief. For the Spanish refugees, superficial cultural similarities could, at times, obscure the peculiarity of the post-colonial experience which gradually began to sink in. After a period of a provisional and transitory existence in the city, the population of European exiles began to settle into more permanent homes and institutions of political sociability which began to form a recognisable part of the urban matrix of the Mexican capital. It is these patterns of social and political practice that this study sought to approach from a praxeological angle in order to develop the historical meaning and significance of the experience of exile from its practical manifestations across the urban landscape. The picture that arises is necessarily complex and relies on evidence of a comparatively small group of European political exiles in Mexico City, those who left behind memoirs, recounted their experiences in interviews, and – above all – engaged actively in the politics of exile and/or the cultural activities of their social groups. It is this active part of the European political emigration in Mexico which this study has focussed on with special attention to the way in which exile politics imprinted themselves publicly upon the urban matrix of the Mexican capital.

Mexico City was far from being the ideal sanctuary for left-wing political refugees from Europe during the late 1930s and 1940s. While official government politics, the powerful trade union organisations, and the intellectual elite of the country publicly championed and actively supported the case for political asylum in Mexico, large sections of Mexican society stayed sceptical, if not openly hostile to the influx of thousands of members of the European Left in the wake of its almost comprehensive defeat by the surging fascist powers in Europe. Among the European ex-patriate communities of earlier phases of immigration, only a small number of individuals embraced and supported the new arrivals while the general political attitude displayed significant rejection and hostility. If from among the

European ex-patriate communities spaces of sociability and, crucially, opportunities for employment were provided, such offers usually came with the explicit provision of de-politicisation in order to avoid importing the ideological strife of the old continent into their institutions and businesses. A pragmatic culture of cooperation seems to have developed over time which allowed for the coexistence of ex-patriate and exile communities without, however, eradicating their ideological differences. The foundation of new institutions and the development of more exclusive social spaces for the communities of European exiles illustrates the limits of such coexistence. This pattern certainly applied to the spaces of informal sociability in cafés, bars, and restaurants which remained more jealously guarded by either side of the European immigrant population in the city.

More importantly, the European political refugees arrived in the Mexican capital at a time of domestic crisis at the end of the government policies of *Cardenismo* which culminated in the bitterly confrontational election campaign of 1940. Without contributing in any significant way to the political conflict, the European refugees found themselves at the receiving end of hostility and vilification by the Mexican right-wing opposition which singled them out as evidence for the alleged betrayal of national interests by the governing state party apparatus of the PRM. Conversely, the refugees could count on the support of the corporatist trade union organisations which time and again tended to interfere physically in the political discourse across the city, as in response to the victory celebrations of the Spanish *Falange* at the *Casino Español* in April 1939. This critical position of the European exile communities in the midst of a polarised ideological confrontation in Mexican politics necessitated, at first, a rather cautious engagement with the public political sphere. Of existential importance was the work of aid and support organisations to provide housing, meals, and opportunities for employment which were either set up by the Spanish aid organisations CTARE and JARE, received support from Mexican partner organisations, such as the FOARE, or relied on the charitable support of the Jewish community and US-American aid organisations. The establishment of early institutions of political sociability, such as the *Centro Republicano Español*, maintained, at first, a relatively low profile in the metropolitan public, as did other cultural initiatives and publications. The main factor for the political paralysis of European politics of exile, however, was external: the Molotov-Ribbentop agreement of August 1939 coincided with the arrival of the first evacuation transports in Mexico and prevented an effective anti-fascist consensus either within the national sub-communities of exile or across the transnational spectrum of political emigration in Mexico City. From the beginning, the events and developments of global politics were inscribed in the social and political practice of exile in the Mexican capital – of which the assassination of Leon Trotsky in August 1940 was but one, if the most notorious, example.

The residential topography of exile in Mexico City displayed some significant patterns of an urban topography of exile which can be deciphered in a variety of ways: Generally, the European communities of exile tended to settle in the middle-class districts west of the historical city centre and the more modest city districts to the west and north of the *caballito*, the equestrian statue of Charles IV. on the Plaza de la Reforma. Be it through personal networks or the friendly inclination of landlords from among the Mexican post-revolutionary elite, in many cases the European refugees tended to inhabit closely-knit topographical communities, such as in calle de López, or in individual buildings across the city where particularly the Spanish republicans developed social spaces of cohabitation. Such effects are also evident among other nationalities of exile in Mexico City, and in some cases, such as the *Edificio Ermita* in the south-western district of *Tacubaya*, these urban communities of political refugees took on a distinctly transnational character. In some cases, the topography of residence in exile in Mexico City also displayed signs of a political concentration, as in the case of the Spanish communists who established a significant colony in the district of *Tabacalera* and some adjoining neighbourhoods in the shadow of the *Monumento a la Revolución*, or in the district of *Roma Sur* where a transnational group of mainly German and Italian communists found residence. The city itself presented considerable challenges by its sheer geographical size and diversity of districts and neighbourhoods. Of particular importance for the successful navigation of the cityscape were personal networks of support and the local hubs of social and political life, the regional centres of the Spanish colony in Mexico City and the informal centres of sociability in the cafés and restaurants. The maintenance of socio-cultural markers of identity *vis-à-vis* the post-colonial fabric of Mexican society took on considerable importance, as in the case of regional cuisine, music, and dance across the Spanish sub-communities, a tendency which is also evident among the other nationalities in exile, e.g. the Austrian community with their traditional coffee houses, wine festivals (*Heurigen*), and celebrations of the Viennese musical tradition. In this sense, the urban sub-cultures of political exile in Mexico differed little from earlier European immigrants which maintained their own spaces of identity in their social centres and restaurants.

The offer of asylum by the Cárdenas administration in spring of 1939 brought a large and multifaceted group of political refugees to Mexico which transported with them the experiences and conflicts of exile politics in Europe. The event which set off the political mobilisation of European exile in Mexico City was the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 which ended the self-imposed relative public inactivity of the anti-fascist groups and organisations in existence so far. Of considerable importance for the transnational mobilisation of national sub-communities of exile, particularly in the case of the smaller Central European (German, Austrian, Hungarian, Yugoslavian, Czechoslovakian) or the Italian and French communities of exile was the *Acción Democrática Internacional* which, from the beginning, provided a public forum for the politics of exile. Alongside this first phase of mobilisation, a range of small but active

organisations emerged which promoted the anti-fascist solidarity in exile, with particular emphasis on the support of the Soviet war effort and communist political leadership in exile politics. These political organisations emerged between November 1941 and the spring of 1942 and had considerable impact on the ideological balance of anti-fascism, particularly in the German case where the newly-established communist-dominated movement *Alemania Libre* managed to side-line the earlier non-sectarian *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana*. In the Spanish case, the appearance of the *Círculo Cultural "Jaime Vera"* marked the solidification of the ideological rift among the Spanish socialists. In terms of the urban topography of politics in exile, it is evident that the support network of the Mexican trade unions became vital for opportunities to enter the public sphere: the theatres of the unions of electricians, telephone workers, cinema workers, and others were regularly used to attract large audiences and to create events with considerable impact not just in the periodicals of the exile communities but also across the Mexican press. Such favourable connections among the post-revolutionary elite in Mexico also opened the doors to the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* or the largest meeting venues, such as the *Frontón México* or the *Arena México*. These public venues were regularly available to organisations either under communist control or with a pro-Soviet inclination to cooperate with the communists, and the personal patronage of Vicente Lombardo Toledano must not be underestimated in this context. Such privileged access to the public sphere was not enjoyed by the anti-communist socialists around Indalecio Prieto and his alliance of the *Junta de Liberación Española* who remained more or less limited to their venue at the *Centro Republicano Español*. The topography of public meetings is not simply an ephemeral detail but reflected the territorial logic of ideological fault lines across the political spectrum of exile. This becomes clear when such spaces were contested between the ideological factions and physical violence entered the political discourse, e.g. when the Mexican communists prevented a meeting scheduled by a transnational group of anti-Stalinists at the *Teatro "Hidalgo"* – a venue which the communists very much regarded as their own – or when pro-Soviet groups physically attacked anti-Stalinist meetings in commemoration of Hendryk Erlich, Victor Alter, and Carlos Tresca. A turf war over access to the transnational public sphere of the European Left in Mexico City was the result.

A topography of political practice of exile politics thereby reveals a structural confrontation between the pro-Soviet political groups and their numerous detractors which occupied different positions in the transnational fabric of exile: Indalecio Prieto's socialists at the *Centro Republicano Español* appear to have maintained a largely nationalist position which even failed to connect with the Basque nationalists while the anti-Stalinists of the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano* consisted, among others, of a truly transnational group of ex-communists and independent socialists of the group *Socialismo y Libertad*, the distinctly Catalan current of Spanish anarchism, and the small contingents of followers of the POUM and the German and Austrian socialists. The communists themselves maintained an excellent network of supporters and partner organisations among



the Mexican political and intellectual elites, even though some smaller national sub-communities such as the German communists around *Alemania Libre* appear to have operated in a somewhat more isolated manner but in close connection with the Soviet diplomats who had arrived by 1943. The general picture that emerges from this topography of political practice is that of an entrenched ideological confrontation throughout the 1940s, culminating in specifically targeted anti-Stalinist manifestations in locations where the anti-Stalinists hoped to gain influence (the *Centro Cultural Israelita* and the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano*) in the wake of the Battle of Stalingrad, which had created a new strategic outlook of the European war, and the somewhat predictable (violent) communist reaction. The apparent hegemony of the pro-Soviet currents of exile, however, existed only on the public stages of the city, such as in the case of the congress of *Alemania Libre* in May 1943 and the *Convención de Solidaridad* of FOARE in August, without having any significant impact on the ideological balance of power across the politics of exile in Mexico City. The topographical, if not territorial, logic of this conflict between pro-Soviet and staunchly anti-communist groups continued throughout the remaining years of the Second World War and closely resembled the strategic *tableau* of the Cold War which can already be deciphered among the European exiles across the urban topography of Mexico City years before it became a reality of global politics during the second half of the 1940s. A truly anti-fascist and transnational consensus which would, for example, reflect the existence of an anti-Hitler coalition is hardly detectable in the political practice of exile in Mexico City.

Against the backdrop of these developments of the topography of exile politics, the post-war development of European political exile in Mexico City appears hardly surprising. As the central-European communities of exile tried to leave Mexico as soon as possible, the Spanish republican refugees had to confront the continuing existence of the Franco dictatorship and the evident reluctance of the US and British governments to risk any destabilisation of the Iberian peninsula. The establishment of a Spanish government in exile, cautiously sponsored by the government of Manuel Ávila Camacho, represented little more than a brief symbolic manifestation of the Spanish republican cause in the Mexican capital. In reality, the Spanish republican community descended deeper than ever into the ideological confrontation between pro-Soviet and anti-communist groups, as Prieto's socialist faction managed to expel Juan Negrín and his followers from the PSOE and developed ideas of a Spanish referendum and making overture's to the anti-Franco monarchists, effectively abandoning the republican cause which maintained the legitimacy of the republic of 1931. The remaining republicans, for their part, entered more clearly than ever into a pro-Soviet orbit by their close association with the international Peace Congress movement and could no longer bring themselves to conceal their increasingly anti-British and anti-US-American stance. The result of these developments during the late 1940s represented the final disintegration of the Spanish republican consensus which had always existed in high-minded rhetoric more so than in

political practice. Any attempts to revive the republican cause in the form of non-aligned organisations in equidistance to both hegemonic world powers, such as *España Combatiente* during the late 1940s soon collapsed under the weight of the global ideological polarisation which also consumed the second-generation activism of the *Movimiento Español 1959* having taken its inspiration from the Cuban revolution. Full international recognition of the Franco dictatorship in the wake of the Korean War rendered the political practice of Spanish republicanism in Mexico City effectively meaningless, but in the cultural sphere the Spanish republican community succeeded in creating a space at the *Ateneo Español de México* of relative liberal inclusiveness across ideological fault lines including a rigorous (if, at times, contested) defence of freedom of speech. Here, all ideological currents of Spanish republicanism were united for the first and last time precisely at the moment of ultimate political failure of the republican cause.

A topography of exile politics in Mexico City seems to be confronted with the ultimate failure of the anti-fascist causes it espoused. This is particularly evident in the case of Spanish republicanism. And while the German and Italian dictatorships alongside their satellite regimes were toppled by the advance of allied forces in Europe, the European political refugees who returned to their homelands after the end of the European war often faced renewed persecution, sometimes incarceration, or even the death penalty during the last Stalinist purges with anti-Semitic undertones conducted by European communist regimes during the 1950s, particularly in Czechoslovakia, the GDR, and in Hungary. Their years of exile in the western hemisphere were regularly used against them as evidence for alleged collusion with western secret services, usually under charges of “cosmopolitanism” and “Zionism”. The significance of exile politics in Mexico, therefore, does not lie in its immediate relevance for, or impact upon, global politics but rather arises from its role as an indicator of the underlying ideological and strategic conflicts which ran right through the political practice of European refugees in the Mexican capital. The political refugees thereby became actors in a much larger political arena of global proportions and turned such global forces into detectable patterns of political activism and sociability across the city with all the potential for cross-cooperation or internal conflict – not unlike iron filings in a changing magnetic field of global politics inscribed upon the urban topography of exile in Mexico City.

The approach developed in this study can be characterised as peripheral in a twofold sense: On the one hand, the transnational politics of exile and the relevant ideological contexts are visited and explored in Mexico City, a location which does not necessarily spring to mind when talking about the violent global conflicts of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Far away from the theatres of war and from the centres of global political power in Berlin, London, Moscow, Tokyo, and Washington, the seemingly marginal position of the Mexican capital did, however, provide fertile ground for the transnational politics of the Left, both in terms of the liberal asylum politics of the Mexican government and for the relative lack of

direct rule from any of the major belligerent powers. The extent to which the US diplomats and their intelligence services felt it necessary to monitor the activities and organising efforts among the European left-wing refugees illustrates not just the US-American claim to hegemony over the western hemisphere but also reflects genuine concerns over national security and fears that this mobilisation of European left-wing politics in Mexico could have a significant impact on post-war European politics. Evident attempts by the US administration at isolating European refugees in Mexico from like-minded individuals and political forces both in North America and in Europe speak for the realisation that the Mexican capital was a far more important global hub for transnational left-wing politics than its seemingly peripheral location would suggest – and should serve as encouragement for adopting a post-colonial perspective and understanding of the global history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which can ultimately do away with the often Euro-centrally charged notion of geographic peripheries.

On the other hand, to focus on the public practice of political sociability and activism across Mexico City can seem to touch upon nothing more than the visible surface of transnational politics in exile, neglecting the role of private and/or clandestine political discourse which would help to explain the “true” meaning of events and developments. To regard the public practice of politics, however, as nothing more than a façade of the arcanum of secretive political machinations is to deny the fact that all politics is ultimately communicative practice. The precise topographical and chronological structure of that practice can thereby elucidate the meaning of transnational left-wing politics in Mexico City: be it in the form of distinct topographical patterns of social and political life, the privileged access of certain political currents to specific public spaces, the deliberate parallel scheduling of political events to either evade or challenge opposing political forces, or the violent conflicts over access to the public sphere. The substance of left-wing politics in exile thereby becomes visible in the practical form that it took across the Mexican capital. A praxeology of transnational exile politics in Mexico City thereby visits the logic of political conflict as an urban map of its practical manifestation whereby the visible surface betrays the forces of its underlying political rationale.

For the politics of exile in Mexico City, the picture that emerges is that across the European communities of exile an uneven matrix of transnational practice existed. The two major camps that displayed the most profound transnational engagement were also the staunchest opponents of one another: the pro-Soviet groups of the European communists and their political allies maintained close networks and connections with their Mexican partner organisations as well as among one another. The transnational group of anti-communist socialists and anarchists, on the other hand, had created an alliance that not only crossed national lines but was also well-connected beyond Mexico, particularly into the United States from their centre of political sociability at the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano*. Other currents of exile politics, however, were less well

integrated, if at all, into the transnational arena of political practice in Mexico City. This is, above all, true for the more nationalist republicanism of the *Centro Republicano Español* with Indalecio Prieto's socialists at its centre. Prieto and his coalition of anti-communists did not enjoy (or seek) a close relationship with the Mexican post-revolutionary political elites of the PRM and the trade union movement and very much kept to their own national political agenda. The anti-Soviet German-speaking circle around the *Liga Pro-Cultura Alemana*, at first, successfully engaged with the intellectual and political elite of the Mexican capital (crucially facilitated by Vicente Lombardo Toledano) but became isolated since the outbreak of the European war in 1939 and operated in defence of national interest against fascism and communism alike. This relatively isolated position also applied to the small group of independent German and Austrian socialists, even if some protagonists maintained links to the *Centro Ibero-Mexicano*.

The key central issue of anti-communism which pervaded the transnational political sphere in Mexico City created a profoundly divided logic of political practice of European exile that foreshadowed the logic of the Cold War. If both sides regularly employed varying concepts of "anti-fascism", they could be relied upon to mean something diametrically opposed: the anti-communists subscribed (either explicitly or implicitly) to a fundamental doctrine of anti-totalitarianism which described fascism and communism as equally illiberal and violently suppressive regimes. The pro-Soviet currents of European exile in Mexico City, on the other hand, largely accepted the communist commitment to the Comintern's Dimitrov formula (1935) and the Zhdanov doctrine (1946), adopted by the Cominform in 1947, which associated fascism and aggressive imperialism with capitalism. As the opposed factions of transnational politics in exile in Mexico City consistently professed their opposition to the fascist regimes in Europe, they increasingly tended to speak about each other.

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## Mappe 2

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