

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

From Comrades to Subversives: Mexican Secret Police and ‘Undesirable’ Spanish Exiles, 1939–60

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Abstract

This article examines the Mexican state’s surveillance of Spanish political exiles. As the Mexican government publicly welcomed over 20,000 political refugees fleeing the Spanish Civil War (1936–9), its intelligence apparatus characterised anarchist and communist refugees as subversive threats to the Mexican nation. Despite these efforts, the Mexican secret police failed to prevent the emergence of new political bonds between the two countries’ popular classes. This article shows the consequences of the Mexican secret police’s campaign against radical exiles while also highlighting instances in which Spaniards evaded the state’s purview and contributed to revolutionary projects in Mexico, Latin America and Spain.

Keywords: Mexico; Spanish Civil War; exiles; anarchism; communism; surveillance

Introduction

In the early hours of 20 September 1948, four members of the Juventudes Libertarias Mexicanas (Mexican Libertarian Youth, JLM) were detained by police as they carried a bucket of paste, paintbrushes and over 3,000 leaflets to the Zócalo, Mexico City’s historic centre.¹ Since three of the detained youths were Spanish exiles, the Mexican state’s intelligence apparatus, the Dirección de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (Directorate of Political and Social Investigations, DIPS), launched an investigation regarding the JLM and its members.² Unlike other Spanish political organisations in exile, which primarily focused

¹Originating in Spain, the Federación Ibérica de Juventudes Libertarias was re-established by exiled Spanish youth who were among the 20,000 political refugees that fled to Mexico following the victory of Dictator Francisco Franco in 1939. Among the detained were two engineering students from the national university: Octavio Alberola Suriñach, a 20-year-old Spanish exile from Menorca, and Manuel González Salazar, a Mexican national born in Coatepec, Veracruz. The two youths were imprisoned along with Floreal Ocaña Sánchez and Francisco Rosell Rosell, 25-five-year-old Spanish anarchists who helped establish the Mexican chapter of the organisation upon their arrival.

²Since the state intelligence apparatus took on various titles throughout its existence, I will refer to it by the name it went under during the majority of the period covered in this article, the Dirección de

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on overthrowing the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, the JLM condemned Mexico's ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI) for its 'betrayal of the [Mexican] Revolution'. Consisting of only 30 members, the JLM called on all Mexican youth to unite under the banner of 'revolutionary syndicalism'.³

After seven days of detention in a clandestine prison, the young men were interrogated by Mexico City's chief of police. Having forced the captives to watch film footage of recent Mexican Independence Day parades, the chief reproached them for criticising the government after it provided the exiles with support in their time of need. One of the students, Octavio Alberola Suriñach, replied that their activities stemmed from the fact that 'some [exiles] could enrich themselves at the expense of suffering Mexican people'. Infuriated by the Spaniard's retort, the chief threatened to 'send them to the Islas Mariás', a penal colony off the Pacific coast of Nayarit.⁴ When Alberola and his close friend and Mexican national, Manuel González Salazar, warned the officers that students would retaliate if they were harmed, the two were separated from their comrades and detained in an abandoned building for an additional three weeks.⁵

The disappearance of the students triggered divergent responses among Spanish exiles and Mexican citizens. Spanish refugee organisations refused to publicly condemn the Mexican government's detention of the students, whereas leaders from Mexican labour and campesino unions wrote to the government to protest the youths' arrest.⁶ Shortly thereafter, a lawyer representing the students' parents accused the government of violating the Mexican Constitution by detaining the youths without charge.⁷ In response to these protests, DIPS Director Lamberto Peregrina Ortega published an internal memorandum suggesting that the exiles had violated Article 33 of the Constitution, which forbade foreigners from interfering in national politics.⁸ It further suggested that then Mexican president, Miguel Alemán Valdés (1946–52), was willing to pardon the students so long as they signed an agreement vowing never to interfere in national politics again.

Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (DIPS). For citation references, the current title of the agency, the Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (DGIPS), is used for its categorisation and will remain as such in the footnotes.

³A la juventud. A la opinión pública en general., 16 Sept. 1948, Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter AGN), Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (hereafter DGIPS), box 114, file 4, p. 8; Agustín Comotto, *El peso de las estrellas: Vida del anarquista Octavio Alberola* (Barcelona: Rayo Verde Editorial, 2019), p. 67.

⁴Comotto, *El peso de las estrellas*, pp. 71–2. For more on the Islas Mariás penal colony, see Diego Pulido Esteva, *Las Islas Mariás: Historia de una colonia penal* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2017).

⁵Interview with Octavio Alberola, conducted by Ulises Ortega Aguilar, April 2009, cited in Ulises Ortega Aguilar, 'Regeneración y la Federación Anarquista Mexicana, 1952–1960', unpubl. PhD diss., Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2011, pp. 243–6.

⁶Rafael Ortega C. and Nicola Llanas to Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, 28 Sept. 1948, AGN, DGIPS, box 114, file 4, p. 9; Margarito Pérez Armenta to Ruiz Cortines, 29 Sept. 1948, AGN, DGIPS, box 114, file 4, pp. 11–12; Interview with Octavio Alberola, conducted by Eduardo Daniel Rodríguez Trejo, March 2015, cited in Eduardo Daniel Rodríguez Trejo, 'La otra izquierda: Testimonios de una ideología olvidada, el anarquismo en México, 1931–1971', unpubl. MA thesis, Instituto Mora, 2016, pp. 161–2.

⁷Enrique Rangel to Lamberto Ortega Peregrina, 30 Sept. 1948, AGN, DGIPS, box 114, file 4, p. 13.

⁸'Opinión', memorandum from Ortega Peregrina, 1 Oct. 1948, AGN, DGIPS, box 114, file 4, p. 15.

Confusingly, interrogators demanded that González, a Mexican national, also sign the document.⁹ The extralegal arrest and indefinite detention of the Spanish youths, along with the symbolic ‘denationalisation’ of a Mexican citizen, exemplified the DIPS’ broad discretionary powers to police political exiles and their supporters.

Between 1939 and 1960, the DIPS opened over 200 investigations to monitor the political activities of thousands of Spanish exiles. As state officials publicly celebrated the refugees’ assimilation into the racial and social fabric of post-revolutionary Mexican society, specific sectors of the Spanish exile population were subjected to intense scrutiny and surveillance from the moment they first arrived in 1939. Of particular concern were exiles with known anarchist and communist affiliations, a sizeable minority of the approximately 20,000 Spaniards that sought refuge following the end of the Spanish Civil War (1936–9).¹⁰ In exaggerated and often fraudulent reports, DIPS inspectors linked refugees with ‘undesirable’ social ills such as racial degeneration, disease, criminality and social dissolution. As the history of Mexico’s treatment of immigrants confirms, such tropes were frequently attributed to non-European communities.¹¹ Less commonly, however, were such characteristics ascribed to Spaniards, whom state officials perceived as the most assimilable due to the colonial history of racial intermixing. Yet in mid-twentieth-century Mexico, Spanish exiles that espoused internationalist sentiments were deemed, quite paradoxically, a threat to the heirs of the nation’s social revolution.

This article contributes to a growing field of scholarship that scrutinises the ways in which the Spanish Civil War was interpreted by Latin American nations.¹² While

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰As is discussed later in this article, the exact number of anarchists and communists that arrived from Spain is unknown. However, at least a quarter of the Spanish refugees that arrived in 1939 identified as members of the anarcho-syndicalist Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (National Confederation of Labour, CNT), the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (Iberian Anarchist Federation, FAI) or the Partido Comunista de España (Communist Party of Spain, PCE). See Aurelio Velázquez Hernández, ‘La otra cara del exilio: Los organismos de ayuda a los republicanos españoles en México’, unpubl. PhD diss., Universidad de Salamanca, 2012, p. 86.

¹¹Pablo Yankelevich, *¿Deseables o inconvenientes? Las fronteras de la extranjería en el México posrevolucionario* (Mexico City: Bonilla Artigas Editores, 2011); José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization during the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S.–Mexico Borderlands* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Grace Peña Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusions in the U.S.–Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012); Jerry García, *Looking Like the Enemy: Japanese Mexicans, the Mexican State, and US Hegemony, 1897–1945* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2014); Daniela Gleizer, *Unwelcome Exiles: Mexico and the Jewish Refugees from Nazism, 1933–1945* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Pablo Yankelevich (ed.), *Inmigración y racismo en México* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2015); Jason Oliver Chang, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880–1940* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017).

¹²Sebastian Faber, *Exile and Cultural Hegemony: Spanish Intellectuals in Mexico, 1939–1975* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002); Patrick Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Kirsten Weld, ‘The Spanish Civil War and the Construction of a Reactionary Historical Consciousness in Augusto Pinochet’s Chile’, *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 98: 1 (2018), pp. 77–115; Ariel Mae Lambe, *No Barrier Can Contain It: Cuban Antifascism and the Spanish Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Kirsten Weld, ‘The Other Door: Spain and the Guatemalan Counter-Revolution, 1944–54’, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 51: 2 (2019), pp. 307–31.

most studies of the Mexican state's response to the Spanish Civil War have emphasised the humanitarian significance of the country's refugee initiative, declassified surveillance records from the DIPS archive suggest that the Mexican secret police – which included DIPS operatives, the secret service of the Mexico City chief of police and later the Dirección Federal de Seguridad (Federal Security Directorate, DFS) – actively thwarted the refugees' integration into the country's political milieu, even after the vast majority of them had naturalised as Mexican citizens.¹³ State surveillance reports not only indicate a much more contentious relationship to the Spanish exile community than has previously been suggested, but also provide insight into Mexico's contradictory practice of publicly praising revolutionary dissidents while privately thwarting their political endeavours.

Along with a critical reading of state surveillance reports, this article uses testimonies and materials produced by Spanish refugees to challenge the state's interpretation of anarchist and communist refugees' political aspirations. From their arrival under the Lázaro Cárdenas government to the early years of PRI rule, exiled Spanish militants conducted activities that blurred the boundaries of national and international politics. Whereas political exiles with existing ties to clandestine movements in Spain continued their support from abroad, the migrants' children and younger refugees became radicalised by life in exile as well as through their ties to Mexican political and labour movements. As this article demonstrates, DIPS investigators became increasingly concerned about the integration of exiles within national dissident movements, leading to a steady increase in surveillance and repression throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Despite the Mexican secret police's efforts to thwart political bonds from emerging between Spanish and Mexican radicals, they were only partially successful in curtailing the revolutionary encounters propagated by exiles and citizens.

Lázaro Cárdenas, State Surveillance and the Spanish Civil War

The policing of Spanish exiles' political activities began under the administration of one of their keenest proponents – President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40). Throughout the years of the Second Spanish Republic (1931–6) and the social revolution which happened in parallel to Spain's three-year Civil War, the Cárdenas administration provided arms and material support to the various factions that fought against the military uprising of Francisco Franco.¹⁴ As a response to the mass refugee crisis caused by the fall of the republican government, the Cárdenas administration offered political asylum to all Spanish asylum seekers. Yet the refugee initiative came at a particularly volatile moment in the consolidation of Mexican state power. A series of counter-revolutionary mobilisations – including the recent Cristero Wars (1926–9, 1934–6), the 1938 uprising of

¹³For discussion of the recent threats to shut down the declassified DIPS archive, see 'Académicos e historiadores acusan censura en Archivo General de la Nación', *El Universal*, 21 Jan. 2020; 'Fraude, apertura de archivos prometidos por el AGN', *El Universal*, 21 Feb. 2020.

¹⁴For more on Cárdenas' support for the Second Spanish Republic before and during the Civil War, see Patricia Fagen, *Exiles and Citizens: Spanish Republicans in Mexico* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1973); Mario Ojeda Revah, *Mexico and the Spanish Civil War: Political Repercussions for the Republican Cause* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2016).

Saturnino Cedillo and the oppositionist candidacy of Juan Andreu Almazán in the 1940 presidential election – all tested the political control of the ruling Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (Party of the Mexican Revolution, PRM).¹⁵

To track potential conflicts relating to the Spanish exiles, the government utilised its growing political intelligence apparatus to monitor those that supported and opposed the refugee initiative. While the DIPS primarily monitored critics of the PRM, it also tracked the activities of sectors that were loyal to the Cárdenas administration. The most prominent supporters of the refugee initiative – the national labour organisation, the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (Confederation of Mexican Workers, CTM), and the Partido Comunista Mexicano (Mexican Communist Party, PCM) – were regularly the targets of DIPS intelligence operatives. Agents patrolled public events and monitored the coalitions that formed between the Mexican Left and Spanish exile groups.¹⁶

Throughout Cárdenas' presidential term, DIPS inspectors focused on the activities of groups that were sympathetic to the refugees, but also the country's Spanish immigrant population and its reported overwhelming support for the Franco military uprising. During the Civil War, the Secretaría de Gobernación (Ministry of the Interior, SEGOB) alleged that approximately 40,000 of the 47,000 Spanish immigrants living in Mexico prior to 1939 had become members of the Falange Española (Spanish Falange), a fascist party that supported the nationalist coup in Spain and maintained strong ties with the Mexican Far-Right.¹⁷ Most DIPS investigations of the *falangistas* (Falangists) during the Spanish Civil War were initiated by rumours, accusations and denunciations submitted by working-class and peasant communities. The investigations, however, did not result in mass expulsions. As Pablo Yankelevich notes, Cárdenas' government hesitated to repress immigrants with fascist affiliations through the stipulations of Article 33 of the Mexican Constitution, deporting only two Spanish *falangistas* during his presidency.¹⁸ Notwithstanding, Cárdenas' far-right opponents continued to condemn the government's humanitarian support for Spaniards fleeing the ravages of the Civil War.

To placate this opposition, Mexican state and exiled Spanish republican officials stressed two major stipulations of the refugee relocation programme: first, that Spaniards of all political tendencies would be granted asylum and, second, that Spanish exiles were accountable under the same constitutional restrictions as all

¹⁵John Sherman, 'Reassessing Cardenismo: The Mexican Right and the Failure of a Revolutionary Regime, 1934–1940', *The Americas*, 54: 3 (1998), pp. 357–78; Aaron Navarro, *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico, 1938–1954* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2010), pp. 13–120. Originally founded as the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (National Revolutionary Party, PNR) in 1929, the party was renamed the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana under Cárdenas' administration in 1938. The name change reflected Cárdenas' efforts to align workers, peasants, civil servants and the military under one unified political entity. However, the state's experiment in popular corporatism was short-lived. By 1946, the party would undergo yet another name change, to the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI), symbolising a marked shift away from Cárdenas' 'workers' democracy' toward an authoritarian party apparatus that centralised political authority behind the president and party officials.

¹⁶Eliseo Castro Reina: Su expediente como Inspector de la Oficina (Tomo 4)', Jan.–Dec. 1938, AGN, DGIPS, box 68, file 4.

¹⁷Ojeda Revah, *Mexico and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 164.

¹⁸Yankelevich, *¿Deseables o inconvenientes?*, pp. 157–8.

other foreigners.¹⁹ These stipulations not only framed the refugee initiative as a humanitarian gesture accessible to all Spaniards fleeing the political turmoil of their country, but also defined asylum recipients' political liberties within the confines of Article 33 of the Mexican Constitution, which forbade foreigners from participating in national politics. To ensure that refugees observed the Mexican government's stipulations, the Spanish republican government's relief committee held meetings on vessels in transit to Mexico to clarify the terms of their asylum. One brochure distributed by refugee aid officials on board the *Quanza* stated:

Refugee: [...] When you are in Mexico, know that you have many obligations: you should be interested in the country where you live, work honestly, comply with the laws of Mexico, avoid interfering in politics and foreign political parties ... and [you should] not criticise the mistakes of the past. [You should forget] about all of that hatred that exists in your land [while] in exile ... [You] should understand one thing: that your siblings, family, and friends depend on your future performance, so that those that are suffering [in Spain] can be saved and freely enter into Mexico. If your presence causes disorder [...] then the Mexican people will have to put an end to collective immigration and restrict your entry.²⁰

At the same time, Mexican state and Spanish refugee officials encouraged asylum seekers to promote the Cárdenas government's support and hospitality. In an article published in the *Ipanema's* on-board daily newspaper, officials emphasised the refugees' obligations to the Mexican state:

Our moral and political conduct must be the best weapon General Cárdenas' government has ... [If we cannot] intervene directly in Mexican politics, we can influence it by supporting, based on our conduct, the great policies for its people and the generosity of the government that governs the destiny of the nation to which we arrive in a dozen days.²¹

Although the Cárdenas administration was vocally supportive of the exile community, its stipulations blurred the boundaries of what constituted permissible and restricted acts of political engagement. Such provisions became even less clear when, almost immediately following their arrival to the country, refugees were granted the right to naturalise as Mexican citizens.²² As Spaniards navigated life

¹⁹Ojeda Revah, *Mexico and the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 190–1.

²⁰'Instrucciones para los compatriotas llegados en el vapor "Quanza", 24 Nov. 1939, Archivo Histórico del Ateneo Español de México (hereafter AHAEM), Exilio, Personajes, box 12, file 150, p. 180. Passengers on board the *Mexique* received similar brochures. See 'A los pasajeros del vapor "Mexique": Instrucciones a seguir para la mejor organización del desembarco y estancia en Veracruz', 27 July 1939, AHAEM, Exilio, II República, box 25, file 313.

²¹*Ipanema: Diario de a bordo*, 24 June 1939, available at www.cervantesvirtual.com/nd/ark:/59851/bmcjh5f7, last access 25 Sept. 2020.

²²Approximately 80 per cent of Spanish refugees became naturalised Mexican citizens shortly after their relocation to Mexico. See Clara E. Lida, *Inmigración y exilio: Reflexiones sobre el caso español* (Mexico City:

in exile, they were expected to simultaneously embody and shed their political pasts as a gesture of good faith to the Mexican government.

DIPS Investigations and the Making of the 'Undesirable' Exile

The Cárdenas administration's ambivalence toward the exiles' political activities coincided with the government's shift away from radical national reforms. As scholars have shown, Cardenista policies did not embody a monolithic ideological tendency, but rather an array of local, regional and national interests consolidated under the banner of the ruling party.²³ With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 and the looming presidential election of 1940, DIPS agents and other intelligence agencies wielded considerable influence in the policing of immigrants suspected of espionage. While Aaron Navarro rightly asserts the DIPS reports had to be plausible in order for the president and other officials to act on their recommendations, the need for plausibility did not make them impervious to the biases and limitations of the agency's inspectors.²⁴ The secret police's reconnaissance thus served as incomplete mosaics of complicated social, cultural and political relations that allegedly posed a threat to national stability. In coordination with other government officials, the Spanish republican government in exile and state-backed labour and political organisations, DIPS agents shaped the ways in which subsequent administrations distinguished between 'desirable' and 'undesirable' refugees.²⁵

In a 15 July 1939 memorandum, DIPS Inspector José María Clavé wrote to his superior, Director Cipriano Arriola, to alert him of the potential dangers posed by a large contingent of anarchist and communist refugees that had arrived on board the *Ipanema* six days earlier. He attached a complete list of the names and passport numbers of all 994 passengers, obtained without the refugees' knowledge, in order to monitor their movements and activities throughout the country. Clavé's discreet acquisition of the information, he explained, was compelled by the

Siglo XXI Editores, 1997), p. 112; Jorge de Hoyos Puente, *La utopía del regreso: Proyectos de Estado y sueños de nación en el exilio republicano en México* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2012), p. 129.

²³For more on Cardenismo, see Alan Knight, 'Cardenismo: Juggernaut or Jalopy?', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 26: 1 (1994), pp. 73–107; Ben Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised: The Failure of Reform in Postrevolutionary Yucatán* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

²⁴Navarro, *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico*, pp. 6–7.

²⁵With the fall of the Second Republic in April 1939, the republican government led by Prime Minister Juan Negrín, a controversial leader of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE), re-established itself from exile in Mexico. Though officially recognised as the legitimate government of Spain by the Cárdenas administration, internal factions within the PSOE led to the establishment of two separate refugee relief organisations: the Servicio de Evacuación de Refugiados Españoles (Spanish Refugees Evacuation Service, SERE), run by Negrín, and the Junta de Auxilio a los Republicanos Españoles (Aid Board to the Spanish Republicans, JARE), led by his party opponent Indalecio Prieto. Both groups coordinated relief efforts with the Mexican government and were recognised by different sectors of the Spanish exile community as government representatives. For more on the Spanish republican government in exile, see Abdón Mateos, *De la guerra civil al exilio: Los republicanos españoles y México: Indalecio Prieto y Lázaro Cárdenas* (Madrid: Editorial Biblioteca Nueva, 2005); Hoyos Puente, *La utopía del regreso*.

imminent danger the passengers posed to Mexican society.²⁶ According to the report, the ship's captain informed Clavé of a mutiny that took place during the voyage from France, when anarchist and communist passengers threatened to kill him for being a 'traitor' and for collaborating with Spanish republican officials to restrict their requests for asylum.²⁷ When the ship arrived at the Caribbean island of Martinique for repairs, French colonial authorities forcefully removed mutineers that refused to disembark. Once on land, Clavé continued, the radicals 'carried out a constant Bacchanalian orgy with the Black women of the country (the majority of [the refugees] having contracted venereal diseases), which occasioned much work to get them to return to the ship'.²⁸ The radicals' alleged violent temperaments and licentious sexual behaviour, the inspector concluded, made the surveillance of the refugees' activities and whereabouts throughout Mexico an urgent matter of national security.

The accusations of Clavé's report to DIPS Director Arriola challenged many Cardenista officials' claims that the refugee initiative complemented the country's racial ideology of *mestizaje* (racial mixture between Europeans and Indigenous peoples). In their efforts to assure citizens that the refugees would easily assimilate into Mexican society, proponents of the relocation programme proclaimed that the two nations' shared history and culture would encourage racial miscegenation and intermarriage between members of Indigenous communities and exiles relocated to rural sectors of the country.²⁹ However, the alleged sexual relations between Spanish men and Black women – and more specifically, the accusation that refugees had contracted sexually transmitted diseases from Black women – was framed as a danger to future generations of Mexicans. Though racial mixture was encouraged by the Mexican government, it sustained the belief that Afro-descendant peoples were racially inferior to *Mestizos*, thus implying that radical refugees posed both a racial and hygienic threat to society.³⁰ Ultimately, the notion of disease-ridden Spanish men with radical political tendencies conjured long-standing eugenicist polemics that correlated ideology, race and hygiene with social degeneracy.³¹

²⁶Inspector PS-15 to Cipriano Arriola, 15 July 1939, AGN, DGIPS, box 315, file 8, p. 19; 'Vapor "Ipanema": Relación de pasajeros que conduce para el Puerto de Veracruz', AGN, DGIPS, box 315, file 10, pp. 27–42.

²⁷The accusation emerged from claims that migration officials loyal to the Spanish republican government of Juan Negrín had purposely excluded anarchists and communists from receiving asylum in Mexico. For more on the discrepancies during the visa process, see Ángel Herrerin López, 'Políticas de los anarcosindicalistas españoles exiliados en México, 1941–1945', *Tzintzun: Revista de Estudios Históricos*, 39 (Jan. 2004), pp. 141–60; Ángel Herrerin López, *El dinero del exilio: Indalecio Prieto y las pugnas de posguerra, 1939–1947* (Madrid: Siglo XXI Editores, 2007), pp. 52–3; Aurelio Velázquez Hernández, *Empresas y finanzas del exilio: Los organismos de ayuda a los republicanos españoles en México, 1939–1949* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2014), pp. 109–12.

²⁸Inspector PS-15 to Arriola, 15 July 1939, AGN, DGIPS, box 315, file 8, p. 19; Hoyos Puente, *La utopía del regreso*, pp. 125–6.

²⁹Antolín Piña Soria, *El presidente Cárdenas y la inmigración de españoles republicanos* (Mexico City: Impreso en Multígrafos SCOP, 1939), pp. 71–2; Fagen, *Exiles and Citizens*, pp. 33–4.

³⁰Karin Alejandra Roseblatt, *The Science and Politics of Race in Mexico and the United States, 1910–1950* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), p. 48.

³¹Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp, 'Cuando los extranjeros perniciosos se convierten en ciudadanos: Procesos de naturalización en México a principios del siglo XX', in Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp, Julián Durazo-Herrmann, Erika Pani and Catherine Vézina (eds.), *Migración y ciudadanía: Construyendo naciones en América del*

In stark contrast to Clavé's reports, the testimonies and records of the exiles on board the *Ipanema* suggest that the inspector's allegations were fabricated. Although anarchists and communists made up a sizeable portion of the vessel's passengers, sources and testimonies from passengers on the boat made no reference to attacks or conflicts during the voyage.³² For instance, a daily newspaper published aboard the ship provided reports of the passengers' activities and discussions, including a detailed description of their short stay in Martinique. 'Both the authorities and civilian population of Martinique interacted with our people with a love and reverence that well merits our heartfelt gratitude', the article asserted. Local vendors offered the travellers free refreshments, fruit, sweets and tobacco, as others questioned the exiles about the perils of the Spanish Civil War. The author concluded by sending an 'enthusiastic and Latino shout to freedom for all nations, big and small, which, united, work for a rebirth of love and justice that is capable of ending at once the differentiation of races and the tyranny of ... imperialism'.³³ Written and edited by representatives from republican, socialist, communist, anarchist and regionalist factions, the newspaper's lack of reporting on the alleged incident raises the question as to the validity of Clavé's claims. What is more, testimonies from passengers aboard the *Ipanema* make no mention of violent incidents nor 'illicit' activities between passengers and Martinique residents. On the contrary, those aboard the *Ipanema* recalled the camaraderie between passengers of various political factions and their lively discussions about Spain, international politics and their aspirations to contribute to Cárdenas' revolutionary reforms.³⁴ While these accounts did not bear out the claims made by the Mexican secret police, the refugees' declarations of racial equality, anti-imperialism and expanding revolutionary reforms challenged the state's views of the exiles as assimilable, docile subjects.

As a consequence of Clavé's claims that anarchist and communist exiles coordinated a mutiny on board the *Ipanema*, subsequent DIPS investigations differentiated the alleged criminal tendencies of the two factions. Although decades of state repression had virtually extinguished all sedentary anarchist movements in Mexico, state intelligence officials grew increasingly worried about the rapid growth

Norte (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2016), pp. 132–3; Nancy Leys Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 55–6; Pablo Yankelevich, 'Mexico for the Mexicans: Immigration, National Sovereignty, and the Promotion of Mestizaje', *The Americas*, 68: 3 (2012), pp. 405–36.

³²While the CNT report to Cárdenas stated that approximately 71 per cent of the *Ipanema*'s passengers were anarchists and communists, Velázquez Hernández's review of visa statistics indicates that anarchist and communist heads of household comprised approximately 36 per cent of the boat's passengers. See Germinal Esgleas, Federica Montseny and Roberto Alfonso to Cárdenas, 1 Aug. 1939, AGN, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río (LCR), box 908, file 546.6/212-14 (file 3), p. 112; Velázquez-Hernández, 'La otra cara del exilio', pp. 86–8.

³³*Ipanema: Diario de abordo*, 27 June 1939, available at www.cervantesvirtual.com/nd/ark:/59851/bmcx36s0, last access 25 Sept. 2020.

³⁴*Ibid.*; Interview with Antonio Navarro Pérez, conducted by Enriqueta Tuñón, 1979, Dirección de Estudios Históricos (hereafter DEH), Instituto Nacional de Antropología Historia (hereafter INAH), PHO/10/70, pp. 128–34; Interview with Ricardo Mestre Ventura, conducted by Enrique Sandoval, 1988, DEH, INAH, PHO/10/99, vol. 2, pp. 428–34.

of the PCM and the growing influence of the Soviet Union in geopolitics.³⁵ Whereas DIPS inspectors accused Spanish communist exiles of colluding with the Soviet Union, investigations of anarchists focused on allegedly criminal, rather than political, acts. In both instances, exiles affiliated with Spain's revolutionary Left were distinguished from their republican compatriots as subversive threats to national order.

Communist Refugees and the Limits of State Surveillance

As global conflicts overshadowed Mexico's internal political turmoil, anxieties over the presence of Spanish communist exiles throughout the country garnered much of the intelligence operatives' attention. The outbreak of the Second World War coincided with a rightward shift within the Mexican government under President Manuel Ávila Camacho (1940–6), who swept back many of the Cárdenas government's radical reforms and expanded the DIPS' role in monitoring political dissidents with ties to the Soviet Union and the Axis powers.³⁶ In a joint effort with the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), DIPS operatives detained Axis nationals suspected of espionage, imprisoning them in a former military fortress which served as an internment camp throughout the war.³⁷ While émigrés from the Axis nations were heavily monitored by the Mexican secret police, Spanish communist refugees' activities were also regularly surveilled by intelligence operatives.³⁸ As the political biases of DIPS inspectors and the agency's coordination with US intelligence operatives demonstrate, wartime anxieties prompted

³⁵The influence of anarchists in Mexico's labour and political movements was hampered by the deportation of Spanish anarchist émigrés who were critical participants of the Mexican libertarian movement prior to the Spanish Civil War. See John Mason Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican Working Class, 1860–1931* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1978), pp. 156–77; Daniela Spenser, *Stumbling Its Way Through Mexico: The Early Years of the Communist International* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama, 2011), pp. 99–107; Víctor Jefeets and Jaime Irving Reynoso, 'Del Frente Único a clase contra clase: Comunistas y agraristas en el México posrevolucionario, 1919–1930', *Revista Izquierdas*, 19 (Aug. 2014), p. 36. For more on communist movements during the Cárdenas years, see Barry Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), pp. 47–62; Jocelyn Olcott, *Revolutionary Women in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

³⁶Stephen R. Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (Wilmington, DE: SR, 1999), pp. 93–6; Tanalis Padilla, 'Rural Education, Political Radicalism, and Normalista Identity in Mexico after 1940', in Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith (eds.), *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938–1968* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 341–59.

³⁷Before serving as an internment camp during the Second World War, the San Carlos Fortress in Perote, Veracruz, was used as a temporary refugee centre for recently arrived Spanish exiles in 1939. See Inclán Fuentes, *Perote y los Nazis: Las políticas de control y vigilancia del Estado mexicano a los ciudadanos alemanes durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, 1939–1946* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2013). For more on the treatment of Axis nationals in Mexico during the Second World War, see García, *Looking Like the Enemy*; Selfá A. Chew, *Uprooting Community: Japanese Mexicans, World War II, and the Mexico Borderlands* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2015).

³⁸For more on the FBI's covert counter-intelligence activities in Mexico and Latin America during the Second World War, see Federal Bureau of Investigation, *History of the Special Intelligence Service of the Federal Bureau of Investigations*, vol. 4 (Washington, DC: FBI, 1947), pp. 471–511; María Emilia Paz, *Strategy, Security, and Spies: Mexico and the U.S. as Allies in World War II* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); Martha K. Huggins, *Political Policing: The United States and*

new investigations into the Spanish exiles' role in the spread of communism and possible Soviet collaboration.

Two years before Mexico's official entrance into the Second World War, rumours of Soviet espionage had already emerged within the DIPS. In August 1940, just days before the assassination of Leon Trotsky by Spanish Soviet agent Ramón Mercader, Inspector Clavé warned Director Arriola that 'reliable sources' had notified him of a new 'Stalinist organisation' being established by exiled members of the Partido Comunista de España (Communist Party of Spain, PCE) residing in Mexico.³⁹ In spite of scant details, the informant claimed that 'GPU agents', members of Soviet Russia's secret police, had entered the country to relay 'direct orders from Moscow' to the Catalan leftist leader and alleged Comintern agent, Joan Comorera i Soler.⁴⁰ Along with Comorera was another GPU agent, an unnamed Spanish woman who worked as the secretary of the chief of police in Barcelona and provided the Soviets' intelligence during the Civil War.⁴¹ Though little else was known of the alleged plot, the claim furthered suspicions of a Soviet incursion into Mexican politics.

Two months later, Clavé suggested that the new organisation was in fact a merger between sectors of the Mexican and Spanish communist parties. According to the informant, Comorera instructed the Mexican and Spanish recruits to destroy all evidence of their connection to their respective communist parties. This included exchanging their party membership cards emblazoned with hammers and sickles for new ones that lacked any discernible reference to their party affiliation. Interestingly, Clavé's informant did not elaborate as to why members were issued new cards, despite the cell's anonymity being of the utmost importance. Nevertheless, the informant notified Clavé that 5,000 new membership cards were printed by Pedro Martínez Cartón, a Spanish typographer and former lieutenant colonel in the Spanish republican army.⁴²

Latin America (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 58–78; Marc Becker, *The FBI in Latin America: The Ecuador Files* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

³⁹During the first assassination attempt against Trotsky, 30 people were detained in connection to the crime, including a number of Spanish exiles. The testimonies of those detained would ultimately lead police to another Mexican veteran of the Civil War and Soviet agent, the famed muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros. While Trotsky's assassin, Ramón Mercader, was a Spanish communist and Soviet agent, he had no direct ties to Spanish communist exiles. Mercader entered Mexico using a forged US passport under the name of a deceased US volunteer of the International Brigades. Upon being arrested, he spoke only in French and claimed to be a Belgian Trotskyist. Nonetheless, Lázaro Cárdenas condemned the Mexican Communist Party for the assassination and stated that Spanish refugee communists had violated their promise to avoid political conflicts in their host country. See Ojeda Revah, *Mexico and the Spanish Civil War*, pp. 199–200; Rubén Gallo, 'Who Killed Leon Trotsky?', *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 75: 1 (2013), pp. 112–18; Stephanie J. Smith, *The Power and Politics of Art in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), pp. 110–14.

⁴⁰In 1934, the State Political Directorate (known by its Russian acronym, GPU) merged into the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD). Mexican intelligence reports used both acronyms to describe Soviet espionage, despite the fact that the GPU technically no longer existed as an entity. As the DIPS archival catalogue's references to Soviet ties to the Spanish refugees consistently used the older acronym, I use the older acronym for clarity with the documents.

⁴¹Inspector PS-15 to Arriola, 16 Aug. 1940, AGN, DGIPS, box 81, file 5, p. 132; Inspector PS-15 to Arriola, 17 Aug. 1940, AGN, DIPS, box 81, file 5, p. 33.

⁴²Inspector PS-15 to Arriola, 8 Oct. 1940, AGN, DGIPS, box 81, file 5, p. 168.

Perhaps more alarming to Clavé's superior was the report's claim that the newly merged group was closely aligned to many of the leftist organisations most loyal to the PRM under Cárdenas. According to the report, the Sindicato de Artes Gráficas (Graphic Arts Union) was providing military training for members of the PCM as well as the CTM. 'Workers' militias', as John Lear notes, were established by Mexican communists, labour leaders and artists, in the style of Spain's Popular Front, to 'defend "the conquests of the [Mexican] Revolution"' from the rise of fascism at home.⁴³ Although various unions provided military training for their members and stockpiled weapons in union halls during the late 1930s, most had focused on symbolic acts of solidarity in the visual culture of the union federation's artwork and propaganda.⁴⁴ In contrast to these past endeavours, Clavé's informant suggested that the CTM and PCE were stockpiling arms and hand grenades manufactured in an agricultural colony established for Spanish exiles in Santa Clara, Chihuahua. The group had also allegedly stolen dynamite from a nearby construction site and acquired additional contraband smuggled across the Mexican-US border by the militant socialist and reputed Soviet agent, Santiago Garcés Arroyo.⁴⁵ The accusations of the transborder movements of Soviet-backed agents and weapons smuggling reinforced the DIPS' characterisation of left-wing Spanish exiles as abusing the country's humanitarian gesture by subverting national politics.

As a result of the report's allegations, DIPS agents began to monitor the activities of Spanish refugees, particularly those accused of having led the communist parties' merger. Inspectors developed profiles of members of the PCE's political bureau in exile, such as Pedro Martínez Cartón, Antonio Mije and Vicente Uribe, as they were deemed critical actors in the newly formed clandestine cell.⁴⁶ Of particular interest was the Spanish communist exile Margarita Nelken and her ties to Mexican radical networks and other known affiliates of the Comintern. Although Nelken was not a member of the party's political bureau, she was a relentless organiser, writer and regular speaker at the Mexican leftist rallies. Inspectors routinely followed Nelken's visitors from her residence in Lomas de Chapultepec to the homes of other PCE members and their Mexican contacts. Authorities also monitored Nelken's frequent travel outside the country, including a trip to Cuba funded by the Servicio de Evacuación de los Refugiados Españoles (Spanish Refugees Evacuation Service, SERE). By May of 1942, intelligence operatives were also tracking Nelken's family members, including her daughter Magda, a member of the Mexican anti-fascist organisation, the Partido Anti-Sinarquista (Anti-Synarchist Party). Nelken's husband, Martín de Paul, also came under surveillance due to his frequent contributions to the Spanish refugee journals, *Hoy* and *Seneca*. Even

⁴³John Lear, *Picturing the Proletariat: Artists and Labor in Revolutionary Mexico, 1908–1940* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2017), pp. 244–5.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 245–53.

⁴⁵Stanley Payne, *The Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union, and Communism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 252, 260–5; Julius Ruiz, *The 'Red Terror' and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence in Madrid* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 299–300.

⁴⁶Inspector PS-15 to Arriola, 8 Oct. 1940, AGN, DGIPS, box 81, file 5, pp. 168–9; Inspector PS-12 to Arriola, 6 Feb. 1941, AGN, DGIPS, box 315, file 11, pp. 1–2; Inspector PS-12 to Arriola, 13 Feb. 1941, AGN, DGIPS, box 317, file 10, p. 1.

though de Paul published pieces that applauded the Mexican state's solidarity with the Spanish exile community and its resistance against transnational fascism, state operatives continued to monitor his connections to several anti-fascist groups.⁴⁷

Despite DIPS inspectors' extensive surveillance of Spanish communist leaders and their knowledge of the communist parties' merger, collaborations between rank-and-file Spanish refugees and the Mexican Left went largely undetected. With no record of the communist parties' merger in their historical archives, the only substantive information on the quotidian activities of Spanish and Mexican communists exists in interviews conducted with exiles. Between 1940 and 1943, Spanish communist militants joined their Mexican counterparts in their efforts to organise workplaces and communities throughout the country. Ramón Guillot Jordana, for example, was a cabinetmaker and an active member of Catalan leftist parties during the Civil War before joining the PCM shortly after his arrival in Mexico in 1939. Guillot was quickly assigned to a 'troika' comprised of Spanish exiles that coordinated bi-weekly training with communist teachers and artists in Pachuca, Hidalgo.⁴⁸ Lino Sánchez Portela, another PCE member, was recruited by PCM General Secretary Dionisio Encina to open a medical clinic for a mining union in Torreón, Coahuila. There, he provided free medical services during a three-month strike against American Smelting.⁴⁹

While some exiles were open about their collaborations with the PCM, others remained silent about their roles and responsibilities within the organisation. For example, Julio Luelmo supported the PCE's merger with the Mexican communists but was reluctant to discuss his role in the PCM even decades after the fact. He admitted to working at the Universidad Obrera de México (Workers' University of Mexico), an institution established by the CTM's leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano, but when asked to elaborate, he refused to speak on the record about his time as a party militant.⁵⁰ Exiles' silences did not necessarily implicate a clandestine Soviet conspiracy, but rather an ongoing effort to navigate the increasingly rigid boundaries defined as engagement in national politics by Mexican officials. Along with fears that their actions would negatively affect other asylum seekers, many rank-and-file exiles upheld the veneer of non-engagement as a means to continue their political work in a context in which political intelligence officials routinely scrutinised party leaders.⁵¹ In other instances, exiles' reluctance to speak

⁴⁷'Refugiados españoles: Actividades comunistas que desarrollan algunos de ellos', Feb. 1941, AGN, DGIPS, box 315, file 11.

⁴⁸Interview with Ramón Guillot Jordana, conducted by Dolores Pla Brugat, 1979, DEH, INAH, PHO/10/47, pp. 217–19.

⁴⁹Interview with Lino Sánchez Portela, conducted by Elena Aub, 1980, DEH, INAH, PHO/10/ESP 6, pp. 74–94.

⁵⁰In the transcription of Elena Aub's interview with Luelmo, she notes that three pages of testimony on his activities in the PCM were redacted upon his request. Interview with Julio Luelmo, conducted by Elena Aub, 1970, DEH, INAH, PHO/10/ESP 14, pp. 95–100.

⁵¹Interviews conducted with rank-and-file members of exiled revolutionary organisations reveal an unwillingness to discuss their connections to clandestine transnational political movements, even decades after the events took place. Sebastiaan Faber has rightly described these 'silences and taboos' as a form of both collective trauma and self-censorship caused by fear of appearing disloyal to the Mexican nation, its citizens and exiled Spanish republicans. See Sebastiaan Faber, 'Silencios y tabúes del exilio español en

openly about their activities was in an effort to protect their host nation from allegations of collusion in the overthrow of the Franco regime.

Despite some communist militants' engagement in Mexican national politics, others focused their attention on the ongoing suffering of their compatriots in Spain. Enriqueta and Rómulo García Salcedo, active members of the PCE during the Civil War, took up Cárdenas' offer to naturalise as Mexican citizens and subsequently joined the PCM rather than remaining members of the PCE. Whereas exiles like Luélmo immersed themselves into the PCM's national campaigns, this couple instead focused their efforts on providing resources for refugees who returned to Spain to join clandestine resistance cells.⁵² The couple also hosted fundraisers and sent clothes back to Spain through a subsidiary of the PCE, the Unión de Mujeres Antifascistas (Union of Anti-Fascist Women).⁵³ For Enriqueta and Rómulo, the party merger was largely symbolic, with Mexican militants focusing on national issues and Spanish refugees working toward the needs of their community. 'Although we felt Mexican', Rómulo explained in an interview conducted in 1980, 'there is a Spanish background that is impossible to deny or sweep away'.⁵⁴ The DIPS' focus on the PCE's leadership provided rank-and-file militants the space to engage in activities beyond the confines of national and international distinctions. These efforts, however, were constrained by the unspoken restrictions posed by their ambiguous legal status as both exiles and naturalised citizens.

As the Soviet Union became an increasingly important ally in the fight against the Axis Powers, its decision to dissolve the Comintern in May 1943 brought the PCM–PCE merger to an abrupt and unceremonious end. Shortly thereafter, the PCM's efforts to build a coalition with the country's national labour confederation dissolved after a series of expulsions of party members closely aligned with the CTM's leader, Vicente Lombardo Toledano.⁵⁵ The PCE explicitly turned its attention away from coordinating projects with Mexican leftist groups and instead shifted its support to clandestine resistance movements in Spain. Though the dissolution of the PCM–PCE collaboration dispelled certain fears of Soviet espionage, DIPS investigations of communist leaders from both parties continued well into the post-war era.

Anarchist Refugees, Political Violence and the Criminalisation of Dissent

In contrast to government surveillance of communists, which emphasised the threat of Soviet influence in national politics, secret police investigations of anarchist refugee activities were described explicitly as criminal acts, devoid of any political intention. DIPS agents coordinated with various state-supported organisations, including the CTM, to distinguish anarchist exiles from 'desired' political asylum

México: Historia oficial vs. historia oral', *Espacio, Tiempo, y Forma: Serie V, Historia Contemporánea*, 17 (Jan. 2005), pp. 373–89.

⁵²Dolors Marín Silvestre, *Clandestinos: El maquis contra el franquismo, 1934–1945* (Barcelona: Plaza y Janés Editores, 2002).

⁵³Interview with Rómulo García Salcedo, conducted by Dolores Pla Brugat, 1980, DEH, INAH, PHO/10/56, pp. 86–9.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 120–1.

seekers affiliated with republican and socialist factions in Spain. The distinction was not new: throughout the Civil War, factions of the Popular Front that wished to preserve the Spanish republican government regularly thwarted the revolutionary aspirations of anarchist groups. Although the Mexican government publicly lauded Spain's anarchist revolutionaries during the conflict, Mexican intelligence operatives exploited the factional divisions that pitted Spanish loyalists against one another to criminalise anarchist exiles.⁵⁶

On 26 December 1941, four members of the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (Iberian Anarchist Federation, FAI) robbed a payroll truck outside of the Cervecería Modelo brewery in Mexico City, leading to a bloody shoot-out among the assailants, the truck driver and local police. Founded by Spanish immigrants in 1925, the Cervecería Modelo had long been a site of labour and political unrest, in part because of its owners' suspected sympathies with the Franco regime.⁵⁷ Though three of the attackers were able to escape, the aftermath left one FAI militant and the truck's driver dead, with several other bystanders and police officers severely wounded. Five days later, the secret service of Mexico City's chief of police arrested two of the accomplices and discovered the apartment hideout of the purported leader of the armed robbery, Mariano Sánchez Añón. After yet another shoot-out with authorities, a wounded Sánchez Añón chose to commit suicide rather than be captured.⁵⁸

The use of armed violence to achieve political means was not uncommon for anarchist militants in Spain. Founded in 1927, the FAI rejected the mass organisational model of the anarcho-sindicalist Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (National Confederation of Labour, CNT) and instead formed clandestine political networks, or *grupos de afinidad* (affinity groups). Comprised largely of young, unskilled working-class men, anarchist affinity groups engaged in bank robberies, political assassinations and community defence forces when outlawed from participating in formal political and labour spheres during the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923–30). Both the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and Spanish republican officials characterised the CNT's and the FAI's activities as the seditious crimes of bomb-wielding terrorists. Nevertheless, many sectors of the Spanish working class viewed the *grupistas'* tactics as cathartic acts of retribution against the military dictatorship and the 'authoritarian' characteristics of the Second Spanish Republic.⁵⁹ As Clara E. Lida suggests of their nineteenth-century ideological forebears, clandestine anarchist activities were a 'premeditated, practical,

⁵⁶For more on ideological divisions during the Spanish Civil War, see Payne, *The Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union, and Communism*; Danny Evans, *Revolution and the State: Anarchism in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2020).

⁵⁷'Falange Española', 8 Oct. 1942, AGN, DGIPS, box 741, file 17, pp. 21–4; Carlos Herrero Bervera, *Los empresarios mexicanos de origen vasco y el desarrollo del capitalismo en México, 1880–1950* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2004), pp. 203–9; Ojeda Revah, *Mexico and the Spanish Civil War*, p. 156.

⁵⁸'Fueron detenidos otros dos de los tenebrosos asaltantes al sub-pagador de "La Modelo"', *El Popular*, 2 Jan. 1942, p. 8.

⁵⁹Chris Ealham, *Class, Culture, and Conflict in Barcelona, 1898–1937* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 48–53, 130–1.

rational, and effective response to legalised violence and repression'.⁶⁰ During the Second Republic, as moderate sectors of the anarchist movement distanced themselves from clandestine acts of violence, CNT and FAI militants maintained a great deal of popular support among people disillusioned by the republican government's ongoing suppression of radical movements composed of migrant workers, the unemployed, tenants and other urban-based labour sectors.⁶¹ However, these methods and political aspirations made them controversial figures in Spain as well as in Mexico.

Interestingly, the most severe condemnations of the FAI's 1941 attack on the *Cervecería Modelo* came from members of the Spanish exile community and the Mexican Left. Throughout January 1942, the CTM's daily periodical *El Popular* covered the secret police's ongoing criminal investigations of the Spanish anarchist refugee community. Published almost exclusively in the paper's 'Policía' section, the coverage of the case shared headlines with murders, suicides and other acts of criminal violence. Similar to the sensationalist and gory accounts of crime covered in Mexico's *nota roja* ('red note') newspapers, *El Popular's* detailed description of the harrowing shoot-out between FAI militant Sánchez Añón and secret service officers included a graphic image of the anarchist's bullet-riddled body and an earlier photograph of Sánchez Añón in a double-breasted suit reminiscent of the era's depiction of gangsters.⁶² The paper also suggested that two women detained at the hideout – Sánchez Añón's 'young lover', the 18-year-old María Mersele, and her close friend, 30-year-old Juana Bailó Mendoza – condoned the men's crimes and touted the leader's suicide as a heroic act fitting for a revolutionary man. Recalling the moment Mersele was notified of her lover's death, the article claimed that 'she screamed at the secret service agents with all of her heart, "this is how men die!"' Under a photo depicting the two young women holding toddlers, the article noted the 'cynical smile of Juana ... who [looks like she is] in the mood to celebrate' the martyrdom of Sánchez Añón and his attacks against the agents of the state. With no reference to the attack having any political motivations, the article concluded by noting the secret service agents' ongoing investigations of 'the now sadly celebrated Sánchez Añón, the criminal gangster of the Federación Anarquista [Ibérica]'.⁶³ Thus, the author corroborated the Mexican secret police's endeavours to portray anarchists as 'gangsters' while ignoring the FAI's intentions to attack industrialists with well-known ties to Spanish fascist movements in Mexico.

⁶⁰Clara E. Lida, 'Los discursos de la clandestinidad en el anarquismo del XIX', *Historia Social*, 17 (autumn 1993), p. 65.

⁶¹Ealham, *Class, Culture, and Conflict in Barcelona*, pp. 121–9; Pamela Radcliff, *From Mobilization to Civil War: The Politics of Polarization in the Spanish City of Gijón, 1900–1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 183–94.

⁶²Fueron detenidos otros dos de los tenebrosos asaltantes al sub-pagador de "La Modelo", *El Popular*, 2 Jan. 1942, p. 8; For more on the *nota roja* genre in Mexican society and culture, see Pablo Piccato, 'Written in Black and Red: Murder as a Communicative Act in Mexico', in Pablo Policzer (ed.), *The Politics of Violence in Latin America* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2019), pp. 89–91.

⁶³Fueron detenidos otros dos de los tenebrosos asaltantes al sub-pagador de "La Modelo", *El Popular*, 2 Jan. 1942, p. 8.

Three weeks after the initial shoot-out, authorities had arrested nine men and three women accused of being accomplices in the Cervecería Modelo attack. The charges against them included homicide, assault, attempted robbery, obstruction, perjury and criminal association, as well as the use and concealment of prohibited firearms.⁶⁴ During the indefinite detention of Luis Cara Sabio, who was accused of being a member of Sánchez Añón's 'gang' responsible for the Cervecería Modelo incident and also an attack on a relief organisation run by the Spanish republican government in exile, he claimed under interrogation that FAI members had threatened to kill him if he refused to join their group. As Cara Sabio repeatedly declared his innocence to his interrogators, he informed them that the other suspects were allegedly well known to police in Barcelona. Another detainee, Margarito Jiménez Contla, was also interrogated by secret service agents for an undisclosed period of time. After he submitted a confession, reporters noted, the visibly distraught Jiménez asked not to be interrogated any further and to be left alone.⁶⁵ Even as reporters heralded the police's capture of the band of anarchists, they alluded to the fact that the confession may have been obtained through torture. Yet as a consequence of the police's heavy-handed tactics, the interrogations produced a wealth of information on an alleged criminal enterprise comprised of Spanish and Mexican anarchists, as well as a detailed account of the alleged crimes conducted by FAI militants in Spain.⁶⁶

Responses to the Cervecería Modelo attack from the Spanish refugee community invoked many of the same disagreements on tactics and strategies that had emerged between different political and labour movements during the Spanish Civil War. On 30 December 1941, the assistant secretary of the Mexico City-based Federación de Organismos de Ayuda a los Republicanos Españoles (Federation of Spanish Republican Aid Organisations, FOARE), Luís P. Maya, cabled President Ávila Camacho to condemn the deaths of brewery employees and pleaded that authorities avoid apprehending refugees of 'clean conduct'.⁶⁷ Despite the efforts of Spanish republican groups to distance themselves from the incident, a number of exiles unaffiliated with anarchist groups were also victims of secret police raids. On 9 January 1942, Concepción Majoral wrote an urgent plea to the president on behalf of her husband, Edilberto Colón, who was detained by Mexico City police during a series of raids following the attack at the Cervecería Modelo. Like many exiles, Colón had found work at the factory following his arrival in Mexico in June 1939. Majoral insisted that her husband was wrongfully accused of being an anarchist and said that, in fact, in Spain he had been a member of the Unión General de Trabajadores (General Union of Workers, UGT), a trade union federation closely aligned with the Partido Socialista Obrero Español

⁶⁴'Fueron consignados a las cortes penales los asaltantes españoles', *El Popular: Sección Policía*, 17 Jan. 1942, p. 1.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶For more details on the FAI shoot-out at the Cervecería Modelo and its impact on the Mexican anarchist movement, see Ortega Aguilar, 'Regeneración y la Federación Anarquista Mexicana, 1952–1960', pp. 94–104.

⁶⁷Luis P. Maya to Manuel Ávila Camacho, 3 Jan. 1942, AGN, Manuel Ávila Camacho (hereafter MAC), box 669, file 541/422, p. 10.

(Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE).⁶⁸ President Ávila Camacho's personal secretary forwarded Majoral's petition to the general prosecutor's office the following day, although an exact outcome is not known. However, other refugees accused of connections to the attack did not receive such support from the Mexican government.⁶⁹ Police also raided the apartment of Ramón Guillot Jordana, one of the refugees who joined the PCM upon his arrival. He shared a residence with other refugees who worked in a factory owned by the exiled Spanish republican government. During the raid, officers destroyed all of the men's possessions and confiscated the documentation relating to their asylum status – an act that deliberately stripped the refugees of their legal right to political asylum. The loss of their immigration records put the men in a particularly precarious position, as documentation was necessary for them to claim refugee status within Mexico and to receive pensions from the Spanish government in exile for their service during the Civil War. Fortunately for Guillot, his military identification card was catalogued at a relief organisation's office, allowing him to continue receiving his pension.⁷⁰ The Mexican secret police's heavy-handed treatment of exiles of various political affiliations went unmentioned in the CTM's newspaper and the Spanish republican press, thus reinforcing the exiles' silence as they faced continued persecution.

As Spanish exiles of all political spectrums emphatically denounced the Cervecería Modelo incident as a 'scandalous criminal act', Mexican anarchists condemned the government's broader crackdown on anti-authoritarian groups that had no ties to the FAI. Writing on behalf of the Juventudes Libertarias (Libertarian Youth) of San Luis Potosí, Evaristo Contreras published a flyer rejecting the association between the FAI and the greater anarchist community, and instead condemned the Mexican secret police's torture and extralegal imprisonment of Mexican anarchists, Spanish refugees and radical immigrants throughout the country. More pressing than the FAI's activities, Contreras declared, was the erosion of democratic values in Mexican society, as police officers forced detainees to make false confessions.⁷¹ Despite the government's crackdown on exiles of various political affinities, Spanish republican and Mexican leftist organisations reinforced the state's framing of the Cervecería Modelo incident as a purely criminal act. This rhetoric would become a hallmark tactic of the Mexican government's suppression of subsequent dissident movements as agents of 'social dissolution'.

Anarchist Exile Activities in Cold War Mexico

The repression of anarchist political activities continued under the presidency of Miguel Alemán Valdés. Prior to serving as interior minister during the presidency of Ávila Camacho, Alemán was highly regarded as the former governor of Veracruz,

⁶⁸Cable from Concepción Majoral to Ávila Camacho, 9 Jan. 1942, AGN, MAC, box 669, file 541/424, pp. 4–6.

⁶⁹Cable from Jesús González Gallo to Majoral, 10 Jan. 1942, AGN, MAC, box 669, file 541/242, p. 1.

⁷⁰Interview with Ramón Guillot Jordana, conducted by Dolores Pla Brugat, pp. 122–3.

⁷¹Juventudes Libertarias de San Luis Potosí, 'El imperativo de la hora: Un llamado a los anarquistas del país', document 25, 1942, available at www.antorcha.net/biblioteca_virtual/politica/fac/fac25.html, last access 25 Sept. 2020; 'Carta al Señor Presidente, 29 de diciembre de 1941', *El Popular*, 5 Jan 1942, p. 3.

where his wife aided Spanish refugee children during the Civil War.⁷² The Mexican Left and various Spanish exile sectors supported Alemán's 1946 presidential campaign in the hopes that he would encourage the victorious allied powers to liberate Spain from Franco's control.⁷³ Such hopes never materialised, and instead Alemán's government flirted with re-establishing economic and cultural relations with Francoist Spain. At the same time, his administration systematically suppressed his left-wing supporters and purged the state-controlled labour confederations of any radical dissidents.⁷⁴ A far cry from his past support of the Spanish refugee cause, Alemán's heavy-handed policies antagonised many militant exiles and led to an increase in clandestine political activities.

As exiled republican government officials looked to international sanctions and diplomacy to combat the Franco regime, radical sectors of the Spanish refugee community chose to directly intervene in Mexico's efforts to re-establish ties with Francoist Spain. On 20 February 1950, the Spanish anarchist Gabriel Fleitas Rouco assassinated the Spanish diplomat José Gallostra y Coello de Portugal as the latter stepped out of his Mexico City office. Due to the lack of formal relations between Mexico and Spain, Franco had sent Gallostra as an 'extraofficial' representative to discuss the prospects of reopening commercial and travel relations with the Alemán government.⁷⁵ However, following the discovery of a manuscript in Gallostra's possession deploying Spanish fascist tropes of Mexicans' racial inferiority, public opinion turned in favour of the jailed assassin. In an interview conducted with journalists, Fleitas was praised when he explained to journalists that his actions were based on the insults Gallostra voiced against the Mexican people and the Spanish exiles.⁷⁶ The revelations not only saved Fleitas from extradition to Spain, but also led many on the Mexican Left to demand Alemán invoke Article 33 of

⁷²Ryan M. Alexander, *Sons of the Mexican Revolution: Miguel Alemán and His Generation* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), p. 49.

⁷³'Apretemos files en torno de la candidatura de Miguel Alemán para llevar adelante la lucha por la independencia de México', *La Voz de México*, 16 Sept. 1945, p. 7; 'Nuestro saludo al Sr. Presidente de la República Mexicana', *España Popular*, 6 Dec. 1946, p. 1; Halbert Jones, *The War Has Brought Peace to Mexico: World War II and the Consolidation of the Post-Revolutionary State* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2014); Lear, *Picturing the Proletariat*, pp. 261–310.

⁷⁴Robert F. Alegre, *Railroad Radicals in Cold War Mexico: Gender, Class, and Memory* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), pp. 40–2; Patrick Iber, 'Managing Mexico's Cold War: Vicente Lombardo Toledano and the Uses of Political Intelligence', *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research*, 19: 1 (2013), pp. 11–19; William A. Booth, 'Hegemonic Nationalism, Subordinate Marxism: The Mexican Left, 1945–1947', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 50: 1 (2018), pp. 31–58.

⁷⁵José Gallostra Coello de Portugal: Español. 1950 – Informes sobre su muerte', AGN, DGIPS, box 112, file 25; 'Ha sido asesinado en Méjico el representante de España, Don José Gallostra Coello de Portugal' and 'Para ellos, la guerra no ha terminado', *ABC*, 22 Feb. 1950, pp. 1, 3.

⁷⁶'Revelador documento del diplomático franquista', *La Prensa*, 10 March 1950, p. 3; 'Fleitas Rouco reafirma que Gallostra ofendió a México', *La Prensa*, 11 March 1950, unknown page number(s), clippings found in AGN, DGIPS, box 112, file 25; 'Pausas del camino: Gallostra y los mexicanos', *Excelsior*, 13 March 1950, unknown page number, clipping also in AGN, DGIPS, box 112, file 25; 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* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, 2001), p. 109.

the Constitution and purge the country of Spanish immigrants loyal to Franco.⁷⁷ It should be noted that, despite Gallostra's animosity towards the Mexican government and ties to the pro-Francoist Sinarquista movement and the right-wing Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party, PAN), the DIPS never condemned his meddling into Mexican national politics.⁷⁸ Following a 'thorough investigation' of known communist groups and hang-outs in Mexico City, a confidential DIPS report ruled out the possibility that Fleitas was acting on behalf of any national or foreign communist parties. Instead, the agency suggested that Fleitas' actions reflected the criminal behaviour associated with 'all Spanish refugees and those with extremist ideals'.⁷⁹ Although the assassination extinguished Mexico's attempts to reconcile relations with Francoist Spain, the incident confirmed intelligence officials' long-standing suspicions of anarchist exiles' impact on national political affairs.⁸⁰

Just one month before Gallostra's assassination, DIPS Special Agent Agustín Daroca Ponsa published a dossier describing Spanish anarchists and communists as 'a constant threat to the Mexican Republic's social security' and provided a detailed description of specific dissidents' 'criminal' histories. Daroca's dossier of suspected dissidents included the prominent anarchist exiles Juan García Oliver and Jaime Balius Mir, noting the men's professions as '*pistoleros*' (gunfighters) and their 'long history of criminal service to the FAI'.⁸¹ Fleitas' room-mate, an 'anarchist *pistolero* by profession' from Aragón, was described as a leader of the FAI in Mexico with 'a long history in the files of the Catalan police'.⁸² While the dossier contained no documentation relating to Spanish criminal records, the descriptions of the FAI militants matched the confessions collected by Mexican secret service agents following the shoot-out at the Cervecería Modelo eight years earlier. Whether the information is corroborated by additional, yet still classified, DIPS reconnaissance or simply replicated the charges that anarchists had proclivities toward criminal behaviour has yet to be determined. The dossier does, however, provide insight into the ways in which intelligence operatives conflated seemingly unconnected political activities as an ongoing criminal conspiracy.

Starting in the 1950s, a new generation of Spanish anarchist exiles coming of age in Mexico also garnered the attention of the Mexican secret police. Soon after the internal distribution of the dossier, the DIPS began to focus its investigations on the

⁷⁷'Fleitas Rouco reafirma que Gallostra ofendió a México', *La Prensa*, 11 March 1950; 'La autenticidad del documento insultante de Gallostra fue comprobado por la procuraduría' and 'Provoca indignación el documento de Gallostra', *El Popular*, 11 March 1950, p. 1.

⁷⁸For more on the Sinarquista movement and the PAN, see John W. Sherman, *The Mexican Right: The End of Revolutionary Reform, 1929–1940* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997); Jean Meyer, *El sinarquismo, el cardenismo, y la iglesia, 1937–1947* (Mexico City: Tusquets Editores, 2003); Héctor Gómez Peralta, 'Los raíces anti-sistémicas del Partido Acción Nacional', *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales*, 57: 214 (2012), pp. 187–210.

⁷⁹Confidencial. Asunto: Se informa sobre la prosecución de la investigación ordenada', 23 Feb. 1950, AGN, DGIPS, box 112, file 25.

⁸⁰For more on the impact of the Gallostra assassination, see Carlos Soya 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.

⁸¹Agustín Daroca Ponsa to Ortega Peregrina, 28 Feb. 1950, AGN, DGIPS, box 315, file 11, p. 46.

⁸²*Ibid.*, pp. 47–8.

radical student movement and its ties to the children of Spanish exiles. Politicised by their families' experiences during the Civil War as well as the outbreak of a general strike in Barcelona in 1952, exiled Spanish youth mobilised alongside left-wing Mexicans demanding that Alemán's government condemn the Francoist government's suppression of political dissidents. The protests against the Mexican government subsequently led DIPS agents to infiltrate meetings and conferences put on by various Spanish youth organisations.⁸³ Whereas mainstream exile political groups focused their political work primarily on liberating Spain from the Franco dictatorship, Spanish youths associated their anti-Francoist politics with the burgeoning Mexican student movement and its focus on Latin American political struggles. In particular, Mexican and Spanish students became clandestine contacts for a small group of revolutionaries led by a then unknown Fidel Castro, who briefly resided in Mexico City in 1955 following a failed attempt to overthrow the Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista.

Among the young exiles who assisted the Cubans was Octavio Alberola Suriñach. Alberola became a well-known member of the student movement following his 1948 arrest mentioned at the beginning of this article. Much like other radical anarchist militants and the members of the JLM, Alberola received little support from other refugee organisations following his detention by the secret police. Representatives of the CNT, for example, hesitated to publicly condemn the Mexican government for the incident, instead chastising the youth's activism as 'adventurous', opportunistic and falling outside of the purview of the Spanish exile community's political endeavours.⁸⁴ Such disagreements, in fact, spoke to a broader generational divide between Spanish refugees. More than their parents and veterans of the Civil War, Spanish youth brought up in Mexico and politicised by life in exile immersed themselves into political struggles on both sides of the Atlantic.

Deeply influenced by the ideas of internationalism and anti-imperialism permeating the Latin American Left, Alberola and other Spanish exiled youth saw the Cuban Revolution as part of a broader struggle against authoritarianism in Spain and abroad.⁸⁵ Alberola and his fellow students put on regular events at the Ateneo Español de México (Spanish Athenaeum of Mexico) and the Teatro del Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (Theatre of the Mexican Electrical Workers' Union) to build popular opposition to the Batista regime and to galvanise support for the Cuban struggle.⁸⁶ Although under continuous surveillance by the Mexican

⁸³Refugiados españoles: Actividades comunistas que desarrollan algunos de ellos', AGN, DGIPS, box 315, file 11, pp. 84–93.

⁸⁴Interview with Octavio Alberola, conducted by Eduardo Daniel Rodríguez Trejo, March 2015, pp. 161–2.

⁸⁵Renata Keller, *Mexico's Cold War: Cuba, the United States, and the Legacy of the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 47, 51–2; Pau Casanellas, '“Hasta la fin”: cultura revolucionaria y práctica armada en la crisis del franquismo', *Ayer*, 92: 4 (2013), pp. 28–9; Octavio Alberola, *La revolución: Entre el azar y la necesidad* (Buenos Aires: Libros de Anarres, 2017), pp. 31–4; Lambe, *No Barrier Can Contain It*, pp. 207–19.

⁸⁶Despite the Spanish exiles' support for the Cuban Revolution, Alberola and others grew critical of the Castro regime, particularly because of its collaborations with the Franco regime and the execution of anarchist revolutionaries who had assisted the Revolution during its formative years. For more on Alberola's views of the Cuban Revolution, see Stuart Christie, *My Granny Made Me an Anarchist: The Stuart Christie File: Part 1, 1946–1964* (Hastings: Christie, 2002), pp. 217–21; 'Castro Turns His Back

state, Alberola acknowledged that his status as a Spanish refugee provided him with more flexibility to speak out against Latin American dictatorships:

Despite the fact that this collaboration was justified by the moral and political duty of being in solidarity with those who struggled against the two most disgraceful dictatorships of that period ... the PRI did not view the 'illegal' revolutionary activities favourably, as it could create diplomatic conflicts. Hence the 'usefulness' of my interventions in public acts of solidarity with the Cuban guerrillas; I intervened as a Spanish and anti-Franco refugee, which allowed me to denounce the collusion of Latin American dictatorships with the Franco regime, without the representatives of those dictatorships being able to ask the Mexican government to prohibit such acts. Nor could the Francoist representatives, because Franco's Spain was not officially recognised in Mexico.⁸⁷

As Alberola and other exiles assisted Cuban revolutionaries with funds, resources and weapons training in the Mexican countryside, the subsequent success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 galvanised other exiled Spanish militants throughout Latin America.⁸⁸ In 1960, Alberola and fellow anarchist exile Juan García Oliver coordinated a conference in Caracas, Venezuela, to rejuvenate the Spanish anarchist CNT union, which had been debilitated by a number of internal divisions.⁸⁹ According to Alberola, one of the contributing factors to the reunification of the CNT was 'the triumph of the *"barbudos"* (bearded ones) of the Sierra Maestra'. The Cuban Revolution also encouraged new collaborations between anti-Francoist movements in Mexico, Latin America and Europe, such as the Movimiento Español 1959 (1959 Spanish Movement).⁹⁰ For this younger generation of anarchist refugees, the overthrow of authoritarian regimes in Latin America complemented their aspirations to recapture Spain from the Franco dictatorship.⁹¹

Despite his initial run-in with the secret police, there are no records indicating that the DIPS was aware of Alberola's activities. Though the lapse is unusual, considering how frequently Spanish exiles were targeted by the DIPS, it is possible that local political conflicts – such as the mounting activism of railroad workers and students – took precedence over the activities of the refugees.⁹² Yet according to

on Anti-Francoists", Interview with "Interior Defence" (D.I.) Organiser Octavio Alberola in Basque Journal *Argia* by Aitor Azurki, trans. Paul Sharkey, 2014, originally published in Basque in *Argia*, 11 Jan. 2014. For more on relations between the Castro and Franco regimes, see Haruko Hosoda, *Castro and Franco: The Backstage of Cold War Diplomacy* (London: Routledge, 2019).

⁸⁷ Alberola, *La revolución*, pp. 31–2.

⁸⁸ Comotto, *El peso de las estrellas*, pp. 113–19.

⁸⁹ Danny Evans, 'Uprooted Cosmopolitans? The Post-War Exile of Spanish Anarchists in Venezuela, 1945–1965', *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, 25: 2 (2019), pp. 321–42.

⁹⁰ Elena Aub, *Palabras del exilio: Historia del ME/59, una última ilusión* (Mexico City: INAH, 1992); Faber, *Exile and Cultural Hegemony*, pp. 162–3; Comotto, *El peso de las estrellas*, pp. 113–19.

⁹¹ Manuel de Paz-Sánchez, 'Voces disonantes: Opiniones libertarias sobre Venezuela y Cuba (1958–1961)', *Revista de Indias*, 77: 270 (2017), pp. 463–89.

⁹² Alegria, *Railroad Radicals in Cold War Mexico*; Tanalís Padilla, 'Rural Education, Political Radicalism, and Normalista Identity in Mexico after 1940', in Gillingham and Smith (eds.), *Dictablanda*, pp. 341–59; Jaime M. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico: Student Unrest and Authoritarian Political Culture during the Long Sixties* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), pp. 83–180.

Alberola, his continued political activities did not go unnoticed. In May 1967, Octavio's father, José Alberola Navarro, a fellow CNT militant and member of its regional defence council in Aragón during the Civil War, was found gagged and hanged in his Mexico City apartment, while Octavio was in New York City for a conference denouncing US military bases in Spain. Though state officials ruled José's death as suicide, detectives who spoke to the building's doorman suspected four young men of conducting the murder. To this day, Octavio Alberola and others in the Spanish anarchist community have alleged that the intruders were Francoist agents assisted by the Mexican secret police as a retribution for political activities.⁹³ As with many cases of the subsequent Mexican Dirty War, the lack of any DIPS documentation pertaining to the death of a well-known political refugee leaves many unanswered questions regarding the state's official conclusion that the death was not a result of foul play.⁹⁴

Conclusion

Mexico's safeguarding of political exiles fleeing the Spanish Civil War has been widely regarded as one of the nation's most significant contributions to international human rights and affirmed the revolutionary credentials of subsequent administrations for decades to come. Yet, as this article shows, the country's hospitality was underscored by its ongoing surveillance of exiles and naturalised citizens. While the state's intelligence apparatus lacked the resources and means to fully expose the nature of Spanish exiles' connections to national and international political organisations, its discourses on criminality tended to regard these activities as acts of subversives rather than agents of social change. As seen in later instances of 'humanitarian' support for political exiles fleeing dictatorships and left-wing revolutionary movements in Latin America, the Mexican state's paradoxical treatment of exiled Spanish anarchists and communists both affirmed its public image as the Revolution's rightful heir while honing its methods of repressing domestic threats to its political control.⁹⁵ And while the DIPS' purported purpose was strictly to monitor domestic social conflicts, this article demonstrates the agency's significant role in policing threats to the reopening of economic and cultural relations with Francoist Spain. Despite these efforts to contain the activities of Spanish exiles, militant refugees found ways to participate in transnational

⁹³For more on the death of José Alberola, see extract from *Últimas Noticias*, 3 May 1967, quoted and cited in Comotto, *El peso de las estrellas*, pp. 212–13; Octavio Alberola and Ariane Gransac, *El anarquismo español y la acción revolucionaria, 1961–1974* (Paris: Ruedo Ibérico, 1967), p. 203; Alberola, *La revolución*, p. 66.

⁹⁴Tanalís Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of the Pax Prista* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Fernando Herrera-Calderón and Adela Cedillo (eds.), *Challenging Authoritarianism in Mexico: Revolutionary Struggles and the Dirty War, 1962–1982* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Alexander Aviña, *Specters of Revolution: Peasant Guerrillas in the Cold War Mexican Countryside* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Gladys I. McCormick, *The Logic of Compromise in Mexico: How the Countryside Was Key to the Emergence of Authoritarianism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

⁹⁵For recent studies detailing the broader use of exiles in national politics throughout Latin America, see Luis Roniger, James N. Green and Pablo Yankelevich (eds.), *Exile and the Politics of Exclusion in the Americas* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2012); Patrick William Kelly, *Sovereign Emergencies: Latin America and the Making of Global Human Rights Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

revolutionary struggles and evade the watchful eye of Mexico's growing intelligence apparatus. Nonetheless, the ongoing efforts to villainise the most politically active sectors of the Spanish diaspora added to a growing lexicon of what acts, by whom, constituted dissent and subversion in post-revolutionary Mexico.

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Spanish abstract

Este artículo examina la vigilancia estatal mexicana a los exiliados políticos españoles. Mientras el gobierno de México dio públicamente la bienvenida a más de 20,000 refugiados políticos huyendo de la Guerra Civil Española (1936–9), su aparato de inteligencia consideraba a los refugiados anarquistas y comunistas como amenazas subversivas a la nación mexicana. Pese a estos esfuerzos, la policía secreta mexicana no pudo evitar el desarrollo de nuevos lazos políticos entre las clases populares de ambos países. Este artículo muestra las consecuencias de la campaña de la policía secreta mexicana en contra de exiliados radicales mientras también subraya las instancias en las que los españoles evadieron la vigilancia estatal y contribuyeron a proyectos revolucionarios en México, América Latina y España.

Spanish keywords: México; Guerra Civil Española; exiliados; anarquismo; comunismo; vigilancia

Portuguese abstract

Este artigo examina o sistema de vigilância de exilados políticos espanhóis implementado pelo Estado Mexicano. Ao mesmo tempo que o México acolheu publicamente mais de vinte mil refugiados políticos da guerra civil espanhola (1936–9), a inteligência do país classificou os refugiados, vistos como anarquistas e comunistas, como uma ameaça subversiva ao país. Apesar de esforços, a polícia secreta mexicana não pôde impedir o surgimento de novos laços políticos entre as classes populares dos dois países. Este artigo demonstra as consequências da campanha da polícia secreta mexicana contra os exilados radicais, ao mesmo tempo que destaca ocasiões em que os espanhóis evitaram o alcance do estado e contribuíram para projetos revolucionários do México, América Latina e Espanha.

Portuguese keywords: México; Guerra Civil Espanhola; exilados; anarquismo; comunismo; vigilância

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