Uprooted Cosmopolitans? The Post-War Exile of Spanish Anarchists in Venezuela, 1945-1965

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Abstract: *This article considers the activity of anarchist refugees in exile after the Spanish civil war in the light of their professed cosmopolitan and internationalist outlook. It first examines the trajectory of anarchist internationalism in Spain and its perceived shortcomings in the period up to and including the civil war. It then provides a brief survey of the post-war re-organisation of Spanish anarchists in exile, before proceeding to the case study of Venezuela. Anarchist activity in this country is analysed through the lenses of internationalism and cosmopolitanism in the ambivalent context of exile.*

Keywords: Anarchism; CNT; JJLL; FIJL; Venezuela; Republican exile; cosmopolitanism; internationalism

**Introduction**

Within the growing field of transnational anarchist history, the greater part of scholarly attention has focused on the period of early ‘globalisation’ book-ended by the Paris Commune and the First World War (notable collections include Berry and Bantman 2010; Hirsch and van der Walt 2010; Bantman and Altena 2015). While the requirement to account for the outbreak of World War One has prompted fascinating reflections on the nationalisation of labour movements (van der Linden 1988), the collections cited above demonstrate that the 1914-18 war did not necessarily mark the end of the detectable correspondence between labour flows, internationalist ideology and anarchist organisation (see also Moya 1998, 307-319; Zimmer 2015, 166-205). However, the inter-war period saw a multi-sided assault on this phenomenon, which was violently disarticulated by the end of the Spanish civil war in 1939. How anarchist internationalism fared in the unforgiving epoch that followed is the subject of this article.

That year, some eighty thousand members of the anarcho-syndicalist Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) went into exile from Spain (Herrerín López 2004, 36). They had been twice defeated: first as participants in a revolution and then as soldiers and workers of the Republican state. The civil war had imposed traumatic compromises on Spanish anarchists, compromises which represented both a rupture and an exacerbation of existing tendencies within the movement (Richards 1995). One of the fault-lines along which it fractured was internationalism against nationalism. This article will consider the extent to which anarchist internationalism was preserved, sidelined or renewed in exile after the war.

This period was not propitious for anarchist internationalism. Apart from the demoralisation and division brought about by the loss of the civil war, Spanish anarchists were aware that their comrades abroad were scarce and greatly dispersed. In the post-war world, cosmopolitan discourse previously associated with oppositional politics from below appeared to be institutionalised from above at the 1949 Geneva Convention (Levy and Sznaider 2004). To the extent that internationalism was given a working-class expression, it was monopolised by the Communist Parties whose prestige and memberships had been boosted by their role in the Resistance. It was then squeezed by the all-encompassing dichotomy imposed by the Cold War (Zimmer, 206-7). Displaced anarchists not only had to reorganise their networks and establish a base for their activity, but also to confront the diminished possibility of their internationalist ideals appearing as a common-sense response to the dominant tendencies of the epoch.

In this context, one understandable reaction was to seek consolation in the evocation of a largely rhetorical “Spain” – site of the movement’s achievements and projected triumphal return. A superficial survey of anarchist exile publications and publicly stated preoccupations suggests a reluctance to shift focus away from their homeland. Displaced Spanish anarchists declared from exile that the dictator General Franco was not a true Spaniard and called for a “Spain for the Spanish!” (Sanz 2013, 289; *Le Combat Syndicaliste. Organe officiel de la Confederation Nationale du Travail*, 20 July 1964.) We will therefore need to dig deeper to explore the possibility that anarchists were able to preserve and develop an internationalist politics beyond the frontiers of Spain, and beyond the political imaginary associated with their ongoing connections to and memory of that country. To use Paul Gilroy’s fruitful metaphor, to consider whether the violent tearing up of their roots might have enabled the discovery of new and productive routes for anarchist activity (Gilroy 1993).

For the purpose of exploring this question, “internationalism” is used to refer to the ideology that anarchists claimed for themselves, which can be seen to have contained internal contradictions (Levy 2004; Stoetzler 2006). I use “cosmopolitanism” in a more specific sense, referring to activist and intellectual practices aimed at reducing as far as possible the significance of state borders and national origins in the interests of conviviality and shared projects among workers and fellow anarchists.[[1]](#endnote-1) A common language and geographical distance from Spain make the Americas a potentially fertile arena for research into this aspect of Spanish anarchist exile. France, the chief refuge of anarchist exiles, and where most research on this subject has been undertaken, does not offer these advantages.

The greater part of this article is dedicated to a necessarily incomplete survey of Spanish anarchist activity in Venezuela, following the pioneering work of Rodolfo Montes de Oca (2016). The country hosted some five thousand Spanish refugees, making it the third most significant destination for Spanish exiles in the Americas after Mexico and Argentina (Plá 2007). In Venezuela, Spanish anarchists were instrumental in setting up organisational and publishing projects such as *Simiente Libertaria*, *Ruta*, and the Centro Cultural y de Estudios Sociales in Caracas. To consider these activities within the framework of cosmopolitanism and internationalism, I first consider the theory and practice of internationalism in Spanish anarchism in the years preceding the defeat of the Second Republic and then in reflections on the movement in exile in the immediate aftermath of the war, paying particular attention to the youth section of the movement.

By shifting focus away from anarchism’s “heroic years” (Bookchin 1998), this article makes an early contribution to extending the timeline of transnational histories of the movement. It is inspired by Christopher Hill’s exploration of the fate of English revolutionaries and their efforts to comprehend their dashed hopes in *The Experience of Defeat* (Hill 1984). In this regard it follows a similar, as yet nascent, turn in the historiography of Spanish anarchism (Ealham 2015; Torres 2019), which promises to rescue from oblivion the achievements and novelties – as well as disappointments and divisions – of its tragic years.

**Anarchism in one country?**

In the 1930s, the exceptional strength of Spanish anarchism in an international climate characterised by the rise of right-wing regimes encouraged the tendency among its adherents to think of the Spanish people as having inherently libertarian characteristics (Álvarez Junco 1991, 254; Smith 2011, 147). The CNT was a member of the Asociación Internacional de Trabajadores (AIT), set up as an anarcho-syndicalist rival to the Second and Third Internationals in 1923, but was disinclined to pay heed to its by-then much depleted sister organisations (Nelles 2010, 94-95). In the first half of the 1930s, prominent activists in the Spanish movement envisaged a successful libertarian revolution as being limited by the frontiers of Spain (see, for example, the otherwise contrasting paradigmatic cases of Puente [1932] 1985, and Santillán [1936] 1978). After publicly doubting the plausibility of “anarchy in one country”, the veteran CNT activist Manuel Buenacasa was excoriated in the anarchist press and described as an “ex-comrade” (Buenacasa 1933, 27-32). In a 1935 letter to Rudolf Rocker, Helmut Rüdiger, a German exile living in Barcelona, wrote that “If the word national-socialism had not acquired its specifically vile meaning I would say that the CNT was a national socialist movement. […] Its relationship with international anarcho-syndicalism is purely formal” (cited in Nelles, 95).

Such tendencies were strengthened in some, though not all, sectors of the movement following the outbreak of the Spanish revolution and civil war in July 1936. German and Italian aid to the mutinous army and the presence of the colonial Army of Africa led to the casting of the war as one for “national independence” (Núñez Seixas 2006). Several anarchist personages and publications contributed to this framing in speeches and writing that were openly nationalist and occasionally racist (Baxmeyer 2015). Meanwhile, disillusionment among foreign anarchists regarding the concessions and compromises that the libertarian movement in Spain had undertaken during the war led to criticisms directed at the CNT from fellow sections of the AIT. This met with strident organisational patriotism. The confrontation between the CNT and its anarchist critics abroad came to a head at the Extraordinary Congress of the AIT held in Paris at the end of 1937 (Evans 2018, 175-77). There, the CNT proposed that exiled groups which could not claim to have a corresponding working organisation in their home country should be excluded from the AIT, and that refugees should join the appropriate organisation in their host country.

Opposition to the leadership current of the CNT within the ranks of the Spanish libertarian movement was more widespread during the civil war than has commonly been acknowledged. As the war progressed, this opposition also made clear its rejection of the organisation’s nationalist tendency, albeit with internal contradictions. The anarchist youth organisation in Cataluña, Juventudes Libertarias (JJLL), was at the forefront of the reaffirmation of internationalism. In October 1938, its mouthpiece *Ruta* declared that “Nations and borders between workers are obstacles on the path of the revolution that the revolution must sweep aside… The time has come for our organisation to say loud and clear: either we are patriots or anarchists” (*Ruta. Órgano de las Juventudes Libertarias de Cataluña*, 8 October 1938). That same month, activists distributing the publication were arrested by soldiers of the Republican army, and the following month a communiqué was issued by the command of the Eastern Army, that “rapid and energetic” action should be taken against those reading or distributing it.[[2]](#endnote-2) In the final months of the war, anarchist internationalism had become expressly prohibited, even before the victorious Francoists attempted to definitively expunge it from the country. Perhaps anticipating their own imminent exile, contributors to *Ruta* appear to have found consolation in their cosmopolitanism, one affirming: “We cannot limit ourselves to acting only in the spheres marked by the nations… We are internationalists and citizens of wherever we find ourselves. Our fatherland is the fellowship of all human beings in the world” (*Ruta. Órgano de las Juventudes Libertarias de Cataluña*, 8 October 1938). Such assertions would soon be put to the test in the unforgiving environment of life outside Spain in the “midnight of the century”.

**The reorganisation of the Spanish anarchist movement in exile**

In a situation heavy with contemporary resonances, the traumatised refugees from Franco’s Spain who crossed the border into France were met by a hostile right-wing press, appalling living conditions and unwanted police attention, inside and outside of the makeshift refugee camps (Samitier Arroyos 2011, 17-19). The efforts towards regroupment that took place in this context – characterised by an extraordinary resilience and creativity, mutual aid and solidarity – have been treated elsewhere in the historiography, as have the ideological disputes that divided the exiled movement (Ealham 2014, 101-7; Lorenzo 1972, 271-95). Likewise, the involvement of anarchists in the French Resistance is outside the scope of this article (Téllez Solá 1996). Instead, this subsection will provide a brief overview of the CNT’s reorganisation in exile, paying particular attention to the impact of displacement on the organisation’s conception of internationalism and international organisation.

Leading figures in the Spanish libertarian movement who had held responsible positions in its *comités superiores* (the term given to the regional, national and peninsular committees of the CNT, the Federación Anarquista Ibérica [FAI] and the Federación Ibérica de Juventudes Libertarias [FIJL]), and who had left Spain after the fall of Barcelona, met in Paris in February 1939, before the end of the civil war. There they formed the Consejo General del Movimiento Libertario Español (MLE). In its first communiqué of 25 February 1939, the Consejo announced its intention for Spanish anarchism to “continue being a coordinated movement”. Key figures thereby announced their decision not to abide by the principle of disbanding and reintegrating into sister organisations that they had previously attempted to foist on the AIT. This was justified, in part, with a view to a swift return to Spain, but also on professed internationalist grounds: “We consider [the Spanish libertarian movement] to be so vigorous and rich in experience that to suppress it would not only do damage to the country in which we were born… but to the movement for emancipation of the global proletariat. We consider ourselves useful, not only to the Spanish people, but to the future of all peoples.” How Spanish anarchists might or should relate to proletarians in the host country was not hinted at, however. In spite of its grandiloquence, the communiqué acknowledged that more immediate and urgent tasks faced the movement in that desperate period (cited in Samitier Arroyos, 36-38).

The legitimacy of the Consejo, described by the historian César M. Lorenzo as “by its very nature an authentic insult to libertarian ideas”, was swiftly questioned (Lorenzo, 268).[[3]](#endnote-3) After the outbreak of the Second World War, Juan García Oliver, the CNT’s former Minister of Justice in the Republican government, who had resigned from the Consejo, attempted to garner support for a projected Spanish libertarian political party, the Partido Obrero del Trabajo, from his exile base in Mexico. His reasoning for the foundation of a new organisation was that, in exile, the CNT could not carry out the workplace-based activity that had been its raison d’être, and that time was of the essence in cohering the exiled anarchists in such a way that the movement’s efforts on behalf of the Allies (above all in the French Resistance), would be duly acknowledged in the case of an Allied victory leading to regime change in Spain (García Oliver 1978, 535; Herrerín López 2004, 38; Lorenzo, 271-73). Although this project made little headway, García Oliver was prescient with regard to the difficulties the CNT would face in sustaining and justifying itself without a trade-union base (see Ealham 2014, 107-9). In fact, his was not the only proposal for an anarchist political party in exile (Herrerín López 2004, 38). However, given the markedly different perspectives that rival anarchist tendencies brought to debates, the only viable means of maintaining a coherent organisation of Spanish anarchist exiles was on the basis of their pre-existing organisational identity.

Amid much intrigue and dispute, the CNT-MLE was formally constituted with its base and leadership in Toulouse. At its helm were Federica Montseny and her partner Germinal Esgleas. Montseny had been Minister of Health during the wartime Republican government. In a not altogether convincing about-face this couple now defended the need for the libertarian movement to return to the principles of orthodox anarchism after the compromises of the war (on their controversial activity in exile, see Herrerín López 1998, 450-68 and, for an explanation of their sudden ideological shift, see Torres, 21-22). Even after great power realpolitik had quashed hopes of an Allies-assisted end to the Franco regime and with it the prospect of a swift return to the Peninsula, the option of the exile organisation dissolving and its members joining sister organisations was not entertained.

With bleak irony, during the post-war reorganisation of the AIT, the exiled Spanish movement’s leadership forced through reversals of the modifications and injunctions it had imposed on its fellow members in 1937-1938. Then, the CNT had browbeaten the other organisations of the AIT into accepting a margin of autonomy for individual sections so that its collaboration in the Republican government would not place it outside of the norms of the AIT. Prior to the first Congress of the AIT to be held since the war, which took place in Toulouse in 1951, the leadership of the CNT in exile insisted that the AIT’s secretariat must not invite a delegation from the CNT in Spain – because it collaborated with the Republican government in exile! Far from dissolving itself as it had enjoined anarchist refugee groups to do in the civil war years, it now insisted on the AIT recognising the CNT in exile as the only legitimate representative of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist movement, refusing to acknowledge the organisation that subsisted, underground and in conditions of extreme danger, in Spain (Movimiento Libertario Español 1947, 52-53). Those members in exile who supported the Spain-based activists and their continued alignment with the Republican “government” split or were expelled from the CNT-MLE (see Herrerín López 2004, 66-80; Samitier Arroyos, 81-95).

**Citizens of wherever we find ourselves? The Federación Ibérica de Juventudes Libertarias (FIJL)**

During the civil war, the youth sections of the libertarian movement in Cataluña and Aragón had jealously guarded the autonomy of their organisation in conflict with the *comités superiores* and had insisted on the internationalist character of the anarchist movement. This grounding provided the basis for a potentially productive regrouping in exile, where veterans of these struggles formed the bulk of the reconstituted committee of the FIJL in Toulouse in 1945 (Vega 2010, 311-12).[[4]](#endnote-4) In a spirit diametrically opposed to that of their elders, young anarchists set about attempting to establish the Internacional Juvenil Anarquista (IJA) in 1946. To that end, Eduardo Vivancos and Germinal Gracia were tasked with liaising with Italian and French comrades, and with founding a bulletin in the language they deemed appropriate. Going on sixteen and seventeen, respectively, at the outbreak of the Spanish civil war, both were already members of the CNT and the JJLL. They had come of age in revolutionary Barcelona and participated enthusiastically in the rear-guard activities of the youth movement, Gracia joining the “Los Quijotes del Ideal” affinity group (see Díaz 1995, 24-27 and Paz 2002, 58-62). After enrolling on the Catalan front towards the war’s end, they had spent the majority of the Second World War in a succession of camps. This experience only ended for Gracia in 1944, when he escaped from a wagon bound for Dachau (Díaz, 39-41). Together they founded *Senstatano*, the Esperanto-language bulletin of the IJA, which appeared in twelve editions until May 1948. Although the IJA did not get off the ground, the bulletin allowed the young anarchists to establish links outside of Europe, notably in Japan and China, and publication continued after May 1948 as the “bulletin of libertarian Esperanto-speakers of the world” until 1955 (Díaz, 45-46; del Barrio and Hiroyuki 2016).

By this point, several of the most prominent members of the FIJL in exile had made the decision to cross back over the border and engage in clandestine activity in Spain. Juan Cazorla Pedrero, seventeen when the civil war began and a veteran of the anarchist Roja y Negra militia column and of the street fighting in Barcelona in May, arrived in 1945. One of the youth movement’s most perceptive thinkers, Amador Franco, went into Spain with a member of “Los Quijotes”, Raúl Carballeira, who resigned from his post in the exiled anarchist youth organisation in March 1946, as did Jaime Amorós, who had travelled alongside Gracia to an Italian anarchist youth conference earlier in the year (Alaiz [1954] 2012). Gracia shortly followed suit. Fellow “Quijotes” Federico Arcos and Liberto Sarrau, along with the latter’s partner Joaquina Dorado Pita – another key figure in the wartime JJLL – were also in Spain at this point.

The solidarity and self-sacrifice that characterised the FIJL activists and their return to Spain at this time is humbling. The balance-sheet of their decision, however, was desperate. Amador Franco was arrested in July 1946, within months of his arrival. He would be executed a year later. By the end of 1946, Gracia and Amorós were in jail. In 1948, having been disowned by the CNT-MLE in exile the previous year, Sarrau and Dorado Pita were arrested, tortured and jailed. That same year, Germinal Gracia, by this time out of jail, along with Raúl Carballeira, Cazorla Pedrero and their comrade Ramón González Sanmartí, became involved in a shoot-out with plainclothes police in central Barcelona while trying to ascertain the identity of a police agent masquerading as an anarchist. González was killed but the others escaped, Pedrero with a bullet in the guts. The comrades went into hiding where, in June, Carballeira was trapped by police in Montjuïc and died, shot either by police or himself to evade capture (García [1961] 2012, 84-86). Gracia, in Tibidabo until August, was finally able to cross the border back into France that month, as did Cazorla, who had been cured of his wound in the meantime by the anarchist doctor Josep Pujol Grúa. Years later, a text composed by Germinal Gracia and approved by a general assembly of the CNT in Venezuela concluded that “The unfortunate tactic of 1946-1948 provided the opportunity to appear on the roll call of libertarian martyrs but drastically reduced the ranks of the comrades most disposed to self-sacrifice and generosity” (CNT de España en Venezuela 1961, 3).

A number of factors help to explain why the anarchist youth had found it hard to consider themselves “citizens of wherever they found themselves” in the post-war period. Disillusionment at the hypocrisy and intrigue of the exiled *comités superiores*, disappointment at the difficulties encountered in establishing an international network with French and Italian comrades, a feeling of duty towards those dead or left behind, or an overly optimistic estimation of the possibilities for activity in the Spanish underground impelled these activists to return home to fight for their ideals in conditions of severe repression. At the end of 1948, having narrowly survived this experience, Germinal Gracia boarded a ship bound for Venezuela. Whether geographical distance from Spain and the leadership faction in France would prove more conducive to the kind of cosmopolitan praxis affirmed by *Ruta* at the end of the civil war, is the question the rest of this article will begin to address.

**Venezuela 1948-1959: Difficult beginnings**

The split between supporters and opponents of the CNT-MLE had divided the anarchist exiles in Venezuela in two, leading to physical confrontations (Herrerín López 2004, 79; Montes de Oca, 157).[[5]](#endnote-5) However, the country’s delegate to the exiled MLE conference in Toulouse in 1947, José Peirats, sounded a positive note, reporting that since 1945 – the beginning of the three years of democratic government known as the “Trienio Adeco”, “Adeco” being the colloquial name given to members of the Venezuelan political party Acción Democrática – the Venezuelan government had offered guarantees to Spanish refugees and their number had begun to increase considerably (Movimiento Libertario Español, 32). This presented a marked contrast to the difficulties that Peirats, alongside other Spanish anarchists, had previously encountered in the Dominican Republic, then under the dictatorship of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, prior to making it to Venezuela (Ealham 2015, 127-28). Although there was no separate anarchist organisation in Venezuela, Acción Democrática, Venezuela’s leading party at this time, was such a broad church that it contained anarchist sympathisers among its most prominent figures, such as Salom Mesa, Francisco Olivo and Pedro Bernado Pérez Salinas, who extended the hand of friendship to Spanish refugees (See Domingo Alberto Rangel’s prologue to Mesa 1987, 18-26; Montes de Oca, 155-6; and Angel J Cappelletti’s prologue to Rama and Cappelletti 1990, clv).

The situation changed dramatically the following year. 1948, the year of Germinal Gracia’s arrival in Venezuela, saw the military coup that would eventually result in the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez, an ally of both Franco and Trujillo. Acción Democrática and the Communist Party were banned while the Casa España, a central meeting point and space of socialisation for refugees in Caracas, came under government surveillance (Montes de Oca, 158-69). While the situation persisted, new anarchist arrivals were not immune from repression. Pablo Benaiges, formerly a leading figure in the CNT’s militant transport union, who had been imprisoned for his role in the May days in Barcelona, was jailed on arrival in Venezuela as a “communist” (ibid, 171; Íñiguez 2001, 84-85).

Other Spanish anarchist refugees appear to have become involved in underground activity against the regime. According to Gracia’s account, provided in an obituary of José Xena (a leading member of the Catalan FAI during the civil war who had arrived in Venezuela from the Dominican Republic in 1945), the arrival of the dictatorship did not mean that “Xena and the comrades of the CNT settled in the country stayed shut up in their houses… on many occasions they distributed stickers and leaflets against the dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez” (García 1989, 11). The most spectacular incident – although rumours of Spanish anarchist involvement are unproven – was the failed assault on the military air base at Boca del Río in Maracay in 1950. The following year, the Spanish anarchists Eusebio Larruy and Pedro Beltrán were accused of involvement in an attempt on the lives of the military Junta in control of the country, whereupon they were detained in a concentration camp for a year, after the closure of which they were transferred to prison until 1956 (Montes de Oca, 159-67). Meanwhile, the youth section of Acción Democrática in exile joined the Frente Internacional Antidictatorial, an ideologically heterogeneous association of aspirant guerrilla and national liberation fighters, which in addition to early incarnations of the Sandinistas and Fidel Castro’s army, also counted on the co-operation of the Juventudes Antifranquistas, whose chief animator was Octavio Alberola in Mexico, an anarchist and son of the veteran CNT activist José (ibid, 175).

The Pérez Jiménez regime entered a crisis towards the end of the 1950s and fell in 1959 amid street mobilisations in which Spanish anarchists participated. This opened a new period of political life for the exiled anarchists, heralded by a wave of publications. Among the first was *Aguilucho* in 1958, produced, according to its editorial, by a group of “children of veterans of the struggle” (*Aguilucho. Boletín de la FIJL subdelegación de Venezuela*, July 1958). Aligned with the CNT in Spain as opposed to the CNT-MLE, this publication changed its name to *Crisol Juvenil* from its third issue. Perhaps understandably, given its organisational alignment with “the interior”, the publication was highly focused on the homeland. Despite its editorial claim, this was an inter-generational endeavour, and some of its most interesting contributions dealt with this problematic. Manuel Lara, former Secretary to Horacio M. Prieto in the Republican government in exile, wrote a sober article from the perspective of one who had arrived at middle age. Recognising the emotion provoked by the news that a new generation of anarchists had determined to reorganise a section of the libertarian youth in Venezuela (“it makes our grey hairs stand on end”), he nevertheless cautioned against optimism:

The youth of yesterday, which gave their lives in the bloodbath that drowned Spain, were brought up in the heat of the revolutionary unions and social centres of the CNT, oriented by the exemplary conduct and ideological firmness of the activists of the FAI. By contrast, according to what great ideal will the youth of today – formed by our own children – be educated? What kind of revolutionary atmosphere can we offer them, lost as we are in a labyrinth of quarrels and engaged in a thousand occupations that have nothing in common with the ideals of redemption that guided us in the greatest moments of our existence? (*Crisol Juvenil. Portavoz de las Juventudes Libertarias de España: Agrupación de Venezuela*, December 1958).

If we can imagine a way out of this impasse, it would surely allow for a libertarian praxis that combined concern for the struggle in Spain and celebration of struggles past with activity focused on the exiles’ immediate environment.

**From a seed to a root?**

Certainly, the return of civil liberties to Venezuela enabled a good number of exiled CNT members to become involved in union activities in the host country, some attaining positions of responsibility in the Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (CTV) and Acción Democrática, but such activity was hard to square with the anti-parliamentary principles of the CNT (Montes de Oca, 178-79). The CTV was effectively the trade union branch of Acción Democrática. In the words of Germinal Gracia, “its leaders are party deputies in parliament and its union activity as such amounts to next to nothing” (García 1989, 11). In opposition to such “connivances with political intriguers”, a new inter-generational anarchist publication emerged in Venezuela at this time. Determined to break the “unjustifiable silence of our nucleus” which had allowed “the champions of apostasy” to ensure that “only a falsified version of our CNT and libertarian movement is known to the public”, *Simiente Libertaria* aimed to combat the “confusionism” that reigned among exiled anti-fascists (*Simiente Libertaria. Órgano del grupo libertario “Errico Malatesta”*, July 1959). Indicative of the gravity of the schism that existed among former comrades in Venezuela, *Simiente Libertaria* was produced by the “Malatesta” affinity group, among whose number were Juan Verde, then in his fifties, a veteran of battles in Argentina and the CNT’s defence committees in Spain, alongside Eusebio Larruy, Pablo Benaiges and Vicente Sierra, the last of whom was in his mid-twenties. Jailed in Spain when only fourteen years old, Sierra had left for France two years later, and emigrated to Venezuela in 1951 (Íñiguez 2001, 572).

Such divisions did not entirely obviate the possibility for new joint activities in the anarchist milieu. One of the most interesting projects undertaken by anarchist exiles at this time was the founding in 1959 of the Centro Cultural y de Estudios Sociales in Caracas (CCES), chiefly on the initiative of José Xena (García 1989, 11). This Centre, which consciously sought the participation of Venezuelans as well as the exile community, was an attempt to foster conditions in which the scattered libertarian seeds might take root. Over a hundred people attended its founding meeting in February, including the “adecos” Salom Mesa and Francisco Olivo. Germinal Gracia, who by this point had travelled widely from his base in Venezuela, was elected Secretary, with the veteran radical Julián Merino (a key figure in the anarchist uprising in Barcelona in May 1937) vice-secretary (*CNT: Portavoz de la CNT de España en el exilio* [Toulouse], 8 March 1959). The CCES was open daily, contained a library, and hosted an impressive array of talks, classes, and film showings in its first year. It also led to the formation of the “Eliseo Reclus” excursion group, which in addition to organising hiking trips also produced the flysheet *Cumbres*, a so-called “wall newspaper” in the classic libertarian tradition (Convocatoria Centro Cultural y de Estudios Sociales, 27 February 1960, B.A.S.E. Montady). Shortly after its founding, Gracia wrote enthusiastically to José Peirats about the attendance of Venezuelan youth at the Centre’s events (Gracia correspondence, Caracas 19 March 1959). The CCES was, furthermore, a hub for the collection of funds to send in solidarity to comrades in need inside and outside of the country (Convocatoria Centro Cultural y de Estudios Sociales, 27 February 1960).

Despite these achievements, within a year of opening, 72 of the 178 members that had joined the CCES had left. The Secretary admitted that not all the projects envisaged by the Centre’s members had been feasible due to a lack of funds, while attendance at language classes had declined and the proposed theatre group had not been established due to a lack of volunteers (ibid). The minutes of a somewhat tempestuous general assembly in March 1960 suggest that personality clashes and political differences among exiled anarchists had benighted the functioning of the Centre in spite of its non-partisan statutes, while there was a certain degree of debate regarding the difficulty of attracting Venezuelans to the CCES (“Acta de la Asamblea General Ordinaria celebrada el día 12 de marzo 1960 en la sede de nuestra local social”, B.A.S.E Montady). In spite of these obstacles, the CCES remained open until at least 1963, and even achieved an expansion of its activities, successfully staging theatre plays, publishing pamphlets – including Erich Fromm’s *Socialismo Humanista (Manifiesto Socialista)* – and producing a bulletin.

The first edition of the CCES bulletin, produced largely by the younger members of the exiled anarchist community, provides eloquent testimony to the love of nature, or what Fromm called biophilia, and the self-improving spirit in which the anarchist refugees had striven to bring up their children (*Centro Cultural y de Estudios Sociales Boletín*, December 1962). In fact, participation in the Centre appears to be the most notable example of the younger generation in Venezuela taking part in the activities of the libertarian milieu. This gave rise to a new section of the FIJL in exile, which produced *Ruta* for a brief period in the early 1960s – out of “a desire for continuity with *Ruta*, which was the mouthpiece of the Juventudes Libertarias in Cataluña and then of the FIJL in exile [in France]” (Gracia correspondence, Caracas, 13 Sept 1980), before this endeavour was handed over to Germinal Gracia. In an earnest appeal to its readers, the bulletin of the CCES ended with an invitation to join the young members of the Centre, whose activities centred on “reading, open discussion, music that elevates and humanises us, and free thought”, and to abandon “the darkness of humiliating discussions typical of downtrodden youth who do not long for justice” (*Centro Cultural y de Estudios Sociales Boletín*, December 1962).

This appeal is indicative of one potential hindrance to a nucleus of libertarian youth expanding beyond the exile community. Insofar as the interest of a new generation of Spanish exiles in anarchism could be traced to a feeling of admiration for the self-sacrifice, rectitude and heroism of their elders, they would also be guided by certain of their attitudes that needlessly limited their field of vision and sociability. “The dancehall is the antechamber of the brothel” was a common refrain among Spanish anarchists, repeated by the heroic teenagers of 1936 even in a time and context when this previously axiomatic-seeming connection had become thoroughly anachronistic (Díaz, 45). Somewhat depressingly, the reference to music “that elevates and humanises us” is reminiscent of the bourgeois disdain for “low” culture that had characterised much of the broad socialist tradition and which was to colour its response to jazz and rock ‘n roll. Here, the editors of the CCES bulletin appear to echo the youthful editorial group of *Aguilucho*, who four years earlier had pledged not to “enter into the youthful atmosphere of ‘rock ‘n roll’” (*Aguilucho. Boletín de la FIJL subdelegación de Venezuela*, July 1958). While anarchist aversion to new music seems to indicate a reluctance to break with a nineteenth-century notion of cultural refinement, it was precisely such parameters of thought that also hindered a complete break with the ideal of the nation. For example, an article on “the history of music” that appeared in the bulletin of the CCES included the following reflections:

…the French, Italian and German schools gave rise to timeless masterworks in which the composers were able to unite to science and inspiration the inherent virtues of the genius of their race. In the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, Spain played host to a distinguished group of grand maestros… who created a form of music that was genuinely Spanish, and who can be justly placed alongside the great musicians of those other times (*Centro Cultural y de Estudios Sociales Boletín*, December 1962).

Such attitudes likely contributed to the generation gap that was to prove so evident and destructive to the reconstitution of the CNT in Spain during the Transition (Ealham 2015, 206-211). However, while this conception of culture militated against an anarchist encounter with the soundtrack to the countercultural 1960s, it may have encouraged sympathy for another key feature of that tumultuous decade, which was heralded by the victorious guerrilla in Cuba.

**National Liberation**

The triumph of Fidel Castro, broadly contemporaneous to the fall of the dictatorship in Venezuela, brought developments in Latin America to the forefront of the concerns of many exiled Spanish anarchists. Issue 4 of *Crisol Juvenil* (the re-named *Aguilucho*) indicated a shift away from its previously monothematic focus on Spain, prompted by these dramatic events:

The Juventudes Libertarias, the CNT and the Movimiento Libertario español in Venezuela, which has always followed the course of events in Cuba with interest, collaborating in attempts to liberate it whenever possible, add its enthusiasm and happiness, in this glorious moment, to that of all men in America, lovers of liberty and human justice, and send the warmest and most hearty of greetings to all free Cubans, represented by the victorious and heroic “26 July” liberation movement (*Crisol Juvenil. Portavoz de las Juventudes Libertarias de España: Agrupación de Venezuela*, January 1959).

The front page of the same edition was given over to a piece by the Trinidadian-Venezuelan writer and politician Lucila Palacios headed “The free peoples of America for the liberty of Spain”, which expressed the wish for “all subjugated nations to break their chains… this is our vote on behalf of the Spain that struggles to join the free nations of the world; this is our vote on behalf of the Spain that struggles to join global democracy” (*Crisol Juvenil. Portavoz de las Juventudes Libertarias de España: Agrupación de Venezuela*, January 1959). The era of national liberation appeared to present the possibility for transnational co-operation directed at mutually beneficial regime change rather than the traditional ideal of global libertarian revolution, but this seemingly more modest aspiration would soon have to confront harsh geopolitical realities.

Members of Acción Democrática, which came to government after the fall of the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship, along with Castro’s 26 July movement, had formed a part of the Frente Internacional Antidictatorial alongside exiled anti-Francoists. The coming to power of the former two movements combined with events in the exiled libertarian movement appeared to herald a propitious moment for renewed anti-Francoist activity. In Spain student protests had given rise to a “Christian-Castroite group”, *Frente de Liberación Popular* (Torres, 37). In 1961 a “reunification” congress was held in France that brought the split in the exiled CNT to an end and gave rise to a new body tasked with carrying out direct action against the Franco regime: Defensa Interior (DI) (see Samitier Arroyos, 134-43; c.f. Alberola and Gransac 2004, 42-55). In the words of Octavio Alberola, “classical anti-Francoism seemed to suddenly wake up to its responsibility and the urgent need for a serious reaction. Its extreme passivity was in marked contrast to the spirit of struggle of the workers and students in Spain, and of the anti-dictatorial forces in Latin America” (Alberola and Gransac, 41).

DI briefly permitted a new generation of anarchist voluntarists to join the clandestine struggle in Spain with the apparent blessing of the newly unified MLE in exile. As Óscar Borillo and Tomás Gómez put it, “This new generation found itself faced by both the overpowering ‘historical weight’ of their parents and the seductive revolutionary practices – less libertarian but seemingly successful – of Fidel Castro and Ernesto Guevara” (cited in Samitier Arroyos, 146; see also Torres, 39 and 45). In the first published text of the unified CNT in Venezuela, composed by Germinal Gracia, the Zionist paramilitary organisation Haganah was even suggested as a paradigm of modern techniques of sabotage (CNT de España en Venezuela, 11). However, while the successful anti-dictatorial struggle in Venezuela had led to some material aid being lent to anti-Francoists, the ideal of a politically heterogeneous alliance of national liberation struggles against right-wing dictatorship met immediate obstacles. Alberola would later recall: “In France in 1961 I was at the Cuban Embassy, promised a visa so that I could travel to Cuba to get to grips with Cuban cooperation in our fight; but that visa never came… Castro never broke off relations with Franco and Che Guevara was able to saunter around Spain under the protection of the Francoist police. Franco and Castro became friends” (Alberola 2014). This state of affairs was commented on by the former Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM) activist Julián Gorkin in the Venezuela-based libertarian publication *Volveremos*: “What will the Latin American Castroists make of this, who believed in the sincere anti-Francoism of their spokesman and chief? In the name of anti-North Americanism will they justify the agreements between Havana and Madrid on the grounds that business is business? With what logic will they be able to condemn at the same time the aid that, for strategic reasons, the US has given Spain?” (*Volveremos. CNT-Boletín de Información-CNT en Venezuela-AIT*, 1 May 1964).

By contrast, Castro did provide backing to a new guerrilla movement in Venezuela when the “adecos” in government established close relations with the US (Wright 2001, 43-44). The most notorious recruit to its ranks was Paúl del Río – son of the anarchist exile Jesús – who led the commando unit in Caracas that in 1963 briefly kidnapped the Real Madrid footballer Alfredo Di Stéfano. As a consequence of his son’s activity and the hardening of the “adeco” regime in response to the guerrilla struggle, Jesús del Río, who had nothing to do with his son’s adventures, was stripped of his Venezuelan citizenship, leading to urgent calls for solidarity among the anarchist exiles terrified that this would lead to his deportation to Spain.[[6]](#endnote-6) This desperate fate was thankfully avoided as del Río senior was able to transfer his residence to Mexico (Montes de Oca, 197).

**Eyes on Spain**

The reunification of the CNT in exile had to overcome an additional hurdle in Venezuela that the diaspora in other countries appear to have skirted around. In the period prior to unification, Gracia wrote to Antonia Fontanillas that “The CNT is divided into several fractions. There is ‘our’ side, the ‘other side’, and the bosses, who do not want to be splitters but who cannot form a part of the other organisation because of the rules under which it operates” (Fontanillas 2012, p. 115). Since 1958, the organisation had taken the decision to exclude “bosses”, members of the CNT who ran businesses in Venezuela employing paid staff. A group of former CNT members emerged in the following year known locally as the “tercera fuerza”. Not all of them were employers; some wished to make common cause with those who had become employers in exile but who were nevertheless considered to be good comrades. To Gracia it was a moot point given that the organisation had in exile ceased to be a factor in the class struggle (Gracia correspondence, Caracas, 19 March 1959). Towards the end of 1960 Gracia successfully argued for the rule to be rescinded prior to joining forces with Julián Merino in a pro-unity commission (Gracia correspondence, Caracas 25 November and 19 December 1960).

With the way cleared for reunification, the enthusiasm that had become widespread among the exiled membership briefly arrived in Venezuela (Torres, 49). Over three hundred people were reported as attending a conference in Caracas on 18 December 1960, where reunification was ratified and Germinal Gracia was nominated General Secretary of the CNT de España en Venezuela (*CNT: Portavoz de la CNT de España en el exilio* [Toulouse], 15 January 1961). According to the Venezuelan newspaper, *El Nacional*, this brought the total membership of the unified organisation in the country to around eight hundred (cited in *Solidaridad Obrera.* *Órgano semanal del Movimiento Libertario Español* [Paris], 21 January 1961).

Undoubtedly, what had weighed most heavily in the debates and meetings that gave rise to reunification was a feeling of responsibility towards and a desire to return to Spain rather than a belief that the CNT in exile could play an active role in the countries its members had found themselves in – “eyes on Spain” became a watchword of reunification. As much was stated in the text composed by Gracia and approved by a general assembly shortly after reunification (CNT de España en Venezuela, 9). At the rally called to cement the reunification process in Caracas in January 1961, José Consuegra, a leading member of the FIJL during the civil war, declared that “Spain is the CNT just as the CNT is Spain”, while Germinal Gracia affirmed that “To recover Spain is the first necessity because the CNT, outside of Spain, is like a fish out of water… our real life can only be found under the Spanish sun, that sun that made us who we are, rebels, anarchists” (*Solidaridad Obrera. Órgano semanal del Movimiento Libertario Español* [Paris], February 1961).

Organisational unity would prove ephemeral, however. The “Malatesta” affinity group came out in opposition to the unified organisation within a couple of months and campaigned against it in the pages of *Simiente Libertaria* – it was probably in allusion to this that Gracia insisted on “the duty of every conscious activist to put to one side their hatred and bile and refrain from sowing the rotten *seed* that divides rather than unites” (*Solidaridad Obrera. Órgano semanal del Movimiento Libertario Español* [Paris], February 1961). For the “Malatesta” group, the emphasis on Spain appeared to be a cover for an ideological change in the precepts of the libertarian movement. As Juan Verde put it:

While we anxiously await the day that we can leave [exile]… we have the unavoidable duty to keep our “eyes on Spain”, and the best way of doing this is to, here and now, in the places where circumstances have brought us to live, reaffirm and ratify with sincerity and conviction our basic principles, ensuring that our behaviour and activity is in consonance with them. This has been and must continue to be the obligatory standard for libertarians and revolutionaries: to behave and act as such everywhere and at all times (*Simiente Libertaria. Órgano del grupo libertario “Errico Malatesta”*, March 1961).

Two of the group’s members, Verde and Benaiges, had taken part in the May days anarchist uprising of 1937, and derived part of the rationale for their position from their memory of the “betrayal” of that struggle by the *comités superiores*: “Today, like yesterday, we must ignore the call to ‘cease fire’” (*Simiente Libertaria. Órgano del grupo libertario “Errico Malatesta”*, April-May 1961). It is sadly ironic, therefore, that their position ultimately aided the continued pre-eminence in the exiled MLE of Germinal Esgleas and Federica Montseny, the latter of whom had played a prominent role in urging a withdrawal from the barricades during that struggle. The man closest to the MLE leadership in Venezuela was José Xena, who to the dismay of Germinal Gracia, also refused the terms of organisational unity. To the oppositionists, the sticking point was not only the presence of ideological opponents such as José Leiva, former Minister of the Republican government in exile, but also “the bosses” (see the arguments in ibid, a critique of the group’s position is contained in Alberola and Gransac, 51-52).

In this context, it is remarkable that the CCES, once described by Gracia as “the last hope for the Spanish comrades in Caracas” (Fontanillas, 115) was able to continue for as long as it did and even expand its activities, counting on the collaboration of Gracia, Verde and Xena despite the bitter divisions in the milieu. Nevertheless, the split would eventually crystallise in distinct projects. Verde and Xena, along with other stalwarts of the “Malatesta” group, founded the Venezuelan section of the AIT, the Federación Obrera Regional Venezolana (FORVE), and produced its associated publication, *AIT*, while also participating in the solidarity work of Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista (SIA).[[7]](#endnote-7) *AIT* began with a print run of a thousand, but reached a circulation of 3200 during its life span and was distributed widely in Venezuela and abroad, although it could not substantially increase the number of its active collaborators and contributors (*AIT. Órgano de la Federación Obrera Regional Venezolana (FORVE). Portavoz de la AIT en el continente americano*, March 1978). In the ten years during which *AIT* was published, Xena’s monthly column on the trade union movement in Venezuela was estimated to have totalled some 600,000 words (García 1989, 12). Germinal Gracia, meanwhile, took over the publication of *Ruta*, a long-running review that would host debates and polemics from the different wings of the exiled movement and, taking advantage of the linguistic skills and global contacts of its editor, provided commentary on political and cultural developments from around the world. In 1966, in a further bizarre twist in the story of anarchist exile, Gracia was expelled alongside Vicente Sierra from the CNT de España en Venezuela by a faction of “the bosses”, who by then occupied the responsible positions in the organisation (*Ruta. Publicación Anarquista. Órgano de la FIJL Caracas*, May-June 1966).

It is likely that such experiences led Gracia to his disillusioned reflection that “our exile has been a fiasco in many respects, including that of principles” (Díaz, 8). In this he was in accord with his friend José Peirats, and a good many other activists of all tendencies (see Ealham 2015, 180-83, and the responses to the survey in Ruedo Ibérico 1974, 147-245). Although he recognised that, on a personal level, he “would have to thank Franco for forcing me out of Spain and obliging me to begin my wanderings around the world”, he wondered “why would this be of interest to anyone else?” (Díaz, 8-9). However, we might question whether such a sharp distinction between Gracia’s personal trajectory and the experience of exile more generally can be sustained. The first fruit of his travels was a geographical and political survey of Latin America, *América, hoy*, published in 1956 under his pseudonym, Victor García. In the prologue, Peirats used Gracia’s voyages as the basis for a more general observation: “In every Spanish refugee who comes to America we find not a castaway but a knight errant with a hunger for the world. Our national drama has made us navigators, globetrotters… We Spanish lived with our backs to the sea for centuries. Exile has given us an appetite for travel” (García 1956, 8). Furthermore, beyond the satisfaction of nomadic yearnings, Gracia’s wanderings also informed a cosmopolitan approach to activism, providing resources for a potential renovation of anarchism which remain worthy of consideration today.

**The routes of a *Quijote***

The decision of Gracia and Eduardo Vivancos to publish the bulletin of the short-lived anarchist youth international in Esperanto was consistent with the traditions of the CNT and the determinedly internationalist and utopian spirit of the Catalan JJLL. In a Francoist prison and the camps of wartime France, Gracia had applied himself to learning French, English and Esperanto. His was what Benedict Anderson calls the “true, hard internationalism of the polyglot” (Anderson 2005, 5). The connections that the bulletin allowed Gracia to establish in China and Japan facilitated his travel to those countries and subsequent talks delivered at the CCES and numerous articles, pamphlets and books, which earned him the nickname “the Marco Polo of anarchism”.[[8]](#endnote-8) One publication resulting from the Esperantist network was a translation of Lao Tse, which had been rendered in Esperanto by the Japanese anarchist Taiji Yamaga, and then translated into Spanish by Vivancos. In the prologue to the Spanish edition, Gracia indicated the wider import of this network:

Anarchist thought… always travelled in but one direction, from west to east… with the westerners as always demonstrating a superiority complex, unwilling to learn anything from the east although so much light has shone from that direction. The east, by contrast, with a cultural legacy at least as rich as our own, has always extended its antennae toward us… This first essay in reciprocity brought about by the publication of this Taiji Yamaga translation should be merely the advance guard of original anarchist thought that, projecting itself over the bridge on the way to the west, might cancel out the disproportionate unidirectionality that has dominated until now in the current of libertarian ideas that unites Asia with Europe and America (cited in Díaz, 86).

Despite his pessimistic reflections on exile, this quote shows how Gracia’s experience of displacement had led to connections and insights that went beyond personal fulfilment. It had disrupted the “rootedness” that had congealed into both Eurocentrism and the peculiar superiority complex of Spanish anarchism signalled in the first section of the article. Gracia’s determination to question the “unidirectional” nature of classical anarchism made *Ruta* under his stewardship into a less thematically and geographically constricted publication than most comparable reviews produced in exile. This was exemplified by a special issue dedicated to Japanese anarchism which included Gracia’s moving biography of Taiji Yamaga.[[9]](#endnote-9) His comrades noticed how his research into geographically diverse regions added insight and maturity to his anarchism. As Vivancos recalled: “His ideological vision remained the same as in his youth, but his watch had not stopped in July 1936 as it had for other activists” (cited in Díaz, 125).

In his official pronouncements for the CNT in Venezuela Gracia emphasised, even exalted, the focus on Spain that characterised the organisation’s reunification. However, the bulk of his exile activity attests to a cosmopolitanism nourished by and feeding into his anarchism. We find in Germinal Gracia an activist whose head-on meeting of the challenge and potential of the diaspora life – to be a “citizen of wherever we find ourselves” as his comrades in the JJLL had put it – appeared to weaken the hold of national rootedness. If his was an outstanding case, facilitated by his prodigious output and relative prominence in the exiled movement, there is no reason to suppose that it was entirely unique, and it may provide an entry point for further research into a variety of planetary anarchism developed by a dispersed minority current of activists in the aftermath of the Second World War. In the words of his biographer:

Germinal always remained true to his roots but he never bound himself to them… like so many other anarchists of his generation… they had to move like weathervanes buffeted by the ice-winds of the different exiles, and ended up being from everywhere and nowhere, a little like perpetual itinerants, wandering stars of the earth. Hence his convinced Esperantism. Not a patriot but a matriot, whose mother was the cosmoglotic mother earth of all men, for whom fatherlands were and always would be cunning deceptions of the bourgeoisie (Díaz, 121-22).

**Conclusion: antinomies of a cosmopolitan exile**

In the context of the polemics around the CNT’s brief reunification in Venezuela, José Tato Lorenzo, a frequent contributor from Uruguay to *Simiente Libertaria* and later *AIT*, made the following observation:

I believed after the Spanish exodus that the exile, with the world ahead of him, would be a universalist wherever he found himself. But I was wrong, because he longs for Iberia and it is there that he centres his thoughts and desires (*Simiente Libertaria. Órgano del grupo libertario “Errico Malatesta”*, March 1961).

Tato Lorenzo had perhaps based his “universalist” expectation on his own experiences. His youth at the outset of the twentieth century had been marked by enforced nomadism (Íñiguez, 588-89). However, whereas during this period it was possible for exile to nourish anarchist internationalism, the climate in the decades that followed the civil war was less conducive to that end. As we have seen, the post-war attempt to form the Internacional Juvenil Anarquista ended in failure, while many younger anarchists who left Spain in the immediate aftermath of the war felt compelled to return to continue the struggle. Spanish anarchists in Latin America discovered that mutual aid among “anti-dictatorial” national liberation movements was highly constrained by Cold War realpolitik, while libertarian projects designed to reach out beyond the exile community enjoyed only limited success. A pessimistic assessment of anarchist cosmopolitanism would appear justified in this context.

Exile, however, is perhaps a necessarily contradictory experience. As Edward Said observed, on the one hand there is an “essential connection” between exile and nationalism, because “an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage… fends off exile [and] fights to prevent its ravages” (Said 2000, 176). On the other hand, “the exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason and necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience” (ibid, 185). Even in the pessimistic reflection cited above, Germinal Gracia recognised that amidst the collective “fiasco” of Spanish anarchist exile, there was a positive aspect to his having been forced out of Spain. Gracia embodied the antinomies of the uprooted cosmopolitan. Second to none in his association of the CNT with the home country at the time of reunification, he was also the pre-eminent example and exponent of the efforts made in exile to weaken the hold of national boundaries on anarchist activity and the anarchist imagination.

It is understandable that the experience of Spanish anarchist exile should be remembered bitterly by those who lived through it. We might cautiously generalise that older exiles judged the period against the dream of total liberation that they had not only glimpsed but fought for and briefly attained in Spain. Then there were those who judged it against the pre-war CNT’s heterodox, culturally enlivening organisational and social world that had nurtured them and which, once displaced, could not but turn inwards in ever more fractured and embittered circles. The youngest exiles, babies or not yet born when their parents experienced the war and revolution, judged that defeated generation against the action-oriented insurrectionists and guerrillas of the fifties, sixties and seventies. They found it wanting and judged it harshly. But from a distance of decades, might not the exile period’s minor triumphs, survival strategies, and resolute memorialisation of a disappearing tradition hold as many resources for our beleaguered times as the heroic years that preceded it?

The enormous difficulties encountered, and the lingering resentments and disputes occasioned by the experience of defeat and subsequent political machinations should not prevent us from acknowledging what was worthwhile in anarchist exile activity. In the case of Venezuela, this can be seen in anti-dictatorial activity in the 1950s, organisational and publishing endeavours such as the CCES, the “Malatesta” group, *Ruta* and *AIT*. These may have seemed forlorn or unsuccessful judged against expectations based on past experiences, or viewed through the prism of factional disputes, but they nevertheless testify to the restless commitment of generations of anarchists forcibly displaced from Franco’s Spain to preserve their historical memory and attract new adherents. The year before Franco’s death, José Peirats considered the CNT in exile to be like “an uprooted plant, which, little by little, has been withering, drying up and slowly dying” (Ealham 2014, 113). One does not wish to deny the painful experience these words attest to. Yet it is also the case that the uprooting of Spanish anarchism led to a voluntarist effort to scatter libertarian seeds on unfamiliar and sometimes hostile ground. Many did not take root. But the fate of them all has not yet been decided. Not least, the worldly insights that emerged from the routes of Germinal Gracia’s exile. These insights imply an anarchistic basis for a renewal of bottom-up cosmopolitanism, and they may yet bear fruit.

**Notes**

1. By making this distinction I do not mean to claim that “cosmopolitanism” is free from internal contradictions. On this point, see for example Chernilo (2015) and Harvey (2000). My use of it is indebted to Paul Gilroy, who conceives of a “new cosmopolitanism”, cognizant of the ways in which the term has been deployed to justify colonial and neo-colonial policies, and which urges a “critical and an oppositional mood” in support of “anti-racist solidarity” and the “cultivation of cosmopolitan disloyalty” and “systematic estrangement from the over-integrated culture of belligerent national states”: Gilroy (2005). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. See, respectively “Informe que presenta el delegado de la IV zona de JJLL, acerca de la detención de los compañeros Manuel Barcelon Vernet y Salvador Saladie Ros de la localidad de Vandellos”, and the communiqué sent by the Secretary of the CNT in Reus to the organisation’s Defence Section in Barcelona, dated 26 November 1938, in Archivos de la Confederación Regional del Trabajo de Cataluña, Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo, 39D. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Lorenzo, the son of the former National Secretary of the CNT Horacio M. Prieto, who refused an invitation to join the Consejo, affirms that “it was created without consulting the ‘base’ of the Confederation in any way; it took on all decision- making powers and functioned exclusively on a top-down, authoritarian basis, ignoring all the rules of federalism” (Lorenzo, 268-69). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. During the civil war, the JJLL in Cataluña and Aragón had a fractious relationship with the national youth organisation of the libertarian movement, the Federación Ibérica de Juventudes Libertarias (FIJL). In exile, however, the surviving militants of the former organisation acted as part of the latter. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. We can only estimate the number of Spanish anarchists exiled in Venezuela after the war. The reports at the time of the reunification of the CNT in 1960-61 suggested optimistically that the total potential membership of the organisation was around eight hundred, or just under a fifth of the total Spanish exile community. This would make the proportion broadly commensurate with that of the initial exodus that crossed into France after the fall of Barcelona. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. See *Le Combat Syndicaliste. Organe officiel de la Confederation Nationale du Travail*, 20 July 1964; *Acción Libertaria. Órgano de la Federación Libertaria Argentina*, September 1964, which edition also contains calls for solidarity with libertarians exiled from or jailed in Cuba; *Federación Ibérica de Juventudes Libertarias en el exilio. Boletín de información (Inglaterra)*, August 1964, which also contains information about the arrest of Stuart Christie and Fernando Carballo Blanco for DI activity. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. The “Malatesta” group had already been notable in the solidarity shown to persecuted Cuban anarchists, see Fernández (2001, 99-100). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. For a bibliographic survey of “Victor García”, see Díaz, 137-45. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. This has been translated into English: García (2000). Yamaga, a nomadic polyglot, prodigious correspondent and evangelical Esperantist who produced the publication *Mondcivitano* (World Citizen), was an inspiration to Gracia.

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