

Mapping South–South Connections
during the Decolonization Process
and Cold War (1810–1990)

The Islamicate and Ibero-American Worlds



Edited by
RAFFAELE MAURIELLO AND
FERNANDO CAMACHO PADILLA

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Mapping South–South Connections during the Decolonization Process and
Cold War (1810–1990)

Islamicate and Ibero-American World Connections

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Mapping South–South Connections during the Decolonization Process and Cold War (1810–1990)

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Edited by

Raffaele Mauriello
Fernando Camacho Padilla



BRILL

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This book has been written in the framework of the research project “Nuevos actores en las relaciones internacionales contemporáneas durante los procesos de descolonización de África, Asia y América Latina (1810–1990). Redes políticas, alianzas y cooperación Sur-Sur”, supported by the Madrid government (Comunidad de Madrid-Spain) under the Multi-annual Agreement with the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, V PRICIT, S11/PJI/2019-00493.

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This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

To the Palestinian people and their inalienable right to self-determination



Hacia el miedo

*El valle
se llenó de metrallas,
una mezcla de botas
y albahacas.*

Aroma de muerte.

*Olivos y naranjos miran
la Estatua de la Libertad.*

*En la huida
el zapato de un niño
cae.
La madre, con las nalgas rotas,
apura los pasos ...
contenta, hacia el miedo.*

JUAN YASER



Contents

List of Figures IX
Notes on Contributors XII
A Note on Transliteration xv

Mapping South–South Connections between the Islamicate and
Ibero-American Worlds: an Introduction 1
Raffaele Mauriello and Fernando Camacho Padilla

- 1 The Historical Background of European Colonialism in the Muslim
World: the Journey of Ali Bey el Abbassi (1803–1808) 26
Fernando Escribano Martín
- 2 Latin America and North Africa: Three Moments in the Genealogy
of Third Worldism 45
Martín Bergel
- 3 A Cuban in the Ottoman Empire: the Journey of Professor
Juan Miguel Dihigo “to the Old Orient” 62
Reinaldo M. Sánchez Porro
- 4 Rodolfo Gil Benumeya and Carlos de Baraibar: Two Spaniards in
the Rapprochement between Spanish America and the Arab
Islamic World 88
Juan José Vagni
- 5 A Bridge between East and West? The Conflicts inside Chilean
Zionism and the Role of Sephardic Communities (1909–1935) 113
Mario Matus González
- 6 Approximations and Confrontations between Revolutionary Cuba
and the Imperial State of Iran during the Cold War (1959–1979) 140
Fernando Camacho Padilla
- 7 Latin America’s Visual Culture and Art in Iran in the Advent
of the Islamic Revolution: Lost and Hidden Murals of Iran’s
1977–1979 Revolution 181
Raffaele Mauriello

- 8 A Joint Struggle against Imperialism: the Internationalization of the *Montoneros* in Africa, Asia and the Middle East 226
Eudald Cortina Orero
- 9 “We Have Mountains Too, Che Guevara”: Latin American Influence on the Radicalization of the 1968 Generation in Turkey 249
Barış Ahmet Yörümez
- 10 Between the AK and the *Shatwa*: the Representation of Arab Women in the Graphic Production of the OSPAAAL (1967–2019) 273
Alberto García Molinero
- Index 307

Figures

- 7.1 Bahman Borojeni, mural, engraving on clay and then baked, lobby of the Ministry of Agriculture in Tehran, 16 × 4 m2 205
- 7.2 Bahman Borojeni, 1982, oil on canvas, TMOCA 206
- 7.3 Abolghassem Saidi, 1968, mural on canvas, *Tālār-e Rudaki* (now *Tālār-e Vahdat*) concert hall in Tehran 206
- 7.4 *Kayhān*, February 1, 1978, page 5 207
- 7.5 Cover of *Muralism and the Revolution of Mexico (Naqqāshi-ye divāri va enqelāb-e Mekzīk)*, Golshā'i Publications, Winter of 1973 (*Zemestun* 1352) 208
- 7.6 Cover of the brochure of the 1979 exhibition at TMOCA organized by revolutionary artists. The white Persian text on the left side reads: "Reopening of the Museum of Contemporary Arts. The Revolution of Mexico and Muralism. The Evolution of Painting from Miniature to Kamal-ol-Molk. Introduction of Young Artists. 1979 Events Through the Eyes of Four Photographers. Wall Writings. Caricature. Realism in Cinema" 209
- 7.7 Photo of Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel) and Mario Amezcua posing together in front of Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome 210
- 7.8 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), *La creación* (The Creation), mural painting on the pendentives of the Parish Church of San Francisco in Uruapan, Mexico, 1968 210
- 7.9 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), *Melquisedec*, mural painting on the pendentives of the Parish Church of San Francisco in Uruapan, Mexico, 1968 211
- 7.10 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), *La última cena* (The Last Supper), mural painting on the pendentives of the Parish Church of San Francisco in Uruapan, Mexico, 1969 211
- 7.11 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), *La resurrección* (Resurrection), mural painting on the pendentives of the Parish Church of San Francisco in Uruapan, Mexico, 1968 212
- 7.12 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), 60-metre mural, acrylic on concrete, main conference hall of the Ministry of Agriculture premises, 1976 212
- 7.13 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), a 60-metre mural, acrylic on concrete, main conference hall of the Ministry of Agriculture premises, 1976 213
- 7.14 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), section of 60-metre mural, acrylic on concrete, main conference hall of the Ministry of Agriculture premises, 1976 213
- 7.15 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), section of the 60-metre mural, acrylic on concrete, main conference hall of the Ministry of Agriculture premises, 1976 214

- 7.16 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), with Ahmad Shamlou 214
- 7.17 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), mural, acrylic on concrete, premises of the Ministry of Agriculture 215
- 7.18 Mural painted on the external walls of the former US Embassy in Tehran. It depicts the Statue of Liberty with a skull face on the left, set against a background resembling the US flag with green stripes. On the right, a white silhouette map of Iran is overlaid with barbed wire lines 215
- 7.19 Mural painted on the external walls of the former US Embassy in Tehran. The artwork features a large Persian inscription in black text on a turquoise background, alongside an image of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in a black robe and turban, standing before the Iranian flag. Additional panels display abstract or symbolic designs 216
- 7.20 Mural on the external walls of the former US Embassy in Tehran. On the left, a grid of repeated geometric floral motifs in red, green, and black. On the right, a stylized revolver in red, white, and blue, with its barrel bent downward like a faucet, releasing a single red bullet. The revolver's grip is decorated with white stars on a blue background, evoking the US flag 217
- 7.21 Mural painted on the external walls of the former US Embassy in Tehran, depicting a dark blue military drone with the US Air Force insignia, emitting white beams downward. Silhouettes of black bats emerge from the drone against a solid red background, with stylized white lines on both sides 218
- 7.22 Hannibal Alkhas, Kazem Chalipa, and Adham Zargham, mural, external walls of the US Embassy in Tehran, early 1980s 218
- 7.23 Hannibal Alkhas, Kazem Chalipa, and Adham Zargham, mural, external walls of the US Embassy in Tehran, early 1980s 219
- 7.24 Hannibal Alkhas, Kazem Chalipa, and Adham Zargham, mural, external walls of the US Embassy in Tehran, early 1980s 219
- 7.25 Cover of the Persian edition of Oriana Fallaci's *Niente e così sia*, published by Amir Kabir 220
- 7.26 Niloofar Ghaderinejad, Masoud Sadedin, and Hannibal Alkhas. *Revolution*, mural, 300 × 700 cm, walls of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Tehran, 1979/1980 221
- 7.27 Niloofar Ghaderinejad painting a mural on the walls of the Trade Union office in Tehran, near Jomhuri (Republic) Avenue, Tehran, 1979 221
- 9.1 Cover of Turkish edition of Carlos Marighella's *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla* 258
- 10.1 Read from top to bottom and from left to right: Olivio Martinez, May 15 World Solidarity Day with the Struggle of the People of Palestine, OSPAAAL (1975); cover of *Filastin al-Thawra* (1975); Andrés Hernández, May 15 World Solidarity Day with the Struggle of the People of Palestine. OSPAAAL (1974); cover of

- Filastin al-Thawra* (1975); photograph of a Palestinian fedayeen in Jordan, by Hani Jawharied (1970); cover of *Tricontinental* bulletin No. 57 (1970); design of a Palestinian woman by Borhan Karakotli (1978); cover of *Tricontinental* magazine No. 93 (May–June 1984). The images of the OSPAAAL have been consulted in the official web portal of the organization (<http://www.ospaaal.com/>) and the magazine *Tricontinental* (personal collection). Images from the Arab world have been consulted on the web portal: The Palestine Poster Project Archives, Liberation Graphics, (<https://www.palestineposterproject.org/>) accessed on January 25, 2023 284
- 10.2 Ghassan Kanafani in his Beirut office during the interview conducted by Richard Carleton in 1970. In the circle, some of the OSPAAAL posters visible on its walls have been highlighted. Image consulted on the web portal: The Palestine Poster Project Archives, Liberation Graphics, (<https://www.palestineposterproject.org/>) accessed on December 10, 2023 285
- 10.3 Read from top to bottom and from left to right: Rafael Enríquez Vega, *Western Sahara, Independence or Genocide*, OSPAAAL, 1978, retrieved from the official website of the OSPAAAL (<http://www.ospaaal.com/>); postcard with original photograph of Sahrawi fighter, author of the picture unidentified, image uploaded by John Atherton to the Flickr Portal on July 12, 2019, accessed at <https://www.flickr.com/> on January 25, 2023. Mai Albattat, *In the name of the fighter who created a new horizon wearing sneakers*, Palestinian Museum (Bir Zeit), 2018; Women's Organization of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), International Women's Day, 1977, both accessed at The Palestine Poster Project Archives (https://www.palestineposterproject.org) on January 12, 2023 288
- 10.4 From left to right: Saharawi combatant photographed by Christine Spengler (1978), consulted in *Tricontinental*, No. 59 (March–April 1983), 65–77; Palestinian fighter parading, author unknown, consulted in *Tricontinental*, No. 115 (January–February 1988), 44 295
- 10.5 Palestinian activist and diplomat Rhanda Nablusi during an exclusive interview with OSPAAAL. Retrieved from *Tricontinental*, 57, 71–72 296
- 10.6 From left to right: designs by Abdel Rahman Al Muzain, consulted in *Tricontinental*, No. 123 (May–June 1989), 28, and *Tricontinental*, No. 97 (January–February 1985), 31 297

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A Note on Transliteration

For the transliteration of Arabic and Persian, we have used a simplified version of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES) transliteration guidelines.

Mapping South–South Connections between the Islamicate and Ibero-American Worlds: an Introduction

Raffaele Mauriello and Fernando Camacho Padilla

In her introduction to *El cambio internacional mediante las relaciones Sur-Sur*, Élodie Brun observed that “The contribution of South-South relations is long-term rather than immediate, as evidenced by the current revival” (Brun, 2018: 25). The co-edited volume *Mapping South-South Connections during the Decolonization Process and Cold War (1810–1990): The Islamicate and Ibero-American Worlds* demonstrates, through robust sources and detailed analysis, that southern societies across the globe have exhibited notable historical interest in discovering, understanding, and connecting with each other. The various contributions corroborate that this interest has existed since the early 20th century, contradicting the commonly held perception in the Global North. The book represents a significant addition to the existing body of research by expanding the field to include areas that have previously received less attention through the analysis of primary sources that have only recently emerged or been considered when exploring the connections between the Ibero-American world (Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Iberian Peninsula) and the Islamicate world – in this volume, represented by regions that can be alternatively termed the Arab world, North Africa, Near East, Middle East, West Asia, the Turkic world, and Persianate Societies.

The volume reflects and provides new evidence that the foundational principles of South–South connections and cooperation are historically linked to the regional and global anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles during decolonization and the Cold War (1810–1990), where the countries of the Iberian Peninsula are also considered due to two other factors. First, their strong historical ties to both the Arab World and Latin America, and second, their position as peripheral countries of Europe in the contemporary era. In this framework, the different contributions collected delineate complex topographies of global power based on diverse modes of literal and self-conscious but, at times, also loosely aspirational transnational connections and solidarities that crystallized particularly around the 1950s and 1960s in an environment of internationalism and socialist networks and revolutions. Furthermore, they reveal that these connections have historical roots based on South–South migration, the genealogy of Third Worldism, personal experiences and travelogues, as well as the exceptional case of Jewish diasporic communities

and their historical relations with the Iberian Peninsula and the Near East, among others.

Before delving into the general contents of this volume and its core chapters, it is worthwhile to pause briefly and reflect on the geographical and geopolitical terms that often frame discussions of the regions in question. These definitions are neither neutral nor stable; they carry historical baggage and reflect evolving worldviews shaped by power, proximity, and perception.

The term *Islamicate*, for instance, deserves careful attention. Coined by historian Marshall Hodgson, it was intended to distinguish between what is strictly Islamic – that is, pertaining directly to the religion of Islam, such as theology or jurisprudence – and the broader civilizational sphere historically associated with Muslim societies (Hodgson, 1974: 57–60). In Hodgson's formulation, while theology or *shari'a* would be termed Islamic, areas like philosophy, literature, art, and architecture fall under the category of *Islamicate*. The term was modelled on "*Italianate*," highlighting its cultural breadth and fluid boundaries. Importantly, this definition opens conceptual space for the presence of non-Muslim communities – such as Jews, Christians, and others – who were integral to the *Islamicate* world. This framing also encompasses the modern state of Israel, established on the historically *Islamicate* lands of Palestine, and reflects its embeddedness within a broader cultural and historical matrix shaped over centuries of coexistence, exchange, and conflict.

When referring to the Muslim-majority territories of North Africa and West Asia, several overlapping labels are commonly used: the *MENA* region (Middle East + North Africa), the Middle East, and the Near East. We recognize that in much academic writing, these terms are often adopted uncritically, with little consideration given to their origins or implications. Each carries its own implications. For the purposes of this introduction, we have chosen to use the term "*Near East*," and this decision is not incidental. It is rooted in a specific Mediterranean perspective, one that sees these regions as part of a shared historical and geographical continuum. That said, contributors to this volume were free to use the terminology that best suited their chapters.

Historically, the idea of the Near East has held particular resonance for Mediterranean countries – especially Italy, France, and Spain. For these countries, the Near East was never a distant abstraction but a neighbouring region, familiar and intertwined. From the shores of the western Mediterranean, the lands of the eastern Mediterranean – Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt – were seen as extensions of a shared world, shaped by centuries of contact, commerce, and conflict.

For Italians, the Near East evoked the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire and the legacy of Byzantium. For the French, it conjured memories

of pilgrimage routes, missionary work, and the colonial entanglements of the French Mandate in Syria and Lebanon. Even for Spain, whose imperial focus often looked westward, the region recalled shared Islamic and Christian legacies, shaped by the long arc of coexistence and reconquest in the Iberian Peninsula.

The term Near East itself emerged in the 19th century, amid the slow disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the intensifying competition among European powers – a period often referred to as the “Eastern Question.” For Mediterranean countries, the Near East was not merely a target of expansion; it was a zone of historical familiarity and imagined inheritance. It was the cradle of Christianity, the arena of the Crusades, and the ancient corridor linking Europe, Asia, and Africa. It is worth noting that even in the Americas, institutions like the U.S. State Department still use “Near Eastern Affairs” to refer to the MENA region, and major U.S. universities such as Princeton still refer to their main department working on the region as the Department of Near Eastern Studies.¹

In contrast, the term ‘Middle East’ rose to prominence in Anglo-American geopolitical discourse during the 20th century, particularly after World War I. While ‘Near East’ retained cultural and historical connotations in French (*Proche-Orient*) and Italian (*Vicino Oriente*) academic and religious usage, ‘Middle East’ became associated with strategic interests, oil politics, and Cold War alignments. It reflected a shift away from Mediterranean entanglements toward global imperial projection. When it comes to the Spanish language, it is worth noting that in the 42nd number of *puntoycoma*, the Bulletin of the Spanish-speaking translators and interpreters of the institutions of the European Union, dealing with terminology and analysing the expressions *Oriente Próximo* and *Medio Oriente*, Luis González (1996) concludes that:

If it were up to me to settle the controversy over the use of *Oriente Próximo* or *Oriente Medio*, I would be inclined, for the reasons given above, to translate Middle East or *Moyen-Orient* (when these refer, as is usual, to the area between Egypt and Iran) as *Oriente Próximo*, the expression most frequently used in the media and the one that most reminds us of a part of our past. It must be acknowledged, however, that the *Oriente Medio* is the expression used in European institutions, the

1 This has been the case since 1969, when the university reorganized the former Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures, established in 1927, into separate departments for Near Eastern Studies and East Asian Studies.

United Nations and the Spanish Foreign Ministry (where until recently the expression *Medio Oriente* was used).²

Similarly, the terminology and regulatory Bulletin No. 42 (2016) of the European Parliament highlighted how *Oriente Próximo* was the formulation defended by *El País*, *ABC*, and the *EFE* news agency to identify the region.

The geopolitical dimension of the idea of Middle East has been scrutinized by many scholars in recent decades. Vincent Crouzet (2022) has offered a compelling reinterpretation of the term's origins. Crouzet challenges the conventional narrative that locates the birth of the Middle East in the aftermath of the First World War, with the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire and the drawing of new national borders. Instead, he argues that the idea of the Middle East was already in formation during the 19th century, emerging from the United Kingdom's strategic entrenchment in the Persian Gulf.

Long before oil became the region's defining resource, the Persian Gulf was a key arena of imperial rivalry. The United Kingdom's growing control over the Indian subcontinent led it to seek security along India's western flank, drawing it into increasingly assertive interventions in the Persian Gulf. These efforts were not part of a clear master plan; instead, they evolved through improvised military campaigns, shifting alliances, and economic restructuring. Over time, a pattern of indirect rule emerged, with local rulers serving as intermediaries of British interests. This imperial architecture laid the foundation for what British officials would later refer to as the Middle East.

By the early 20th century, as new powers like Germany entered the scene and oil began to redefine global priorities, the term gained broader usage. Yet, as Crouzet insists, the British did not invent the Middle East after the First World War – they reinvented it. The deeper origins of the concept lie not in formal treaties or mandates, but in the long, uneven history of British imperial entanglement in the Persian Gulf.

In retracing these histories – of terminology, power, and cultural geography – we aim to provide readers with a more nuanced framework for contemplating the regions discussed in this book. Instead of fixed or neutral categories, terms like Islamicate, Near East, and Middle East emerge from specific historical

2 “Si de mí dependiera zanjar la polémica sobre el uso de Oriente Próximo u Oriente Medio me inclinaría, por las razones expuestas, por traducir Middle East o Moyen-Orient (cuando éstos se refieran, como es lo habitual, a la zona comprendida entre Egipto e Irán) por Oriente Próximo, la expresión más frecuente en los medios de comunicación y la que más nos recuerda una parte de nuestro pasado. Hay que reconocer, sin embargo, que Oriente Medio es la expresión que se utiliza en las instituciones europeas, Naciones Unidas y en el Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores español (donde hasta hace poco se hablaba de Medio Oriente).”

moments and political imperatives. Understanding their evolution allows us to approach the chapters that follow with a greater awareness of the worldviews – past and present – that continue to shape our maps and our minds.

Regarding the use of the term ‘Ibero-America,’ there is a consensus, as it encompasses the countries of the Iberian Peninsula and the Americas that share a common linguistic affiliation based on Iberian Romance languages, whether Spanish or Portuguese, and exhibit a remarkably similar cultural heritage. Additionally, other key factors that set these regions apart are included, particularly with regard to their shared colonial history that lasted between three and four centuries, depending on the independence timeline of the American countries. The regions are predominantly characterised by an aristocratic mentality and an agricultural production model that is primarily based on *latifundia*. Another significant element to consider is the predominance and significance of Catholicism as a branch of Christianity and the prevailing religion. In the specific case of the Americas, the conservative mentality of the economic elites and racial discrimination have also been elements of their societies.

The use of this concept within a cultural context was first documented in the mid-1880s (González Boixo, 1984: 72). The concept of ‘Ibero-America,’ which makes use of the hyphen between the two words, originally arose with the purpose of strengthening social, economic, scientific, literary, and artistic relations among Spain, Portugal, and the American countries. It should be noted that the Uruguayan intellectual José Enrique Rodó, in his article “Ibero-America” (1913 [1910]: 435), was a prominent proponent of this concept. In his work, Rodó advocated the use of this term to designate the American territories that had emerged due to the colonization carried out by Spain and Portugal on the American continent. Later, the hyphen was dropped in Spanish, giving rise to the term *Iberoamérica*, whose meaning can be somewhat ambiguous, as it can denote both the original concept or refer specifically to the American countries of Iberian cultural heritage.

The inclusion or non-inclusion of non-American states depends on the context in which the term is used. For this reason, since the end of the 20th century, the term ‘Ibero-American Community of Nations’ (Comunidad Iberoamericana de Naciones) has also come into use, becoming increasingly established and unambiguously including Spain and Portugal. In the realm of international politics, particularly regarding the Ibero-American summits initiated in 1991, the participation and role of Iberian countries have regained significant importance.³ The decision to use the term ‘Ibero-America’ in the

3 For more information, see: <https://www.segib.org/>.

title of this volume, as well as in the title of the book series *Islamicate and Ibero-American World Connections* published by Brill, is driven by the aim of including studies that cover both Spain and Portugal alongside with the American countries sharing a common cultural space and historical legacy. Consequently, other terminologies that refer to narrower cultural and geographical parameters, such as Latin America, Pan-America, *Hispanoamérica*, or *Lusoamérica*, do not align with this edited volume due to the diversity of topics in the chapters.

It is essential to note that, unlike the phenomenon observed in the context of the African colonies of European powers, emigration from the former metropolises to the American continent continued to be a significant phenomenon even after the declaration of independence. This process was predicated on the perception of opportunities for social betterment that the American territories offered, in contrast to the limited prospects for personal and social fulfillment available in the emigrants' cities of origin. In general, the trend mentioned above persisted until the early 1970s. From the 1970s onwards, a reversal process took place, driven by political (exile) and economic factors, with a significant migratory flow that began from Latin America to Spain and Portugal. Initially for political reasons and later for economic ones, this migration fostered a process of cultural strengthening and dialogue between both sides of the Atlantic. This migratory phenomenon, which persisted for two centuries following the declaration of independence of the respective countries in the Americas, has played a vital role in maintaining cultural links between geographically distant regions.

Near East and Ibero-America Connections

The Arab-Islamic presence in Spain, which lasted for approximately seven centuries (711–1492), bequeathed a significant cultural heritage that has withstood the test of time and remains evident in various regions of the country, especially in Andalusia. Similarly, the continued presence of numerous Islamicate elements in the daily life of Spain is influenced by various factors such as geographical proximity, Spain's colonial past in North Africa, and the ongoing significant migration from that region.

It is also important to recognise that since the colonial era, various cultural elements from the Arab world have been introduced to the American continent via Spain, particularly through Andalusia, as this region was home to the ports authorised by the monarchy for trade and emigration. Alongside the architectural components, the migration also involved the incorporation

of individuals who privately confessed their Islamic beliefs. There is therefore clear evidence of the cultural transfer from the Arab-Islamic world that Spain exerted on the American continent from the early years of the conquest and colonization of its territory (Taboada, 2004: 81–103).

At present, Moroccans represent the largest foreign community in Spain, while nearly 20 million Latin Americans are of Arab descent. Although, in the case of Latin America, most people are descendants of migrants who arrived in the region at the end of the 19th century and during the first half of the 20th century, others continue to arrive from North Africa and the Near East, fleeing armed conflicts and bleak economic conditions. The vast majority came from Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine when these territories were part of the Ottoman Empire. They were both Christians and Muslims, although initially, the first group enjoyed greater dominance.⁴ They were generally engaged in trade or business activities. On the contrary, there has been no migration from Latin America to North Africa and the Near East due to economic unattractiveness and political instability. Nevertheless, there are cases of migrants who, after acquiring some savings, returned to their countries of origin, mainly Lebanon and Syria. In the latter country, however, several individuals crossed the Atlantic Ocean again after the outbreak of the 2011 Syrian Civil War. The only mass migration from Latin America to the Near East has been from the Jewish communities, settling exclusively in Israel. Most come from Argentina, but some come from countries such as Uruguay, Brazil, or Chile.

Nowadays, there is an extensive list of eminent Latin American personalities of Arab origin, including the current president of El Salvador, Nayib Bukele, and others who are no longer in office, such as Carlos Menem, Tony Saca, Carlos Flores Facusséulio, César Turbay, Abdula Bucaram, Jamil Mahuad, or Michel Temer. From the cultural and business sectors, the best-known are Ricardo Darín, Salma Hayek, Shakira Mebarak, and Carlos Slim. Many migrants and their descendants have maintained ties with their places of origin and tried to preserve their traditions. Thus, numerous Arab cultural associations exist in Latin American countries, particularly in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Cuba.

Official political relations were established decades after the migratory process began. This is because when migration started, most of the territories in North Africa and the Near East were under the control of European powers, including France, the United Kingdom, Spain, and Italy. Further east, and until the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire also held control. The only two

4 For a deeper understanding of the historiography, sources, and methodology of the links between Latin America and the Near East, see Balloffet, Camacho Padilla & Stites Mor (2019).

powers in the Islamic world that were independent and managed to establish their own diplomacy were the Ottoman Empire and Iran (then known as Persia). Due to its closer proximity, a higher level of development, a relatively important maritime fleet, and the already mentioned migratory flow, it was the Ottoman Empire the first among Muslim empires to establish ties with Latin American countries, especially Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, and Venezuela, mainly between the mid and late 19th century, although with several interruptions (Kutlu et al., 2012; 2019). A few years later, Iran entered the fray, and between 1902 and 1908, friendship and trade treaties were signed with Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile. At the same time, contacts were also established with Colombia, Cuba, Peru, Paraguay, and Guatemala (Camacho Padilla, 2020a).

Diplomatic relations between Arab and Latin American countries were established in the context of decolonization and the Cold War. During this period, more significant interaction began between Third World countries⁵ in international fora and organizations such as the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Furthermore, Latin American and Near Eastern states pursued initiatives to expand their diplomatic presence, foster trade relations, secure political support, and have allies in international fora in the event of armed conflicts. The years between 2005 and 2015 witnessed the celebration of the Summits of South American-Arab Countries (*Cumbres América del Sur-Países Árabes*, ASPA). The objective of these events was twofold: firstly, to promote economic and commercial exchange between the countries of the Arab League and the Union of South American Nations; and secondly, to identify points of convergence on key global political issues. Nevertheless, merely four meetings were held, after which the initiative was discontinued.

A mutual appreciation has been observed between the two regions in general. However, this appreciation is also contingent upon individual circumstances, contemporary events, social classes, and political ideologies. In many respects, Latin America and the Near East have experienced comparable historical processes, including colonialism, imperialism, and political resistance against Western domination. Nevertheless, a generalized lack of knowledge about the particularities of each country and their respective historical processes prevails for various reasons, such as language barriers and other major social factors.

5 For an analysis of the idea of the Third World, see Palieraki (2023).

The perspective of the so-called Global North on Latin America and the Near East is often characterised by negative portrayals, frequently highlighted by news of political or religious violence, corruption, and a range of human rights violations. Furthermore, relations between anti-imperialist governments in Latin America and the Near East have generally been stigmatized and often criticized by Western corporate media and think tanks, and on social networks, as if they were alliances or strategies threatening the West and global peace.⁶ However, today such connections are much more limited and less significant than in the past due to ideological shifts in many countries of both regions. Some iconic political figures from Latin America have attracted significant political interest in the Arab world, such as Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Hugo Chávez. By contrast, no figure from the Near East has inspired such deep fascination across generations in Latin America; however, in the past, there was a notably high interest among leftist and nationalist circles in political leaders like Abdel Nasser and Abdelkrim, as they challenged European powers' colonialism. Additionally, before the 1978–1979 Iranian Revolution, the Shah and his family received considerable attention from celebrity magazines, just as they did in other parts of the world.

It should be noted that there have been no serious incidents between the states of the two regions.⁷ Moreover, unlike with major Western powers, there have been no relations of domination and subordination between Latin America and the Near East. The majority of countries in Latin America managed to achieve independence a century before those in the Arab Near East, in most cases following complex negotiations or armed conflicts. Also, most countries from both regions faced multifaceted relations with the superpowers of the moment during the 20th century, especially with the United States after World War II, due to the latter's involvement in military coups, starting with the overthrow of Mohammad Mosaddegh in Iran (1953) and Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala (1954). The only major exception has been Israel's belligerent attitude towards the Palestinian people since 1948. This has led to the cooling or even suspension of relations between Israel and some Latin American states, as has occurred, among others, with Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia. Overall, the acceptance of open ideological diversity has prevailed among the governments

⁶ An exemplification of this particular geopolitical perception can be found in Johnson (2012).

⁷ A partial, exceptional case is represented by the bombing of the *Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina* (Argentine Israelite Mutual Association, AMIA) in Buenos Aires (Argentina) carried out on July 18, 1994. Although there is still no clear authorship of the terrorist attack, some Argentine authorities have accused Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah of involvement, affecting the level of bilateral diplomatic relations.

of countries in both regions, which has also led to the signing of cooperation agreements, the implementation of alliances or common strategies, and the pursuit of commercial or economic interests.

Spain has played a crucial role as a bridge between the two regions due to its geographical and cultural proximity. A critical impulse took place during the Franco regime (1939–1975), given the need to seek political allies in Latin America and the Islamic world to overcome international isolation, especially during the early years of the dictatorship (Portero Rodríguez & Pardo Sanz, 1999: 211). Thus, a substantial effort was made in terms of cultural diplomacy through the creation of the (former) Instituto de Cultura Hispánica (1945) and the Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura (1954) (on the latter, see Hernando de Larramendi, González González & López García, 2015), that promoted the exchange of students and professors, as well as the realization of academic projects, and the organization of events. In addition, several Spanish universities currently have departments of Arabic and, less so, Islamic studies, where the region's main languages are taught, such as Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew, and, much less so, Persian, in addition to courses offered on the history and culture of North Africa and, secondarily, the Near East. Also, in connection with the Islamic world, in Spain, there are Casa Árabe, a cultural institution focused on promoting the culture of the countries of that region, and Casa Asia, which covers the entire continent, including non-Arab Muslims such as Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Casa Sefarad, moreover, focuses on Jewish culture in Israel and other parts of the world.

Since the middle of the last century, specialized centres in African and Asian studies have progressively opened in some Latin American countries, where North Africa and the Near East have received increasing attention. The most significant references have been the Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais of the Universidade Federal da Bahia (1959), the Centro de Estudios de África y Asia of El Colegio de México (1964), the Centro de Estudios Árabes of the Universidad de Chile (1966), and the Centro de Estudios de África y Medio Oriente in Cuba (1979). To promote Arab culture in the region, two notable initiatives were launched at the beginning of the new century. Firstly, the Latin Arab Film Festival, founded in 2001, had celebrated 11 editions across Brazil, Argentina, and Chile by 2025/26. Secondly, the construction of the Biblioteca Centro de Pesquisa América do Sul Países Árabes África (BIBLIASPA) in 2003 in São Paulo (Brazil) was aimed at fostering critical reflection through research, production, and dissemination of knowledge about Arab, African, and South American people.

On the other hand, the study of Latin America in North Africa and the Near East is more limited. It is primarily approached from the departments of Spanish language and culture at universities in Morocco, Syria, Iraq, Egypt,

Lebanon, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran, among others.⁸ In turn, the only countries that have specialized centres on Latin America, including postgraduate programs, are Turkey (Ankara University) and Iran (University of Tehran). In several of these countries, such as Morocco, Jordan, Israel, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, Turkey, and Egypt, there are also branches of the Instituto Cervantes, Spain's main body of cultural diplomacy, although its purpose is also to promote the culture of all Spanish-speaking countries of the Americas. In the opposite direction, the only Arab country with a cultural centre in Latin America is Morocco, which has an institute called the Mohammed VI Centre for the Dialogue of Civilizations, located in the Chilean city of Coquimbo. Considering the generally stronger diplomatic relations with Spain than with Latin America, several Muslim countries have established cultural institutes, including Egypt and Iran. Furthermore, Syria previously had one, and until 2003, the Iraqi college in Madrid was also managed by the embassy. Additionally, certain diplomatic representations are especially proactive in this area, as evidenced by the active efforts of Turkey and Morocco's cultural attaché offices. Furthermore, the cultural presence of Iran in Venezuela constitutes a significant aspect of their bilateral relations. Nevertheless, throughout the region, numerous mosques act as cultural centres, generally linked to Islamic doctrine, where occasional conferences and cultural activities are offered. For the most part, they receive financial support from various Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia or Turkey, for those which are Sunni, and Iran or Iraq, in the case of Shiite mosques (Moya Mena, 2020a). In addition, the Aga Khan Foundation has been operating in Portugal since 1983, focusing on enhancing the quality of life of migrant communities in urban areas through the provision of social and economic support.

It is worth mentioning that over the last decades, there has been a significant increase in Latin American scholars interested in North Africa and the Near East. However, it is essential to note that most of these experts primarily focus on the study of the region's history or on analysing its political and social development, while overlooking issues related to cultural relations or the connections between this region and other geographical areas. Consequently, despite the significant contributions made by these individuals, they have not been referenced within this particular topic. In any event, this situation has led to the establishment of working and research groups, as well as networks with a focus on studying the Near East and its connections with Latin America. Examples include the Latin East Initiative (*The Latin East: New Perspectives*

8 Information on Spanish and Latin American language and culture departments and teaching centres worldwide can be found on Instituto Cervantes' portal on Hispanic studies. See: <https://hispanismo.cervantes.es/>.

on *Links between Latin America and the Middle East*)⁹ and the Working Group “Middle East and North Africa” of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO).¹⁰ Over the past decade, these collaborations have yielded significant publications (Velasco, Dahi, Antoon & Weiss, 2018).

As far as academic publications on political, social, and cultural relations between Latin America and the Near East are concerned, most of them focus on migratory aspects during the late 19th or 20th century (Klich & Lesser, 1998; Alfaro-Velcamp, 2007; Vargas & Suaza, 2007; Tofik Karam, 2007; Akmir, 2009, 2011; Hauser & Gil, 2009; Baeza, 2014; Pastor, 2017; Bergel, 2020; Camacho Padilla, 2021; Schwabe, 2023; Ferabolli & Araujo, 2024) and political relations during the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Fernández, 1990; Brun, 2008; Logrono Narbona, Pinto & Tofik Karam, 2015; Levaggi & Ferez, 2016; Saddy, 2016; Tawil Kuri, 2016; Stites Mor, 2016; Camacho Padilla, 2020b; Tawil Kuri & Brun, 2022; Funk, 2022; Guirguis & Pabón, 2025). Due to the good relations between Iran and some Latin American countries, mainly the members of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (ALBA), but also US and Israeli security perceptions and interests, several works on Iran’s relations with some Latin American governments have been published over the past two decades (Arnson, Esfandiari & Stubits, 2011; Özkan, 2017; Moya Mena, 2012 & 2020b; Botta, 2010; Lotfian, 2010; Brun, 2011 & 2020; Humire & Berman Lanham, 2014; Farah & Tavarez, 2019; Yousefi Koupaei, 2021; Goforth, 2011). There are also studies related to bilateral relations (Silva Cuadra, 2021; Montenegro Pinto, 2022) and a single country’s foreign policy (Latin American or from the Near East) with the other region (Fernández, 1988; Amar, 2014; Vagni & Calle, 2014; Vasconcelos, Clemesha & Guimarães, 2018; Balloffet, 2020). However, there are still very few studies on diplomatic or cultural relations during the 20th century (Rubio Navarro, 2015; Vélez, 2015; Balloffet, Camacho Padilla, & Stites Mor, 2019; Camacho Padilla & Escribano Martín, 2020).

Historical references in publications on 20th-century relations are often inaccurate and superficial. This is because very few researchers access archives to examine primary sources, and their research is limited to data available online, where the same mistakes are often repeated. Moreover, according to Cuadro (2019), Latin American scholars are influenced by Western pejorative stereotypes that blame the Near East for their own shortcomings. Several constraints condition this subject of study, such as the difficulty of accessing archives due to restrictions imposed for political reasons or a lack of clearly defined regulations, or simply locating documentation, which has not always been carefully preserved in the countries of both regions or has not been easily

9 For more information, see: <https://www.latineast.org/>.

10 For more information, see: <https://www.clacso.org/medio-oriente-y-norte-de-africa/>.

accessible to the public. There are also other conditioning factors, such as the great distances between the two regions and between the countries within each region, which involve substantial travel costs and necessitate longer routes due to the lack of direct flights, language barriers, political conflicts, and, of course, the absence of economic resources to support this kind of activity. The precarious situation of political rights and civil liberties in several countries in both regions, especially in North Africa and the Near East, as well as the poor condition of some of the archives, makes it hard, if not impossible, to consult the documentation, which means that there are large gaps in the history of relations between the two worlds. To a certain extent, this volume makes a significant contribution to the subject by referencing original primary sources, providing a clearer and more accurate understanding of the contacts established throughout much of the 20th century, which were largely overlooked until now.

Background, Aims, Structure, and Content of the Volume

Brill Publishers has created the book series *Islamicate and Ibero-American World Connections* to promote and disseminate studies on relations and interconnections between Latin America and the Islamicate world in the broad sense. The initiative comes from a group of researchers who have been working on the subject for some time, and most of them have collaborated in the organization of cultural and academic activities and events, as well as the publication of dossiers in journals and collective works on the subject. The book series consolidates this trajectory in which new researchers interested in the connections between the two regions are invited to join.

This collective volume aims to lay the groundwork for understanding the relations and contacts between Latin America and the Islamicate world, primarily during the 20th century. The book maps and highlights milestones of interrelation between different areas of both regions, which undoubtedly have a historical connection to the Spanish colonialism of the 19th century. To understand the political evolution of many of these countries or how relations and influences between them functioned, it is also essential to seek data or interpretations not only from the old colonial powers but also from the material available in different archives of relevant actors of these regions, which are of great value. In this volume, several contributions based on this type of source are presented, allowing us to understand the political links and cultural transfers that occurred during those years.

This work is part of the results of the research project "New Actors in Contemporary International Relations during the Decolonization Processes

of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (1810–1990): Political Networks, Alliances, and South–South Cooperation,” funded by Comunidad de Madrid through a multi-year agreement with the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, v *PRICIT* (Reference: S11/PJ1/2019-00493).¹¹ During the project’s execution, several academic meetings were held at centres such as Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Allameh Tabataba’i University, El Colegio de México, and the University of British Columbia. A conference titled “Mapping South-South Connections: Networks, Alliances and New Actors on the International Scene during the Decolonization Process and Cold War in Latin America, Asia and Africa (1810–1990)” was organised online on November 21–22, 2020, by Allameh Tabataba’i University and Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, which saw the participation of scholars from the Americas, Europe, and Asia, serving as the primary basis for the incipit of the volume.¹²

One of the most interesting aspects of the project is that it involved academics from different countries and continents, which diversified the perspective with a comprehensive and open interaction. Likewise, the events featured academics from several countries interested in the topic who also contributed significantly to the research project. The project resulted in this co-edited volume, another co-edited volume in Spanish (Camacho Padilla & Orero, forthcoming 2026), the publication of a special issue of an academic journal (Camacho Padilla, Mauriello & Escribano Martín, 2024), and articles published in specialized journals.

The different contributions collected into this volume contribute to ongoing critical debates and literature aimed at developing theoretical and methodological frameworks that can be described as decolonial, postcolonial, or anti-colonial in that they challenge but also supersede epistemologies and hegemonic frames of reference that reify unequal structures of intellectual subalterization and peripherization (Chakrabarty, 2008; Connell, 2007; Dabashi, 2015; de Sousa Santos, 2014; Fiddion-Qasmiyeh & Daley, 2019; Grosfoguel, 2011; Lockman, 2010; Mignolo, 2000; Minh-ha, 1989; Quijano, 1991, 2007; Sundberg, 2014; Tuhinawai Smith, 2021). In this framework, the volume embraces a more fluid understanding of the South and of South–South connections as a metaphor or paradigm that exposes embedded relations of knowledge and power and reveals undetected and unexpected determinants of global/world history. It thus rejects a binary, negative and oppositional conceptualization of the South based on simplistic imperial and economic geographical imageries (Global North versus Global South/periphery versus metropole/West versus

11 For more information, see: <https://redessursur.wordpress.com>.

12 For more information, see: <https://southsouthconnections.atu.ac.ir>.

'the rest'). The result is what the editors think is a major contribution to a more complex delineation of the historical roots and routes of contemporary dynamics of globality and global history (Conrad, 2016). It is important to note that most contributions in this volume focus on entirely new topics within the field of historiographical studies related to these two regions. Additionally, the volume includes the work of authors whose publications have been available in Spanish only so far. As a result, their contributions in English in this book help to make these topics accessible to a broader audience.

We want to highlight that the volume's main contribution is the relationship between geographical areas that are very distant but respond to similar logic. We have been interested in tracing the connections between Latin America and the Near East during the 19th and 20th centuries, with a particular emphasis on the Cold War, since this period witnessed an intensification of cultural and political exchanges and interactions. Precedents and pre-colonial movements at the beginning of the 19th century have been sought to help understand these political dynamics, especially concerning Spain's incipient interest in controlling the territories closest to the southern lands of the Strait of Gibraltar. Another major contribution has been to include studies on the Latin American interest in the Islamicate world in the first decades of the 20th century, especially concerning views from significant actors such as Cuba and Argentina, which had yet to receive adequate academic attention or been analysed in detail before.

When discussing politics, symbols are essential, and the history behind their creation is vital. Therefore, we analyse the links, views, and relations between Latin America and the Islamicate world from very diverse perspectives, which has also led us to be interested in learning about travel books written by Latin American essayists or academics who visited North Africa and the Near East. Perhaps they were imbued with an orientalist or romantic vision typical of the colonialist era, as Eduard Said criticized (1978). Nevertheless, in this case, the view presented is mainly from a postcolonial perspective of different specialists on Latin America and the Near East, which makes it a valuable contribution. Also new is uncovering the direct relationship between Mexican and Iranian muralism in terms of form and aesthetics. In the same direction, this edited volume examines the representation of Arab women in Cuba through the *Tricontinental* magazine. In this case, besides overcoming traditional roles, women's struggle was linked to the revolutionary processes in Asia, Africa, and Latin America; a goal and a desire that for many remains unfulfilled.

The chronological and geographical journey we propose to trace and relate a wider historical dimension of South–South political and cultural connections between the Islamicate and Ibero-American worlds is extensive and

ambitious. Reading the set of contributions, without overlooking the common idea that unites them, reveals a distinct, surprising map that is perceived through the respective views, contacts, and diplomatic ties that developed primarily throughout the 20th century and remain largely unknown. The research on primary sources is also of great importance to the people taking part in this project, as there have been very few previous studies on the subjects covered here, if any at all. In addition, due to the magnitude of the size of both regions and their enormous cultural diversity, the need to continue excavating the material already identified is evident. This will allow us to continue discovering new histories and experiences.

The volume features the participation of ten researchers from diverse nationalities across Latin America and the Mediterranean countries, including Cuba, Chile, Argentina, Spain, Italy, and Turkey. Several of them are based in Latin America and the Near East or have significant and prolonged on-the-ground experience in those regions. Most have an extensive body of research on the connections between the Near East and Latin America from various perspectives. Overall, they contributed to this book project with the themes they specialise in, creating a lively and well-structured mosaic as a final product, thanks to the meticulous coordination efforts of the editors. The different contributions have been arranged mainly based on chronological order, and thematically concerning the latest studies mainly focused on Iran's links with Latin America and Cuba's with the Near East.

The work begins with a contribution by Fernando Escribano Martín. It presents an almost unknown journey that precedes and reveals the first signs of the confrontation between England and France in several Asian and African territories. This scenario must be understood as a political antecedent of both colonial movements of the two empires in the making and later developments in the territories themselves. According to Escribano, the process of colonialism clearly began in the early 19th century. What was originally going to be a scientific trip to North Africa became a political mission that preceded Spain's presence in the northwest part of the continent. When the protagonist, Domingo Francisco Jorge Badía y Leblic (alias Ali Bey), a Spaniard disguised as a Muslim prince of purported Syrian origin, was expelled from Morocco – where he was believed to have planned the overthrow of the sultan – he fled to Mecca, touring the region and conducting intelligence operations against the British. Spain had no conflicts with the British in these territories, so Ali Bey was presumably fighting for the French, but it is not yet known under whose orders.

The second contribution, by Martín Bergel, analyzes three historical situations in which Latin America had a particularly intense relationship with

North Africa: the trip of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811–1888) to Algeria; the treatment by the Ibero-American press of the Anglo-Boer war in southern Africa at the end of the 19th century; and the analysis of the status of Morocco around World War I. The author points out the appearance of the first traces of a Third Worldist sentiment that would become clear around World War II. According to Bergel, in order to study the relations that were established in the 20th century between different zones of the so-called Third World, it is necessary to go back to the history of colonialism and imperialism and to the first manifestations of empathy and trans colonial solidarity that occurred as early as the 19th century.

Chapter 3, by Reinaldo M. Sánchez Porro, demonstrates how the metropolis narrative can shape the traveller's vision, and this may have been the case for the Cuban perception of the Near East during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, the Spanish vision of North Africa and the Near East likely differed from that of Europe. Juan Miguel Dihigo y Mestre's trip through the Ottoman Empire between April and May 1912, as described in his book *Towards the Old East*, is perhaps another Western view that portrays Egypt as already under British control, and Palestine and Lebanon as divided into Ottoman vilayets, with the Young Turks in control of Turkey. The book focuses on the former Ottoman Sultan's territories before World War I, a situation similar to the old possessions of two Continental European empires (the Austro-Hungarian and the German), which were also fragmented at the same time. Dihigo's testimony and the corresponding analysis by Sanchez are crucial to understanding an old era as seen from a Caribbean intellectual's point of view.

Chapter 4, by Juan José Vagni, analyses the role of two Spaniards, whom he describes as cultural mediators, through their early activities in the context of Spain's colonial policies in Morocco, their participation in the epicentre of Arab politics, Egypt, their ideas on the role of Spain, and their relations with Arab emigrants in America. Journalist and writer Rodolfo Gil Torres Benumeya, who adopted his mother's surname,¹³ worked in Franco's institutions, although always on the political razor's edge. On the contrary, Carlos de Baraibar had to go into exile in Chile due to his ideology after Franco took power following the Civil War. Among other responsibilities, during the Second Spanish Republic (1931–1939), de Baraibar had a high-ranking position inside the Ministry of Labor when Largo Caballero was minister.

Chapter 5, by Mario Matus González, analyzes the Jewish conflicts and connections that travel far beyond the territories where they originally began, with a narrative that makes it easier to comprehend the historical past. Sometimes,

13 First surnames from father and mother are used in most Spanish-speaking countries.

history is wielded as a weapon, usually distorted, but it is fundamental to understand societies and their political organization. In this regard, Matus explores how Zionism became a unifying element in the early years of Chilean Judaism. Specifically, he focuses on the centrifugal forces that arose from within it, such as its contradictions and conflicts, to see how the Sephardim finally played a mediatory role. Their community's experience during the multi-ethnic coexistence in the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire allowed them to use it again in Chile with their religious partners.

The following contribution, by Fernando Camacho Padilla, represents the first investigation of this volume addressing the Cold War period. His research focuses on the political game that took place between Fidel Castro's Cuba and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's Iran until the overthrow of the monarchy (1959–1979). The study aims to examine South–South relations between two states, which, despite the geographical distance, were key players in the Cold War. Additionally, the chapter explores the network of connections established by the Cuban government with Iranian non-state actors, focusing particularly on the support given to the armed opposition against the Shah of Iran. At the same time, both countries had direct or indirect participation in opposing sides of conflicts which occurred throughout the Near East and sub-Saharan Africa. The author reveals the respective strategies established by Cuba and Iran when confronting each other in different parts of the world. Despite being two countries where it is difficult or even impossible to access archival sources, Camacho shows that information that allows us to relate experiences like the one presented in the chapter can still be found in alternative archives and/or documentation centres.

In his chapter, Raffaele Mauriello demonstrates how, in the years leading up to Iran's 1977–1979 Revolution, a powerful yet often overlooked artistic influence emerged: Latin American revolutionary muralism, particularly from Mexico. He reveals that before the revolution was "Islamized," Iranian artists inspired by leftist, anti-imperialist ideals were already painting murals echoing the works of Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros. Key figures in this movement – Mohammad Hassan Shiddel, Hannibal Alkhas, and Mehdi Sahabi – introduced muralism to Iran through international study, artistic practice, and translation. Their works, often painted on government buildings and university walls, visually expressed values like justice and resistance. Sahabi's 1973 Persian translation of Mario De Micheli's writings on Mexican muralism contributed to providing intellectual grounding for the movement. After the revolution, the new authorities repressed this visual culture, erasing many murals and promoting an Islamic aesthetic. Yet the Latin American legacy endured quietly in studios. It resurfaced decades later in a 2022 exhibition at Tehran's Museum

of Contemporary Art, marking a partial reclamation of this hidden chapter in Iran's revolutionary art.

Chapter 8, by Eudald Cortina Orero, addresses the coincidence of the fall of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlevi, the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution, and the "Strategic Counteroffensive" that the Montoneros developed against the Argentine military dictatorship. It shows how, in Montoneros' view, these three processes were interconnected and functioned as parts of the overall fight against imperialism. With this conceptual framework, the Montoneros developed, or attempted, a unity of action with newly emancipated countries or with national liberation movements based on the struggle against Zionism, racism, apartheid, and neocolonialism. The chapter traces the networks woven by the Montoneros in Africa and Asia and their impact on the group: on their discourse, mobilization, and identity projection.

Chapter 9, by Barış Ahmet Yörümez, addresses the theoretical framework of the impact of the Latin American revolutionary experience in Turkey. The author posits the notion that Cuba played a pivotal role in the radicalization of the Turkish generation of 1968. This assertion is predicated on the premise that the demise of Che Guevara in 1967 coincided with the escalating tensions between the socialist youth and state forces. The political violence that broke out during those years led to the proclamation of martial law on April 26, 1971 and eventually a coup d'état in 1980. Yörümez emphasizes that this period was crucial in radicalising young Turkish socialists as university activism shifted to underground revolutionary militancy. This chapter demonstrates not only the multi-centric character of the Cold War but also underscores the significance of the ideas and affective dimensions of South-South solidarity in shaping anti-imperialist and counter-hegemonic movements throughout the Third World.

The last contribution to the volume, by Alberto García Molinero, investigates the representative models of femininity in the Arab world through the graphic designs produced by the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America between 1967 and 2019. His work has been carried out specifically based on the images of the *Tricontinental* magazine. It shows the different representations of Arab women according to their country of origin and the organization to which they belonged, but also concerning the artistic influences of the Cuban designers, where controversies also emerged. In addition to some women dressed in traditional attire, the magazine paid particular attention to the woman as a revolutionary agent, armed and ready for combat. The chapter shows how, despite the distance between the respective regions, Arab and Latin American women had a common revolutionary goal and similar referents and characteristics.

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The Historical Background of European Colonialism in the Muslim World: the Journey of Ali Bey el Abbassi (1803–1808)

Fernando Escribano Martín

1.1 Introduction: the Person and His Context

To understand the importance and significance of Ali Bey el Abbassi's travels through North Africa, the Mediterranean basin and the Near East, always treading Muslim soil, between 1803 and 1808, it is first necessary to become acquainted with who he was – which was not who he claimed to be –, with the European politics at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the reason behind his journey.

Colonialism can be understood in different ways. According to the definition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, it is a political and economic – and, therefore, also social – phenomenon in which other powers have explored, conquered, settled and exploited different geographical regions throughout history.¹ The intention was to control resources, to create captive markets, to disseminate lifestyles regarded as civilised, versus other backward and barbarous ones, and to impose a cultural model which also had to be superior. Reference is usually made to the Spanish and Portuguese Empires as the first forerunners of those of the nineteenth century and also to a chain of different processes, each with its particularities, but which were also characterised by control and imposition.

The colonization of Africa is normally established as of 1880, in a very swift process through which by 1900 the entire continent had all but fallen under the control of the European powers. The growing presence of other powers in the Near East ran parallel to the decline of the Ottoman Empire, which had begun to allow European diplomats to visit and establish themselves in its different territories. In the interior of that empire, different peoples or regions sought

1 Many an analysis has been performed on what imperialism is and entails, like, for example, that of Hobson (1902). For the now classic idea of the meaning of colonialism in the field under study here, see Said (2002). For a thought-provoking analysis of these visions in other fields: Canavaggio (2016).

independence or a higher level of self-governance, as a result of which some European powers began to take a stance towards their old and new rulers.

The initial research on the ancient history of these territories cannot be understood without considering the forging of those political and economic ties (Liverani, 2011) and how quite a few now colonial powers understood culture and historical revival as a struggle that was as reputable as it was profitable. It is important to recall that Egyptology came into being because of Napoleon's expedition to Egypt and Syria (1798–1801) (Denon, 1802), on which he was accompanied by a veritable retinue of *savants* who, among other objects of study, resuscitated the country's ancient history. Similarly, the origins of Orientalism, including the investigation and appropriation of the history of the ancient Near East, are impossible to fathom without taking into account this process. The first enquiries² aimed at recovering this forgotten past were made by the political and economic agents³ of those European powers directly linked to the control of the region.

This general overview, which serves to piece together and understand the origins of Orientalism, had a more or less distant precedent at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which makes it necessary to reconsider the time frame and even the powers involved. The travels of Domingo Badía y Leblich (1767–1818), under the alias of Ali Bey el Abbassi, first under the Spanish and then under the French flag, paved the way for the political and colonial expansion in North Africa, always against British interests. As to Spain, it can be assumed that there were plans that were never brought to fruition, but were nonetheless a precedent of the Spanish position in Morocco decades later. With respect to France, however, those travels clearly opened a window of opportunity in North Africa from which the country swiftly profited as of 1820, with, for example, the conquest of Algeria in 1830.

Accordingly, an attempt should be made to understand the purpose behind Badía's journey and his real persona, in addition to who sent him and why and against which European, African and Asian backdrop he embarked on it, before attempting to analyse its relevance in the process known as colonialism.

This chapter is based on a comparative analysis between the book that Badía (under the pseudonym of Ali Bey el Abbassi) wrote and the documents

2 Orientalism is understood here as the study of the history of the ancient Near East, a knowledge of which cannot be grasped without considering the contemporary reality of the places where it transpired, which have their own characteristics and form part of universal history in their own right, although it was first acquired through foreign accounts.

3 For example, it was Claudius James Rich, a British business agent of the East India Company and consul, who conducted the first scientific study on Babylon (Córdoba, 2016).

that his travels generated in different French and Spanish chancelleries. The repercussions of his journey, and sometimes the lack of information in this regard, are a good example of a mission that the Spanish did not fully comprehend, to which they did not give continuity and which was perhaps nipped in the bud by other powers when the French intended to follow suit.

The scientific part of the journey, which was always one of the objectives and formed the basis of the idea and whose results were subsequently published, serves to study the political actions that were carried out while research was being conducted. This excellent scientific work can be reconstructed by following a fascinating route which conceals the real reason behind Badía's journey.

1.2 Relevance and Significance of the Journey

Although the Spanish administration did not follow up on Badía's journey, it can be understood that the French did indeed. Following his return to Europe, Napoleon gave him credence and ordered that his intelligence should be investigated. As a matter of fact, the government of Louis XVIII endorsed a similar project proposed by himself, during which he died, perhaps eliminated by the British secret service, now in the context of the race for colonies in these and other regions.

Badía set out on his journey several decades before the emergence of other movements in Africa and Asia which could indeed be classified as colonial. What at the time was an attempt to control Morocco – to what extent and how are not clear – subsequently became a journey of exploration, chiefly with political objectives, the length and breadth of the Ottoman Empire. Judging by the descriptions contained in his book, the political manoeuvring on the part of other powers and the fact that several of its territories were independent, as was promptly noted that empire was beginning to show symptoms of the 'sick man', as it was subsequently called, much earlier than is usually assumed.

Under the guise of a scientific expedition, which was always one of the objectives that was actually met, as evidenced by the book, it allowed Badía to perform a political, sociological, anthropological and analytical study on the Ottoman Empire as a whole, where Spain generally did not have interests. This apparent illogicality and, above all, the fall from grace of the administration (that of Charles IV and Godoy) that had endorsed the journey, a point stressed in subsequent historiography, have meant that its importance and even its results have been overlooked. This has resulted in a general lack of knowledge of the project, the journey per se and its protagonist, who some respected and

admired for his initiatives and achievements and as an enlightened person, the precursor of many studies and adventures and a role model (Burton, 1893; Roussier, 1930) and who others saw as a sort of fanciful crank (Barberá, 1997) who neither gauged his strength nor understood the world in which he moved.

1.3 Badía's Scientific and Political Journey

Badía's⁴ scientific and political journey is conscientiously documented in his book entitled, *Voyages d'Alí Bey el Abbassi en Afrique et en Asie pendant les années 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806 et 1807*, published in Paris in 1814, in French and still under the pseudonym he had created. The book offers an account of his travels, experiences and analyses, including the always present scientific objectives which were indeed developed, but says nothing about its ultimate purpose. It is only when the secondary sources (perhaps only known in part) are examined that it is possible to confirm that what the book recounts is true, and only when the intentions and intra-history of those travels are known, is it possible to gain a fuller understanding of developments at the time.

Even though the book was published in French, it seems reasonable enough to assume that it was based on the notes he had taken in Spanish, which he then compiled in Spain or France before preparing the manuscript. As the author recounts events in chronological order, while also indicating the route he took, it has usually been divided into the following chapters: Morocco, Tripoli and Greece, Egypt, Arabia, Palestine and Syria, Turkey and the journey's end. Following the first edition in French, the author managed to publish his book in German, Italian and English (editions printed in London and Philadelphia), but it was not until the death of Fernando VII that it was published in Spanish in Valencia and Mexico in 1836, for the Atlantic was no barrier in this regard at the time. Following a brief review of the book and its first editions, an analysis is performed on Badía and how he planned his journey.

Born in Barcelona on April 1, 1767, Domingo Badía y Lebllich was the son of Pedro Badía Castillo, the secretary of the governor of the Citadel of Barcelona, and Catalina Lebllich Mestres, of Flemish descent. Following the administrative career of the paterfamilias, the family moved to Malaga in 1774 and then to Vera (Almeria) in 1779, after he was appointed as purser of war (*contador de guerra*) and treasury deputy (*teniente de tesorero*) of the city's military jurisdiction. As Vera served as a supply hub for the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, it is

4 Although there is still no complete biography of or holistic work on the traveller, Ventura Lebllich, a descendent of his, has written several articles in this respect.

usually claimed that this was where young Domingo first came into contact with the Muslim world, albeit nothing is known about the type of influence or its consequences. In fact, when documenting this chapter, it was impossible to find any reference or comment in his own writings indicating that the experiences of the 'Traveller' (one of his future codenames) in his youth influenced his subsequent travels.

One of the most important years for Badía was 1786. There is evidence that he enrolled in the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando (Madrid) and that he studied at the Royal Schools of Physics and Chemistry. At the same time, when his father moved up the administrative ladder, he occupied his post of war cashier on the coast of Granada, while continuing his studies in Madrid until the end of 1787. This can only be explained by the fact that in Spain of the period, the taking up of some administrative posts did not always imply directly discharging their respective duties. The man certainly did not have the gift of omnipresence, but at many levels in the former Spanish administration this might have appeared to be the case.

In 1791, he married María Lucía de la Asunción Berruezo ('Mariquita')⁵ in Vera. Two years later, he was appointed as the administrator of the Royal Tobacco Revenues (*Real Renta de Tabacos*) of Cordova, where he began to publish a series of scientific articles on atmospheric weight and the barometer, especially in the *Correo de Murcia*, throughout 1794.⁶ Considering these and other publications (Sigaud de la Fond, 1800 [1781]), the scientific experiments that he conducted, all that he studied on his travels and which he later published in his book paint the picture of an enlightened scientist par excellence who pursued knowledge through experimentation and analysis and who set out his conclusions grounded in scientific debate. Although some of his conclusions may be currently arguable, he definitely made a brilliant intellectual contribution to branches of knowledge that have since been separated into different sciences. Be that as it may, the relevance of the person and his science are still virtually unknown.

It was at this point that he became involved in the major enterprise of making a hot-air balloon fly (the first manned flight in a hot-air balloon, invented

5 This is the affectionate nickname he gives her in his correspondence. There are several extant letters of his to his family, yet perhaps the most moving is a sort of will or farewell penned shortly before he died in the vicinity of Damascus. He always addressed his wife as 'Mariquita'.

6 'Eclipse solar', 10–11 February 1804, signed by Ali Beik in Fez and published in the *Almanaque Náutico del Real Observatorio de Cádiz* in 1807 (all his astronomical measurements refer to this observatory, not to that of Paris); *Diario de Madrid*, 1801, different articles on 'Sobre los viajes a lo interior de África' (On Trips into the African Interior).

by the Montgolfier brothers, took place in Paris in 1783). He obtained the funding from several subscribers,⁷ who he intended to compensate with the profits from the sale of a book that he planned to write in this respect. After several failed attempts to make the hot-air balloon fly, in July 1795 his father, fearing an accident, finally convinced the pertinent authorities to withdraw the license he needed to continue with his experiments. His resulting financial ruin and discredit forced him to move first to Puerto Real and then to Madrid, while his wife and children returned with his family to Vera.

Following this setback, in Madrid he found employment as the librarian and secretary of the prince of Castelfranco, undertaking tasks including the translation of Sigaud de la Fond's (1800 [1781]) dictionary and apparently reading everything that fell into his hands on journeys to the heart of Africa on which French, English and German travellers had previously embarked. It can be assumed that, thanks to this reading material, he conceived a project for exploring North Africa which he managed to present to Godoy⁸ in April 1801. His intention was to travel through Morocco to the Sahara, before crossing the continent to Zanzibar and returning by way of Tripoli. He planned a four-year journey during which he intended to conduct surveys and to map the territory, in addition to making observations on geology, meteorology, botany, ethnography and popular medicine. Travelling on his own disguised as an Arab, he also aimed to perform commercial and political studies.

In view of the documents available, neither is it clear when this initiative started to have a political priority, nor who was responsible for such a change in strategy. All the scientific tasks were performed, as evidenced by the book and the collections arriving in Spain, but the primary objective was now different: the political control of the kingdom of Morocco. Both Badía and Godoy⁹ (the prime minister and the de facto ruler of Spain) took credit for the idea

7 Nowadays, this would be called crowdfunding. As it was a failure, it could be regarded as a crackpot scheme and that he was counting his chickens before they hatched. Yet if it had been successful, it would have been the first civil experiment with hot-air balloons conducted in Spain and would have led to a successful scientific publication. Depending on the point of view, Badía is judged as a visionary genius or as a bold and chimerical amateur.

8 Manuel Godoy y Álvarez de Faria (Badajoz, 1767–Paris, 1851), 1st Prince of Peace, First Secretary of State since 1792 and indeed the leader of the government of Charles IV until the Mutiny of Aranjuez (17–18 March 1808), which led to his removal.

9 Godoy is a controversial figure. He has been accused of seizing power because of his rapport with the queen and also as an upstart in that he belonged to the low nobility. The government of Charles IV was certainly affected by the French Revolution and by the conflict between France and England. But to blame the favourite (if indeed he was) of all the ills of the state is not a serious historical approach to the matter (Godoy, 1965; López Tabar, 2001; Rúsoli, 2008).

of what was doubtless a change in geopolitical strategy. The former perhaps to be able to reach the established scientific goals and the latter to make the most of a cover that allowed him to achieve a political objective that guaranteed an important supply of wheat, as well as shoring up Spain's position in a country in which other powers were already jockeying for position. It warrants recalling that this occurred during the war between England and Napoleon and that aspects like the sinking of the frigate *Nuestra Señora de Las Mercedes* on 5 October 1804 and the subsequent Battle of Trafalgar on October 21, 1805, ending in the defeat and virtual destruction of the Spanish fleet that served to maintain contact with America, also formed a crucial part of Spanish politics. Some of the decisions resulting from that conflict directly affected the travels and mission of Badía, under the guise of Ali Bey el Abbassi.

Once Godoy had embraced the project as his own, the machinery of the Spanish state ground into motion. A report (Guevara Vasconcelos et al., 1801) on the project was requested from the Royal Academy of History which, despite being negative, was not taken into consideration. Perhaps because of the doubts expressed by the academy, it is conceivable that to be better prepared for the expedition, Badía studied Arabic at the Reales Estudios de San Isidro with Simón de Rojas Clemente y Rubio,¹⁰ a renowned scientist, while plans were made for them to travel together disguised as Muslims. In May 1802, both men departed for Paris and London to prepare for the journey, purchasing the necessary scientific instruments and interviewing relevant scientists. Badía even got circumcised as part of his disguise, but nothing is known about why or when Simón de Rojas backed out.

Now under the identity of Ali Bey Abd Allah, Badía arrived in Cadiz on April 26, 1803, without Simón de Rojas, from where he crossed the Strait of Gibraltar to Tangier on June 29, passing himself off as the son of a very wealthy Syrian prince, who had had to flee his country for political reasons and who had been educated in Europe. This explained why he spoke some languages and not others, as well as his astonishing scientific knowledge and why he was returning to the land of his brethren with the firm intention of making the pilgrimage to Mecca.

10 Simón de Rojas Clemente y Rubio (Titaguas, September 27, 1777–Madrid, February 27, 1827) is known above all as a botanist in charge of the archive and library of the Royal Botanical Gardens of Madrid. Nevertheless, he also began his career as a linguist, specialising in Semite languages, for which reason he was brought on board (therefore, it is far from clear that Badía spoke Arabic as well as was claimed). After studying the natural history of the kingdom of Granada for four years (perhaps in compensation for the change of plans) and his work linked to the Royal Botanical Gardens of Madrid, he thenceforth devoted his time to botany, producing some highly relevant works.

Although his book offers a description of his movements in Morocco, there is nothing overtly suspicious about his intentions. He was received as the person he professed to be, whose scientific knowledge made him a popular person worthy of merit. Accepted as a pious Muslim, his plotting against Sultan Soliman, forging alliances mainly with the tribal chiefs of the Rif area, initially went unnoticed. In October, he met the sultan who, swiftly taking a shine to him, invited him to his court in Fez where he held him in great esteem. Here, Badía, aka Ali Bey, found himself in a thorny situation. The alliances aimed at seizing power in Morocco were now practically in place, and Badía was at court where he enjoyed the full support and affection of the sultan who even gifted him a large property and showed concern for his welfare. Even so, the plot continued to hatch. When Badía reported that he believed he could accomplish his mission, soldiers and supplies were dispatched to Ceuta and Melilla, for this formed part of the agreement struck with the rebels. Yet the plan was promptly stalled by Charles IV himself. According to Godoy's version, when he approached him to inform him and to ask him for permission, the king refused to tolerate a betrayal of the sultan in which he was involved and, accordingly, postponed the operation. Fearful that the sultan had got wind of the plot and of the reaction of his allies, Badía took to his heels and made himself scarce. Months later, however, when war was declared against England (December 14, 1804),¹¹ the king did indeed authorise the operation, but the political context had since changed and the opportunity had been lost.

In this respect, nothing is known about the level of rapport with the court of Soliman or how other alliances and rebellions were planned. Although the book is yet again non-committal, the author is clearly withholding information. For example, Badía certainly departed from Fez on May 30, 1805, after which he was intercepted in the hills close to Uxda by the sultan's troops and was taken to Larache, from where he was expelled from the country on October 13. According to him, it was a perfidious affair, because neither his wife (he always claimed he had had no choice but to accept her, although he subsequently vindicated the role of his son in an alleged succession to the throne) nor his retinue was permitted to accompany him. At any rate, he did not lose his position or his funds, for he would continue his journey with the same socioeconomic status and political prestige he always claimed to have had in Morocco.

Two observations should be made in this respect. Although they were subsequently written in Paris in 1815, there are two works¹² closely related to his

11 The immediate cause was the sinking of the frigate *Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes* and the capture of the rest of the fleet by the English.

12 Both currently housed in the Historical Archive of the City of Barcelona.

sojourn in Morocco and the type of government he sought to establish there. One is a theatre piece, *Alí Bey en Marruecos. Tragedia* (García Valdés & Gaha, 1999), which recounts his life at court, his attempts to convince the sultan to establish an enlightened constitution and his disenchantment and confrontation with him when he realised he was going to do nothing of the sort. The other text – which to my mind is fundamental – is a prospective constitution (López García, 2010) he drafted for the kingdom of Morocco. It is true that he obviously proposed himself as the supreme ruler and that perhaps it was not well suited to the country's political situation, but it predated by almost a century the one published in the newspaper *Lisan al-Magrib* in 1908, which was an adaptation of the Ottoman charter and which is usually understood as the first that was put forward for Morocco. As it was a clearly constitutional time (the American Constitution of 1773, the Spanish Constitution of 1812 and the French Constitutions of 1791 and 1814 signed by Louis XVI and Louis XVIII, respectively, under very different circumstances), Badía had something similar in mind for Morocco, surely at a moment when he was organising and documenting his planned trip with France.

In sum, Badía was expelled from Morocco from the port of Larache and, according to his account, in which it can be sensed that something strange was afoot and that he had been betrayed, he then decided to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, setting off in that direction.

The first part of what can be considered as the second stage of his journey took him to Tripoli (now Libya), arriving in the locality he called Tripoli of Barbary on November 11, 1805. In his book, he refers to political affairs, diplomatic relations and commitments at several levels. As if he were indeed offended by how he had been treated in Morocco, he alleged that he did not want to use the letter of recommendation that the 'emperor of Morocco' had given him, while also indicating that the pasha Salauí of Larache had written in unflattering terms about him to the pasha of Tripoli. Here, as in all the places he visited on his travels, he performed sociological and anthropological studies, as well as enquiring into the rulers, relating weights and measures, learning the ins and outs of trade and sometimes describing in detail the army, its organization and command structure. To this end, he usually interviewed the authorities, civilians, clerics and military men. It was his princely status, which he maintained, that opened those doors. Indeed, when reading his book, there is sometimes the impression that he is drafting a report which, of course, must have been very welcome in the chancelleries for which he worked or for those that managed to obtain first-hand that wealth of information provided by a European disguised as a Muslim.

His next port of call should have been Alexandria in Egypt but owing to a stroke of bad luck he ended up in Cyprus. When his ship was about to enter the port of Alexandria, a storm blew up and because of the captain's incompetence it was swept to the island. In this connection, he claimed that it was the measurements he took that enabled them to get their bearings and that his seafaring experience saved them from more than one misfortune.

He remained on the island from March 7 to May 7, 1806. During his stay, he also interviewed the authorities, including the archbishop of Cyprus, who even sent him a letter, which he published in his book, thanking him for his advice on how to eradicate the locust plague devastating the island. Yet his archaeological studies were perhaps the most important aspect of his sojourn on the island. He was the first to conduct them systematically,¹³ examining the remains he observed and described there, sketching ground plans and elevations and the main architectural elements and ruins in an attempt to understand them. He put forward interpretative hypotheses relating to Aphrodite, whose birthplace tradition was also established in Cyprus. One of the major contributions of his book, these descriptions were the only ones available for quite a time.

He then departed for Alexandria, where he arrived on May 12 and where he made an interesting comment on the scientific importance of Napoleon's expedition: 'which [Egypt] is much more so [better known] since the visit of the French army, with its corps of men of science, whose brilliance and joint efforts for three years have undoubtedly exhausted the attention of the spectator' (Badía/Ali Bey, 2001: 239), while also offering a physical and archaeological description of the city. It should be recalled that as all and sundry saw him as a Muslim prince, a savant, who was visiting the religious sites of Christians and

13 In the introduction to his book, Graziadio (1997: 11–15), refers to the descriptions that Jodocus de Meggen made in 1542 and to the acquisition of ancient objects, such as that belonging to the Duke of Luynes, which was donated to the National Library of Paris at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as well as to the first enquiries into this past. They were followed by the works of diplomats and bankers, written in the middle decades of the same century, which managed to put the island on the map. The first relevant work was that of Luigi Palma di Cesnola, the American, and then Russian, consul in Larnaca in 1865, who in 1879 became the first director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York). In 1877, he published *Cyprus, Its Ancient Cities, Tombs and Temples*, in which he boasts about having explored 12 temples, 65 necropolises and 60,000 tombs. Without drawing comparisons or being judgmental, Badía was also a pioneer in archaeology on the island, long before those that have always been regarded as the first archaeological studies were conducted in Cyprus.

Muslims – to which non-Muslims were denied access – his accounts, descriptions and sketches were unique at the time.

Without attaching much importance to them, Badía's book includes several excursuses on the political situation in Egypt, while also mentioning Elfi Bey and the role that the French and the English had given him in the country's future, seeking a greater level of independence from the Ottoman Empire. According to other sources, when in Cyprus, Badía got word of a British operation aimed at establishing Elfi Bey at the head of the government and subsequently adopted measures in Alexandria to thwart the power's plans. In other words, throughout his travels in the Mediterranean and the Near East, he acted or claimed to be acting against the interests of the British who were gaining a foothold in these territories. Spain apparently was not interested in the region, which raises the question of whose orders he was following, always provided that he was telling the truth, which is an exceedingly moot point considering that he was a spy.

His description of Mecca is another of his book's major contributions. He not only visited the most relevant places in the holy city and witnessed how rituals were performed, but also described and sketched them, for which reason it was the most important depiction of Mecca, its places of worship and rites to date. He was not the first Christian to visit Mecca but indeed the one who painted the most faithful picture of the city at the time. Owing to his princely status, he was received everywhere and made the acquaintance of the highest authorities, thus allowing him to discover who was in charge and their *modus operandi*, going so far as to describe how the Wahhabis would soon seize power, which they did, establishing a religious regime that still exists in the Arabian Peninsula.

There was then a strange turn of events which is explained in the book as if nothing had happened and as if it were of no import. Badía travelled to Medina, something that the Wahhabis had prohibited him from doing, among other things because the tomb of the prophet was out of bounds. In his book, he does not explain the reasons behind this, for if it had been a mere visit, he would have said so. He and his retinue were arrested, forced to pay a tribute or fine, which he negotiated, made to part with some of their belonging and then freed. Although there are no further explanations in the book, the real intention of the trip remains in doubt.

The next stage of his journey took him to Palestine and Syria. In Cairo, there was talk of the British disembarking in Alexandria and of two unsuccessful attacks against Rosetta. According to Badía, the jails were full of British prisoners. On July 23, 1807, he arrived in Jerusalem. In the main, he paid a surprising amount of attention to Christian buildings and myths for someone who

professed to be a Muslim, for the descriptions are magnificent and the drawings, ground plans and elevations of the buildings of the Christian faith he was prohibited from entering are extraordinarily detailed.¹⁴ He also expressed his views on the Roman Catholic friars of the Holy Land, which were undoubtedly reflected in a report in this respect which he subsequently issued. Furthermore, his book contains descriptions of the city's defences which would have had a clear military value.

The last chapter of Badía's book is devoted to Turkey. Arriving in Constantinople on October 21, 1807, he had already met his host, the Marquis of Almenara, the ambassador of the king of Spain to the Sublime Porte at the time, in Europe. The marquis sent him his dragoman, servants and boats to cross the Bosphorus, while accommodating him in a room in his own house, 'which he had decorated in the Turkish style so as not to offend his customs' (Badía, 2001: 490). Regardless of the fact that he maintained his fictional identity in his account, it seems only natural that the Spanish foreign service had followed him and continued to offer him assistance throughout his journey and, once in Constantinople, provided him with accommodation.

In this chapter of his book there is reference to his characteristic working methodology, for instead of describing Constantinople because other travellers had already done so (Badía, 2001: 491), he focused instead on those places that Christians were prohibited from entering. In short, he knew how to make the most of his cover to chronicle all that was forbidden to non-Muslims. This part of his scientific work relating to the history of art or that of religions, sociology and anthropology is also one of the most important contributions of his book.

His description of Turkish society is particularly fault-finding, blaming all the citizenry's ills on bad governance. To his mind, it was a society that did not respect human rights or public law. There is a chapter on the 'Current state of Turkey' which, in a way, perhaps explains or justifies the clear decadence into which the Ottoman Empire had fallen some time ago. He was also scathingly critical of the Janissaries and the army, seeing them as accomplices of or tools for rebellion, depending on their own interests. This short and qualifiable political and sociological study also provides an eyewitness account that was necessary for affording an overview of a still powerful enemy.

14 He himself indicates this in several parts of the book, like when he refers to *El Haram* or the Muslim temple built on top of that of Solomon: "As it has been impossible hitherto to offer a description of the Muslim temple in Jerusalem because the Muslims refuse to do so and the Christians have never been able to enter it ..." (Badía, 2001: 413).

The journey ended abruptly, at least according to the book. Departing from Constantinople, Badía made for Bucharest in Wallachia, passing through Pera on December 2, 1807. He claimed that he did not know where he was heading, leaving his papers with a friend who he authorised to publish them after a stipulated time. He left the Ottoman Empire on Saturday, December 19, 1807, at dawn. He recounts how even the Russians he met on the way paid him their respects, before finishing with a three-paragraph description of Bucharest.

The book therefore does not have any structured ending, as if there had been an unexpected turn of events. This is odd considering that it was based on notes Badía had taken on his travels and that it was then revised and prepared for publication. He then returned to Spain, via Vienna and France, arriving in Paris on April 17, 1808, before setting off for Bayonne in May, where the Spanish kings were to be found. The Abdications of Bayonne were signed on May 5 and 6, by virtue of which Charles IV and Ferdinand VII renounced the Spanish throne in favour of Napoleon, who gave it to his brother Joseph Bonaparte (Artola, 1975; Domínguez Ortiz, 1976; Fontana, 1983).

Continuing with the developments in Spain, on 2 May 1808, triggered by the uprising in Madrid, the Peninsula War broke out with France, which subsequently always influenced the government of Joseph Bonaparte. In this historical period, the Spanish Constitution of 1812 was proclaimed on March 19. Charles IV informed Badía that Spain was now governed by Napoleon and that he should serve him. After interviewing Badía, Napoleon requested reports with a view to corroborating his account, before gauging the importance of the journey and the opportunities it offered for controlling North Africa.

Badía worked for the French administration in Spain, occupying the post of superintendent of Segovia from 1809 and 1810 and prefect of Cordova from 1810 and 1811. He attempted to modernise the administration according to enlightened canons, promoting public works in Cordova, like the Cemetery of Our Lady of Health and the Agricultural Gardens, known as 'Los Patos,' as well as cotton and potato growing. He sought to rationalise the city, promoting hygiene and agricultural development as a form of progress.

At the end of 1813, when the French occupation of Spain was drawing to a close, Badía abandoned his country like many other pro-French Spaniards and, although he tried to return, Ferdinand VII never allowed him to do so, while also trying to condemn him to oblivion.¹⁵

15 In the *Índice General de los papeles reservados de Fernando VII* (Archivo General del Palacio Real de Madrid), he appears several times, but his requests to return to Spanish service went unanswered. It is telling that his book was only published in Spanish after the king's death.

During his exile in Paris, he managed to publish his book in 1814 which, as already noted, he wrote in French still under the pseudonym of Ali Bey. It was shortly translated into English, Italian and German, an edition published in 1816, as indicated in the literature. In the forwards to these editions, it is observed that the editors are acquainted with the author and that he is not the Muslim he professes to be, with the German editor even going so far as to reveal Ali Bey's real identity.

At some time or another, following the establishment of the new French administration under the government of Louis XVIII, Badía proposed a journey similar to the first one he had embarked on for Godoy, this time with a clearly political objective from the outset. He must have alternated its preparation with the writing of the aforementioned tragedy and the drafting of the constitution for Morocco. In these three works, he stressed how important it was that a European leader, converted to Islam – namely, yours truly – should govern North Africa and that he should do so through a constitution.

Albeit similar to his first journey, his intention was to start the second in Mecca, where he planned to join a caravan on its return leg, thus enabling him to cross Africa, passing through Abyssinia, Darfur, the Niger valley, Timbuktu (Mali) and Senegal. When it was approved, he was set a time limit: three years, from January 1818 to January 1821. He acquired a new identity, this time going by the name of Hadj Ali Abu Othman, the pilgrim Ali, father of Othman. He had held the status of pilgrim since 1807, when he had first made the pilgrimage to Mecca, while also recovering the idea of the rights of his son in Morocco.

After making swift preparations, he arrived in Constantinople on 20 March, from where he wrote a letter to his family, and in Tripoli (Syria) on June 9, a city in which he was recognised by several Moroccan merchants, before arriving in Damasco on July 30. His presence was now no secret.

He died between Zarka and Balka on the night of August 31 or in the early hours of September 1, 1818, en route from Damasco to Mecca. Some claimed that he had succumbed to dysentery because he was perhaps too old for such a demanding journey. For others and in his own opinion, he was poisoned surely by the British secret service. The United Kingdom was France's enemy in this region of colonial expansion. Lady Hester Lucy Stanhope, the 'White Queen of Palmyra,' who for a time was responsible for British interests in the area and acquainted with Ali Bey el Abbassi, and perhaps his friend, also suspected foul play, as did the Spanish consular services.¹⁶

16 Archivo Histórico Nacional (Spain). Legajo 5957.1: 'Buyundéré of Constantinople', January 25, 1819. He refers to the death of Ali Bey while making the pilgrimage to Mecca, with other news about the individual, and the suspicion that he has been poisoned by the "Mupliti" of Damasco.

His death was as spectacular and intriguing as his life. Spurred on by the quest for fortune and status, the truth is that his achievements were unique and preceded the political and colonial actions that seemed to have followed in his footsteps through different countries decades later.

1.4 The Scientific Implications of His Travels

From a scientific point of view, the maps (of the kingdom of Morocco, North Africa, the Arabian coasts, the Red Sea, the coastline of the Eastern Mediterranean and Cyprus) appearing in Badía's book are one of their kind, some being the best of the period. Their degree of accuracy, accompanied by astronomical measurements in the body copy, implied that they were groundbreaking. His studies of the buildings he visited, considering that no Christian could do so, were essential for the history of art and for gaining first-hand knowledge of an inaccessible heritage. In his book, Badía himself remarks on how novel his descriptions are and that they serve to disseminate a heritage, which he documents with floor plans and elevations and modern studies, hitherto unknown in the West. His description of Mecca, which is unique, served as a model for subsequent travellers, like, for example, the English explorer Richard Francis Burton (1893: xx). His descriptions of the societies with which he came into contact, their lifestyles and trade practices and how they were governed allowed him to perform a detailed analysis that must have been followed closely in different metropolises (Burton, 1893: 15). Napoleon's immediate interest in his travels and writings, Badía's monitoring by the British foreign service and his subsequent trips reflect how compelling his analyses were. He also conducted pioneering archaeological studies, like those in Cyprus, while also collecting herbs that are still grown in historical botanical gardens. The main objective of his journey, viz. scientific study, was always pursued, and what can be fathomed about the other reasons, perhaps the most important, appears in other sources which are only partially known.

The first Spanish edition of his book, clearly stating that Ali Bey el Abbassi was Domingo Badía y Leblích, was published in 1836. Prevented during the reign of Ferdinand VII, the figure of Badía only started to be studied and vindicated following the king's death in 1833. Different scholars, some of whom were civil servants, searched for documents relating to the man to gain a deeper understanding of him, with all, or practically all, of those that were not in France being studied and some included among the legacy housed in the Historical Archive of the City of Barcelona. However, there is still a need for a global study of Badía and especially his oeuvre, for archives and libraries must still contain surprises in this regard.

1.5 Conclusions

If it is possible to establish the colonial conquest of Africa by the European powers at a specific date, it is obvious that by the 1830s the French presence in Algeria had already become a long-standing and unquestionable reality, although the colonial domination of the continent is established at the end of the century.

The expansion of France, Britain and Russia, among other powers, in the territories that for the Ottoman Empire were becoming increasingly harder to retain as of the beginning of the nineteenth century and even more so as the century progressed, was also related to historical studies of their ancient history: Orientalism and Egyptology.

In addition to a previous presence in and clashes over Ceuta and Melilla in the nineteenth century, the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco was established between 1912 and 1956/8.

So, against this general backdrop of colonialism and its cultural repercussions, there was a very clear precedent in the travels of Ali Bey el Abbassi through North Africa, the Mediterranean basin and the Near East. Although the interests that Ali Bey defended from his sojourn in Tripoli to his departure from the Ottoman Empire are little known, there was more to his travels than he was willing to admit. In his book, it is possible to follow his route, as regards which nothing is concealed but very little is disclosed. In other documents there is talk of subversive actions against British interests, for the more or less veiled clashes for political purposes were already occurring throughout these territories.

The presence that Spain had, or intended to have, in Morocco as of the last third of the nineteenth century, which was further promoted following the so-called disaster of 1898 (with the loss of the colonies of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines), had a distant precedent in the action promoted by the government of Godoy. From the perspective of understanding colonial expansion in favour of the power in question, in a manner of speaking it was a precursor of policies that an attempt was made to implement at a much later date. In other words, Badía was a man ahead of his time who saw an opportunity that nobody had noticed before (indeed, this could refer to Godoy or Badía). Considering the bad press that Godoy has been given in Spanish historiography (Domínguez Ortiz, 1976; López Tabar, 2001), it is strange that all these actions whose intention was to boost the Spanish economy and trade are not usually recognised or appreciated.

From the point of view of the French, the relationship between the journeys that Badía made or planned and the areas of North Africa subsequently falling under French colonial control seems to be evident. It is conceivable that

Badía's journey under the Spanish flag immediately roused Napoleon's interest, as confirmed by the fact that he ordered a captain to verify whether the Spaniard's claims about the possibility of seizing Morocco were true or not. In the Ottoman Empire, a complete itinerary from Senegal to Egypt and the duration of each stage of the journey had been established (Roussier, 1930: 68). That the project Badía presented to the administration of Louis XVIII was based on this information and a previous objective only reinforces the idea that the French were interested in the region and the relevance of the Spaniard's two journeys (the second incomplete) when establishing the guidelines for French expansion in North Africa.

There is a direct relationship between the revival of studies of the ancient Near East and the European presence in the geographical areas that this history encompasses. Some of the prime movers also understood it as a way of flaunting colonial prestige in that the idea was to embrace that history as their own. The advent of Egyptology and Orientalism was directly related to this colonial, political and economic presence, as Badía himself indicates in his book, a field in which France and England were clearly competitors at that moment.

Perhaps under the orders of Godoy, Badía conducted a series of enquiries that also established him as a precursor because of his historical and even archaeological studies, in addition to the fact that he described the most prominent buildings and analysed societies, their governments and the inner-workings of the territories through which he travelled. Although, as already observed, he included all these studies in his book, he only recounted some of the reasons behind his journey, namely, that which a spy would describe or could safely disclose, thus hinting at what was behind it. In this chapter, the intention has solely been to acquaint readers with Badía and his oeuvre.

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Latin America and North Africa: Three Moments in the Genealogy of Third Worldism

Martín Bergel

2.1 Introduction¹

The global turn of contemporary historiography and the discussions on cultural circulations and transfers currently in vogue are prompting us to exhume from the past unsuspected connections between distant regions of the world. Thirty years ago, when the debate on globalization took hold in the humanities – promoted mainly by sociology, anthropology, and political philosophy –, the belief that the landscape of the late twentieth century offered the picture of a radically new era dominated the discussions. The advent of the digital era, the hegemony of immaterial capitalism based on the incessant mobility of finance, and the crisis of the nation-state were read as signs that the cycle of modernity was in decline, and that a framework of effective and unprecedented globalization was opening up. However, today the rise of global history points out to us, almost as an imperative, the need to search for a fabric of transcontinental relations in the past – even the remote past. The term “global” ceased to designate our most immediate contemporaneity, expanding into a perspective that allows us to illuminate and provide a framework for interrogating a past horizon rich in economic, political, and cultural contacts.

Undoubtedly, this expansion of the historical field of visibility, promoted by global history and other related factors, is auspicious, as it helps reveal episodes and plots that are unknown or little frequented. A positive consequence of this trend is that it challenges not only the different versions of methodological nationalism (a challenge that will never be idle to insist on) but also those that naturalize other spatial frameworks. For example, regional and continental ones, which in Latin American studies are often expressed in a sort of “methodological Latin Americanism.” However, this expansion into the past

1 This chapter is an edited version of the Opening Lecture delivered at the International Conference “América Latina – África del Norte – España. Traslaciones culturales, intelectuales y literarias,” Freie Universität, Berlin, July 6–7, 2017. I am grateful to the organizers of that meeting, Stephanie Fleishmann, Ana Nenadovic, and Susanne Klengel.

runs the risk of becoming a somewhat banal project, insofar as it directs its efforts simply to recover uncritically any contact between distant areas, or to content itself with making inventories of those links. The main risk may lie in giving similar importance to any of these transcontinental links without considering the historical significance of each situation. If we limit ourselves to noting that all (or nearly all) of the human past has been global in terms of the extent of transcultural contacts, we will not be able to distinguish moments of accelerated globalization, or particularly significant instances of circulation of people, goods, or ideas.

In this chapter, I want to consider briefly three historical situations of different nature in which Latin America established dense links with the North African (Arab) region. Three moments in which, for reasons that I intend to develop, the reflection on that region (as part of the figurations on the “Orient”), or the processing of some of the phenomena coming from there, were highly significant for Latin American culture and politics. I begin, first of all, with the Orientalist references in Domingo Faustino Sarmiento’s book *Viajes* (Travels), particularly in his account of his visit to Algeria. The origins and functions of these references in Sarmiento’s textual economy, illuminated by a set of works (Piglia, 1980; Altamirano, 1997; Gasquet, 2007; Civantos, 2013; Bergel, 2015), exemplarily condense – albeit with particularly notable accents – the cultural codes of the nineteenth-century progressive literate elites in Latin America, and the place within these codes of Orientalist representations. The other two moments I want to focus on have been less addressed by historical research, at least from the perspectives from which I approach them here. On the one hand, this chapter pays attention to the final decades of the nineteenth century to consider the functions of news about the East – for example, those coming from Egypt and the Maghreb countries – in the modernization of the periodical press that was taking place in Latin America at that time. My conjecture is that such news played a crucial role in the emergence of a modern press, since international news, particularly from distant regions, is one of the main factors that fostered the new place that news occupies in newspapers at the end of the century. In this regard, I wish to highlight how public opinion on global issues emerged in Latin American capitals during that period, as well as how events such as the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) in South Africa or the tensions surrounding the status of Morocco, in the lead-up to the First World War (1914–1918), contributed to this evolving public discourse that engaged increasingly larger segments of the readership (Bergel, 2017). In addition, the chapter examines how the chronicle of modernist writers, a genre that finds its conditions of possibility in the press, contributed to shaping public opinion on global issues. Finally, I will move to the 1920s, during the immediate post-war

period, to highlight that through phenomena such as the widespread sympathy for the resistance led by the anti-colonial leader Abdelkrim in Morocco, reflected in public opinion and among many intellectuals across the continent, one can observe the emergence of the first traces of a sensibility that foreshadows the Third Worldism of the second post-war period. Since it is paramount to show how the ideological-political framework of the Latin American national-popular tradition owes much to the reception of cycles such as that of Abdelkrim (or later, almost immediately, that of the Chinese Kuomintang), I will moreover refer to the reading made by some prominent figures of that Latin American moment, such as the young leader of Peruvian *aprismo*, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre. In this reading, some of the first conceptual and political formulations of the Latin American national-popular or populist tradition are modulated in close contact with a phenomenon of global origin and resonance, which is expressed and thematized in the so-called “awakening of the East” that has some of its first manifestations in the Rif revolt or the Chinese insurgency against the European powers.

In short, in the journey through these three moments, in which intense relations of different types are established with aspects of North Africa, I am interested in showing the historical shift whereby, for significant segments of Latin American public opinion – as well as for part of its intellectuals and political leaders –, Algeria or Morocco go from being civilizational counter-models to spaces that contribute to define and inspire relevant features of the continent’s political culture. In what follows, I will then consider these three moments in three successive sections, finally suggesting in the conclusions that the power of the global Third Worldist imaginaries of the 1960s and 1970s must be understood in terms of their historical roots within a long-term perspective.

2.2 Sarmiento and the Uses of the “Orient”

In his seminal book *Civilización y Barbarie. Vida de Juan Facundo Quiroga* (1845, better known as *Facundo; Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism*), Sarmiento repeatedly uses Orientalist analogies to illustrate the features of the sociocultural configuration nestled in the Pampa, with which he had to confront in his will to build a modern nation in the emerging Argentine territory. If, as Ricardo Piglia (1980) pointed out, comparison is for Sarmiento the key operation in any initiative of knowledge, the constant referral of the elements of the Argentine Pampas habitat to the universe of notions provided by the European Orientalist archive was intended to offer images that, through familiarity, would serve to shed light on realities that remained obscure, in a task of elucidation that

appeared to him as an indispensable starting point for the development of his modernizing project. Pursuing this same horizon of searching for models and cultural references, he soon embarked on the journey that would give rise to his book *Viajes por Europa, África i América: 1845–1847* (*Travels in Europe, Africa and America 1845–1848*). It was in the course of this journey that he visited Algeria, becoming one of the first Latin American writers to provide a first-hand account of areas of the extra-European and extra-American world.

It was a fact that had nothing to do with chance. The visit to North Africa, Sarmiento notes in his book (1849–51/1996: 172), “from Chile was a very important part of my travel program.”² What attracted him to this destination so strongly? Algeria had just been conquered by France and constituted at that time the outpost of European penetration in North Africa. What seemed to direct Sarmiento’s curiosity at the time were the vicissitudes of an ongoing colonization project, which undoubtedly evoked the American struggles between civilization and barbarism. The traveller could already glimpse the benefits of this process, which allowed him to rejoicefully predict that “at the rate things are going, this country will soon be able to be called without impropriety the African France” (Sarmiento, 1849–51/1996: 173).

It has been rightly pointed out that in his Maghrebi portraits, Sarmiento’s gaze contains folds, and there are stretches of his narrative in which the association of the Orient with a negative pole is suspended. As in the case of the gaucho from the Pampas, there are also moments of empathy in his descriptions of Algerian village life. Civantos (2013) has even seen a strong identification of Sarmiento with features of Arab culture. A radical ambivalence would cross his relationship with that universe, between his association with the pole of barbarism and those moments of identity. However, these readings arguably stylize and exaggerate those flashes of empathy. There is indeed a rescue by Sarmiento of the skills of the Arab populations that he judges even superior to those he detects in his known description of the gaucho tracker in *Facundo*. It is also true that he offers a hallucinatory and joyful account of his horseback riding in the Algerian plain, which, as he warns, has awakened in him “the gaucho instincts that slumber in us” (Sarmiento, 1849–51/1996: 188). However, these moments are inevitably followed by judgments that show another set of values. His fascinating description of the *diffa*, the feast of feasts given to him by the tribe he visits, shows the radical estrangement and apprehension he experiences in the face of local customs. And unlike what would happen eighty years later, with the widespread sympathy aroused in Latin American

2 All translations in this chapter are mine.

public opinion by the Moroccan leader Abdelkrim, Sarmiento shows no similar sentiment for Abdelkader, the commander of the Algerian resistance. On the contrary, in that figure and the “religious fanaticism” that he observes in his followers he finds the elements that configure the main function that Carlos Altamirano (1997) has detected in Sarmiento’s Orientalist figurations: that of illustrating the phenomenon of despotism, a key notion when focusing on the problem of Latin American caudillismo which, embodied in the names of Facundo Quiroga and Juan Manuel de Rosas, emerges as the main obstacle in the Río de la Plata to the advance of civilization.

We can conclude, then, that if ambivalence runs through Sarmiento’s descriptions of the American gauchos and the Arab tribes – objects of reflection so often interchangeable –, it is the type of relationship that the march of progress should establish with them. At times, Sarmiento leans towards the option of integrating these subaltern subjects. His emphasis on the democratization of education is linked to this path. At other times, he does not hesitate to declare all-out war on the populations he associates with barbarism.

However, there is no doubt about the privileged role the Orient plays in Sarmiento’s narrative strategy, which is also a political one. As he points out in *Viajes*, “Many precious data I have treasured in Africa about colonization, which I reserve for a special work” (Sarmiento, 1849–51/1996: 186). In his observations on this book, writer Juan Goytisolo (1999) exculpates Sarmiento for his justification of the colonial enterprise. The author of *Facundo* could only express the civilizing hierarchies that configured the horizon of his time. In that hierarchical scheme, what is unique in his case lies instead in the quasi-ethnographic perspective through which he gathers and translates into the language of civilization certain voices coming from the field of barbarism (a trait previously pointed out by Ramos, 1989: 19–34). And also, in the determination with which he assumes, as a personal initiative, the intellectual adventure of advancing the lights of progress even in places he judges hardly hospitable to them. Considered in this context, and in terms of its inscriptions and subsequent drifts, Sarmiento’s brief North African voyage acquires a profound significance.

2.3 The Power of News and the Beginning of a “South–South” Zone of Complicity

A second significant moment, of a different nature, in the connections between Latin America and North Africa began to take place in the final decades of the 19th century. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, news about distant

regions of the world played an important role in the process of modernization of the press in Latin America – a role that has not been sufficiently explored. Only recently has a new cultural history of the press become interested in the transformations brought about by the invention of the telegraph and other technical and journalistic advancements.³ This fact represented the effective emergence of an urban public opinion on global issues that took place progressively in all the major cities of the world.

Certainly, it is not that information from different latitudes lacked significance before the telegraph. However, in the final decades of the 19th century, the methods of circulation and consumption of this news underwent a series of qualitative changes.⁴ In the first place, there was a radical change in time. If up until then the duration of the news journey coincided with the speed of human means of transport (which took weeks and even months to move the so-called steam press from one distant place to another), from the telegraph came a new experience of informative instantaneity, which in newspapers was manifested in the possibility of being informed of events that had occurred only a few hours earlier. Secondly, the same fluidity with which news now circulated brought with it an expansion of space: whereas in Latin America the flow of international information until then mainly reflected news from Western Europe, and only infrequently from other regions, the new era of agencies and cables allowed the constant arrival of news from all continents (albeit mediated by circulations that confirmed the privileged place of cities such as London or Paris in the new circuits). Thirdly, the crystallization of fixed spaces in the press dedicated to international cables or telegrams allowed for a constant, and no longer discontinuous, presence of this type of news. The very organizational rationality of the newspapers changed, and the telegrams and international cables section became an unavoidable part of the press, decisive in the stabilization of a renewed news culture. Finally, this entire process coincided with the radical expansion of the newspaper-reading public in Latin America (and, with varying speed, throughout the world) at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. This deepening of the reading field meant that novelties from distant regions were consumed by increasingly wider audiences. Added to all this is the presence, first, of different illustration techniques and then the appearance of journalistic photography. In short, without understanding the gradual process of shaping public opinion

3 For an analysis of the phenomenon in the Buenos Aires press, see the seminal works of Caimari (2016 and 2018). For the case of the circulation of news in colonial Algeria, see Asseraf (2019).

4 I follow here the argument that I developed in Bergel (2017).

on global issues, a process overdetermined by technical and socio-cultural changes, the truly global impact of later events, such as World War I, cannot be fully understood.

This process was one of the main drivers of a significant shift that occurred in the Latin American periodical press: the transition from a political-factual press to one based on the fundamental input of modern newspapers, namely, news. As in other parts of the world, during the 19th century, an important press system flourished in the capitals of Latin American countries. This press was generally driven by immediate political motives, linked to the support of a caudillo or faction. It was only in the years preceding the turn of the century that, in the heat of the expansion and diversification of the reading fields, the gradual transformation that culminated in the type of newspapers we are familiar with today began to become evident. Driven by a commercial logic, sustained by advertising and the sale of tens of thousands of copies, newspapers featured a diversity of sections aimed at capturing the favour of differentiated segments of the public. Historians of Latin American print culture have insisted on this passage, which goes from a “proselytizing press model” (Palti, 2003) to newspapers that, like *La Nación* of Buenos Aires, *El Mercurio* of Santiago de Chile or *El Comercio* of Lima, progressively abandoned their political-factional nature to approach the type provided by the modern North American press. Of course, this passage was neither unilinear nor complete. Goldgel (2013) has shown us how, in the factitious newspapers of the mid-nineteenth century, newspapers of Havana or Buenos Aires also dealt with aspects linked to the diversification of consumption and the emergence of an incipient fashion system. And, on the other hand, it is unnecessary to emphasise how the newspapers of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century were far from indifferent to political matters, often providing strong support to a party or leader.

If that process is sufficiently well known, there are mechanisms at work in this gradual and contradictory cycle of modernization of the press that have not been equally pondered. In general, this transformation has been focused on the link between journalistic companies, the complexification and diversification of the press discourses, and the vertiginous increase in literacy rates and the reading public. However, it has been less considered from a strictly journalistic point of view, understanding as such those who have the activity of informing as their centre of gravity. My conjecture in this regard is that while the modernization of the press can be described as the process by which the news is installed, the news coming from the international arena that, in the last third of the nineteenth century, began to circulate in an accelerated manner has much to do with that triumph. In other words, the triumph of news is above all the triumph of global news.

Certainly, other scholars have highlighted elements that point in different directions. Peter Fritzsche (1996), for example, argues that the growth of the Berlin press network was strongly linked to the supply of local urban news, which was closely tied to the world of work and later also to leisure. But several indications support the assumption mentioned above. The Argentine polygrapher Ernesto Quesada (1882), for instance, who in the 1880s wrote a series of works on the evolution of the press in the Río de la Plata, noted that the telegram section – that is, the informational snippets with news from abroad – was among those that most attracted the attention of readers. Some events in the international arena aroused great attention. In 1900, the anarchist attack on Italian King Humbert I boosted the sales of many press organs on the continent. The magazine *Caras y Caretas* of Buenos Aires, for example, broke all its sales records when it announced the event (Prieto, 1988: 40–41). More generally, it was no coincidence that, following a worldwide trend, Latin American newspapers included abundant sections of telegrams from abroad, conveniently organized and headlined. Many of these newspapers even opened with such sections, which occupied the front pages.

If it is therefore true that the strengthening of the daily supply of news from around the world was a decisive driving force behind the transformations experienced by the periodical press in the last decades of the 19th century, by extension, considering the links established between newspapers and their readers, one can assume that for Latin American newspapers information from the “Orient” played a preponderant role in this process. This should not surprise us, as one of the primary drivers for the development of the telegraph network was the expansion of imperialist powers in Asia and Africa (Headrick, 1991). Thus, it was common for the foreign telegram sections to be filled with news from those continents, especially the growing frictions, diplomatic negotiations, and episodes of combat between the imperial advances and the local populations. Latin American newspapers generously published news on the multifaceted expansion of European powers in overseas territories. Certain events garnered constant and daily attention for weeks, and even months, providing informative articles consistently grouped under easily identifiable headings, such as “The Powers in the Far East” or “The Anglo-Boer War.” In this context, the North African countries were an object of attention, insofar as they were part of the regular cast that participated in the spectacle of the imperial distribution of the world, followed attentively by an increasingly globalized public opinion. The crises of 1905 and 1911 over imperial disputes regarding Morocco, for example, were part of the regular menu of Latin American public opinion. In short, the events of imperialist advance, as well as the embryonic anti-colonial protests, were part of the process of transformation of the

news economy in the Latin American press, and were part of the menu that informed the new newspaper reader in the continent's capitals.

At this point, it is worth noting that my focus is on the changes occurring in the press and public opinion systems in Latin America; however, it is clear that I am highlighting features that, with varying rhythms, occurred worldwide. What is particular to Latin America are some of the effects derived from this process. The period when public opinion on global issues took hold worldwide coincided with the great debate over the right of the great powers to place Asian and African countries under their tutelage. Between the Berlin Conference of 1885, which marked the division of Africa, and the end of the First World War (with the Versailles Conference as the great theatre for the design of the post-war world), a global debate took place on the hierarchies between countries and on the so-called standard of civilization of each society. In this course, the ideology of the civilizing mission, which, as is well known, served as a general justification for imperial adventures, underwent a process of increasing questioning (Adas, 2004). The discussions held at the Congress of the Second International in Stuttgart in 1907 offer a vibrant example of the cracking of this ideology. It was there that the first serious socialist questioning of European colonial policy emerged. Barely ten years later, the Wilsonian-Leninist principle of national self-determination was receiving worldwide attention at Versailles, helping to trigger powerful movements of nationalist and anti-colonial agitation in Asian and African countries (Manela, 2007).

It should be noted that in Latin America, this process of questioning the colonial matrix had its first glimpses even earlier than in Europe, partly spurred by the phenomenon that the intellectual historian Oscar Terán (1986) called in a classic essay "the first Latin American anti-imperialism" (which took shape especially after the Spanish-American War of 1898). Once again, although this process was carried out through different channels, the periodical press was a privileged space for its realization. In fact, it is in the course of the constant appearance in the newspapers of news about the conflicts generated on the borders of the imperial advance that a change in the language in which these events were presented inadvertently took place. If, in Sarmiento's time, the struggles of the Algerians led by Abdelkader against French colonial intrusions did not warrant sympathy, now the ancient rebellions of Asian or African populations could begin to be described in terms of "national resistance." It was a process of gradual filtration of an alternative imaginary of empathy with these phenomena of insubordination, which occurred in an ambivalent manner. At least until the outbreak of the 1914 War, the colonial authority of France or England was rarely challenged directly; however, conditions were also created for a different understanding of the manifestations of dissent against

imperial ventures. In short, the continuous presence of the colonial fact in the press, which was in tune with the emergence of a nascent Latin American anti-imperialist sensibility, laid the ground for thinking for the first time of a possible complicity and solidarity between Latin America and the East.

This phenomenon materialized through a plurality of concurrent instances and discourses. As has already been studied by a number of scholars, the modernization of the press was also the occasion for the emergence in Latin America of an increasingly autonomous literary scene. In the context of the search to capture new segments of readers, Latin American newspapers rushed to produce reworked versions of the daily news, a task entrusted to a plethora of journalist-writers who, in turn, found in the press both a means of economic sustenance and a space for the public projection of their authorial figures. These are the historical conditions that led to the emergence of the so-called literary modernism, and the format through which writers enrolled in its bosom developed their interventions in newspapers: the chronicle. What has been less emphasized, however, are the internal connections that in the space of the press linked the flow of international news with the vicissitudes of the modernist chronicle as a genre.

In a remarkable chapter of his classic book *Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina*, Julio Ramos (1989: 82–111) retraced the links between the salient features of the modernization of the press and the modernist literary constellation. For Ramos, the era of the telegraph also prompted decisive changes in the economy of the languages of newspapers, including that of literature. On the one hand, modernist writers positioned themselves critically in the face of the empire of the news. The cut-up language of the wires appears to them as lacking any aesthetic appeal, antithetical, therefore, to that of literature. On the other hand, both the newspapers they work for and the audiences they write for demand that writers incorporate current affairs. Hired as correspondents or chroniclers, modernist writers cannot do without the wealth of news that the press brings with it. Hence, Ramos points out, the modernist chronicle is recurrently presented as an exercise in rewriting or overwriting the news wires that the newspapers brought with them.

In this context, both in their foreign correspondents and in the chronicles, they write echoing current events; modernist writers constantly allude to events in international politics. And in so doing, they amplify the discussion on relations of identity or difference with the East and often unsettle the civilizational hierarchies inherited from the division between civilization and barbarism of Sarmiento's time. For example, in early 1881, the Cuban writer José Martí wrote in his chronicles for the Venezuelan newspaper *La Opinión Nacional* a defence of the autonomy of Egypt, which would soon fall into British hands:

The problem is vital and it is severe: for Egypt, as airy and rebellious as its steeds, a problem of life [...] Thus the problem remains: the British anchor wants to nail itself to the Egyptian horse's flanks. The Koran is going to do battle with the Ledger. The spirit of commerce tries to drown the spirit of independence. The generous son of the desert bites the whip and breaks the hand of the selfish son of the Old Continent. (Martí quoted in Azourgah, 1998: 17)

Martí thus uses the topic of independence to refer to the rebellions that his time still called simply uprisings. To be sure, that early anti-colonialist tinge is linked to his location and his space of experience in Cuba, whose geopolitical situation favoured ideological positions of that nature. However, two decades later, modernist writers based in other cities on the continent would deploy similar arguments. Amado Nervo, for instance, wrote from Madrid a chronicle entitled "La Conferencia de Algeciras" (The Algeciras Conference),⁵ in which he alluded to the "square kilometre fever" that had taken hold of the great powers (Nervo, 1906, in Djbilou, 1986: 240). In the Argentine newspaper *La Nación*, the writer Emilio Becher published a chronicle with the same title, based on the daily press reports from that conference. Becher wrote:

Convened on the shores of the Mediterranean by project of the Kaiser, the conference offers to the disdainful contemplation of the Moroccans the spectacle of the European dissensions. So antagonistic are the interests of France and Germany that at times a declaration of war has been feared [...] While the delegates argue about the customs regime, we witness the last defeat of the Arab race [...] Their fantasy, dazzled by the spectacle of the wonders interviewed in their peaceful or warlike travels, was dilated in the resplendent dream of The Thousand and One Nights. Her grave meditation discovered the mystery of the occult sciences, the noble algebra, patient alchemy, astronomy. A magnificent civilization grew in their schools, helped by the harmonious work of their farmers, their merchants, their soldiers and their sailors [...] But the unalterable signs of their race have not yet been erased after a thousand years of history. And it revolts us as a sacrilege the attempt, approved by the chancelleries, to violate the venerable desert that they still travel. (Stylo [Emilio Becher], 1938: 148–152)

5 A 1906 congress to settle the diplomatic crisis between France and Germany over Morocco.

In Becher's chronicle in *La Nación* there is also an anti-colonial stance, which starts from current news and then slips into the zone of fascination that modernist literature found in Arab imagery (in the quotation, alluded to through the reference to *The Thousand and One Nights*). Becher places Morocco as part of a "magnificent civilization," whose deserts are no longer home to barbarism but a habitat that seems to him "venerable." However, unlike the Orientalist discourse of European romanticism classically portrayed by Edward Said (1978), he inscribes these classical clichés within sharper geopolitical references and in notes critical of the advance of imperialist powers. In summary, the modernist chronicle also relies on the new place acquired by the news, a place that has been conquered in part through information about the Orient.

2.4 Anti-imperialism, a Framework for Exchanges and Common Constructions

If the modernization of the press, including the modernist chronicle that emerged from within it, is the framework for the erosion of the narrative that participated in the belief in the civilizing role of the European powers in North Africa, the destabilization of that narrative would only come after the First World War. It is then that, in Latin America, in line with what was happening in other parts of the world, a discourse emerged that vigorously announced the "awakening of the Orient," a topic that echoed the wave of anti-colonial movements unleashed after the end of the Great War.

In the previous period, during a complex and multifaceted process – one that I have just mentioned in general terms – the first sketches emerged in Latin America that reversed the negative evaluations commonly assigned to the East during the 19th century. These positive visions were consolidated and proliferated in broad sectors of public opinion on the continent after the war. Once again, the press was the primary channel for the dissemination of this imaginary, which contained a novelty: the idea that Latin America and the African and Asian realities faced similar positions of subordination in relation to the imperialist forces. And as an effect of this equivalent relationship between the geopolitical situations of these three continents, which was often expressed through a list of analogous cases (Nicaragua, Morocco, and China, among others), a proto-third worldlist discourse emerged, imagining for the first time the potential convergence between these three macro-regions (Bergel, 2015; Goebel, 2015).

Within this perspective, one of the main references repeatedly alluded to is that of the Rif Republic, proclaimed in 1921 in northern Morocco following

the resounding defeats inflicted on Spain. This experiment, commanded by the leader Abdelkrim, would also keep France in check for a few years – until its defeat in the middle of the decade. During this period, the presence of the so-called Rif War in the Latin American press was constant, as was the sympathy shown towards the Moroccan forces. Many intellectuals also assumed such positions. Argentinian José Ingenieros, for example, was a strong supporter of Abdelkrim. In a 1925 article, he wrote that “the French, American, and Russian revolutions mean the same thing as the Rifian revolution. Any Latin American who is not a supporter of Abdelkrim seems to me to be infected and inoculated with imperialism.” And he went on to proclaim that “the position of Abdelkrim vis-à-vis Europe is the same as that of the countries of America vis-à-vis the United States” (*Repertorio Americano*, 1925). In this last sentence, coming from one of the most renowned intellectuals of the continent, the equivalent relationship mentioned above can be observed. Both Morocco and Latin America are placed in an analogous position vis-à-vis imperialism. Implicit in this perspective was the idea that an inclusive “we” could emerge to encompass and name both terms of the relationship. This common name, as is well known, would emerge after the Second World War under the guise of the Third World.

The fame of Abdelkrim and the Rif Republic often served as a gateway to a more general positive consideration of other cases in the East. The Rifian leader was also the author of one of the most resonant pieces of that discourse, which anticipated the tricontinental solidarities, in the form of the letter he sent under the title “Message of Abdelkrim to the Latin American Peoples on the Centenary of Ayacucho.”⁶ The text, which was published in numerous newspapers and cultural and political magazines throughout the continent – for example, in the newspaper *Crítica* of Buenos Aires – read as follows:

My dear brothers:

Acceding to the request of the group “Renovación” from Buenos Aires, I address all Latin Americans with a heart filled with joy, in this glorious hour in which they celebrate the centenary of the deed of arms that sealed their independence from a foreign yoke [...] The heroic Moroccan people fight with the same ideals that drove Miranda and Moreno, Bolivar and San Martin. We have always loved and admired those heroes of your peoples [...] The Spanish blood that runs in your veins is Arab blood, like that of all the Spaniards of the south of the peninsula who left Palos,

6 That was in the occasion of the centenary of the battle of Ayacucho (Peru) in 1924.

Cadiz, Seville, to show in your America the Arab soul that resurrected in the gauchos and the llaneros. (*Crítica*, 1925)

Here we find again the old Sarmiento association between Moors and gauchos, now tied on ethnic and blood bases, and also presented in virtuous terms (as an identity sustained in a historical-mythical background that can be reactivated in the present).

This field of analogies had many effects of various kinds. I will briefly mention just one of them. One of the most enthusiastic recipients of Abdelkrim's message was the Peruvian Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre. As the leader of the University Reform process in his country and subsequently on the continent, he would be the founder and leader of Peruvian *aprismo*, one of the first movements typically affiliated with the Latin American national-popular (or populist) tradition. However, in the mid-1920s, the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) was just being formed and consisted of only a few student groups. In that context, Haya de la Torre would not only show towards the Rif rebellion the expressions of sympathy and solidarity that were frequent in continental public opinion, but would also try to draw practical lessons to replicate in the political organization he had just created. The Peruvian leader was impressed by how Abdelkrim's nationalist rhetoric managed to galvanize his people. As he wrote in an article dedicated to extolling the Rif Republic, his success was due to the fact that "the immense popular masses look for traditional bonds, rummage in distant enthusiasms and unite. It is the instinct of the weak. That instinct [...] will one day have to dominate the peoples of our America" (Haya de la Torre, 1924). A couple of years later, it was the Chinese Kuomintang that attracted the attention of Haya de la Torre for its capacity to build a popular nationalist and mass movement. Such was the extent of his admiration that in numerous essays and references of the period, he publicly presented APRA as the "Latin American Kuomintang" (for example, Haya de la Torre, 1927, reproduced in Heysen, 1977: 39).

From this singular appropriation of Haya de la Torre, it is possible to extract an additional important function that Latin American political culture owes to the East and the North African popular rebellions. The case of that embryonic period of the APRA shows that the Latin American populist tradition⁷ is not so idiosyncratic and typical of the continent as is usually assumed, but that in its origins it received the impact of powerful stimuli from the global sphere of circulations of models and references that took place in the years following

7 The family of national-popular movements that includes Argentine Peronism, Brazilian Vargasismo and Mexican Cardenismo, as well as Peruvian Aprismo and other expressions from other countries.

the First World War. Phenomena from North Africa, and also from Asia, thus contributed to the formation of this deep-rooted Latin American political tradition (Bergel, 2025).

2.5 By Way of Closing: a Third-Worldism of the *Longue Durée*

The trajectory traced in this chapter has sought to elucidate a number of significant connections and processes of appropriation between Latin America and the Arab countries of North Africa (frequently invoked as part of the “Orient”). These include Sarmiento’s negative Orientalist references in formulating his influential dichotomy of civilization and barbarism; the emergence of a sphere of complicities among regions of the “Global South” enabled by the circulation of international news inaugurated with the advent of the telegraph and the modernization of the press; and the direct influence that anti-imperialist movements – such as the Moroccan struggle or the Chinese Kuomintang – exerted on the formation of a “populist,” or more precisely national-popular, political culture. Additionally, it suggests that the unique political and cultural power of the field of representations that crystallized after 1952 under the name of the Third World is best understood by situating its history in a process of *longue durée*.

In recent years, the historiography of Third Worldism and the so-called South–South connections has experienced a vigorous deployment. From intellectual and political history perspectives, the new approaches to the Third World have ceased to consider it as an objective entity, with clearly demarcated geopolitical borders, to be reconstructed as a mobile imaginary – a prism of historical ties of variable geographies, which may have included actors not necessarily located in Asia, Africa or Latin America. To quote Vijay Prashad’s (2007) well-known dictum, the Third World is better understood as a project than as a place. In this framework, some works have reconstructed the context of the emergence of the concept of “Third World,” especially in France, its country of birth (Kalter, 2016; Palieraki, 2023). Others suggest that this temporal focus is too narrow and propose a longer periodization, starting after the First World War. Jeremy Adelman and Gyan Prakash (2023) have recently edited a volume that includes this perspective. However, this extension may still be insufficient. To understand the strength of the Third World configurations of the twentieth century, it is necessary to think of them in relation to the history of colonialisms and imperialisms of long standing, and to the first manifestations of empathy and transcontinental solidarity that appeared at the end of the nineteenth century.

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A Cuban in the Ottoman Empire: the Journey of Professor Juan Miguel Dihigo “to the Old Orient”

Reinaldo M. Sánchez Porro

3.1 Introduction¹

Not only the broad Atlantic separated ‘the largest island of the West Indies’ from the realities of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, in what for us is the not-so-Near East. As it formed part of the peripheral colonial system, nineteenth-century Cuba tended to see the rest of the world through the prism of the European power centres and thus assimilated their stereotypes, a circumstance that barely changed with the establishment of the republic in the twentieth century. Very few people had travelled to the lands of the East, for which reason references to them tended to chime with the visions prevailing in London, Paris and Madrid, which were already a false mirror. The representation of Europe in the Ottoman Empire, framed in the context of the ‘Eastern Question,’ had to do with a way of relating to these lands and peoples established by colonial objectives which, in the long run, determined the actions of the imperial powers as they parcelled out the world as they saw fit. The Ottoman Empire’s contacts with the Caribbean island were also far and few between, apart from the fictionalised visit of General Ahmed Pasha, of the Information Corps of the Ottoman army, in 1897, during the War of Independence, “with the aim of determining whether some of the strategies deployed by the Spaniards could be of use for quelling the uprising” on Crete (Gómez Abascal, 2010: 5).

For this reason, the account of the travels of the legendary professor at the University of Havana, Juan Miguel Dihigo y Mestre, through the Ottoman Empire from April to May 1912, recounted in his book *Hacia el viejo Oriente* (1917), is fascinating, despite the fact that it tends to reproduce in situ the

1 Thanks to a stroke of luck – the ally of many researchers – one day in the Central Library of the University of Havana I came across this book which is an authentic treasure. I have to admit that when I opened it, I thought it might refer to a journey through the erstwhile Cuban province of Oriente, but to my immense satisfaction I discovered that *Hacia el viejo Oriente* was the revealing account of the journey that a Cuban made to the Ottoman Empire in the final stages of the post-Hamidian sultanate. With the publication of this chapter, I have fulfilled my aim of giving it a new lease of life over a century after it was first published.

typical contemporary Western vision of the East. This chapter aims to analyse how these territories were depicted in the account of the Cuban traveller, the primary source on which this chapter is based. Throughout my research, I have also consulted several secondary sources, chiefly specialist literature.

On his trip, which he made during the Italo-Turkish War (1911–1912), one of the colonial conflicts that had contributed to the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire during its definitive decline, Dihigo visited the European territories that the empire would shortly lose during the First Balkan War (1912–1913). His brief 'creole' account of the places he visited in Egypt, now occupied by the British, Palestine and the Lebanon, fragmented into Ottoman wilayahs, and Turkey of the Young Turks, is the most complete and one of its kind among the few Cuban narratives of the Near East, just before the cataclysmic First World War (1914–1918).

3.2 Havana and Cuba before the Great War

The period called the *Belle Époque* in Europe had contradictory characteristics in Cuba. Thirteen years after the end of Spanish rule and following two US interventions that had turned the presidential term of Tomás Estrada Palma (1902–1906) into a bothersome interval – the first of the supervised republic starting in 1902 – with little over two million inhabitants and still without its own currency, the government of José Miguel Gómez (1909–1913) was coming to an end. What had been a peculiar sugar plantation colony, with an academy of sciences and an elite university, opera seasons and a dire Spanish administration, had experienced a strange decolonization managed by Washington. With respect to the economy, US capital had gradually displaced British capital around 1912, a year in which there were possibly more Spaniards on the island than before its independence² (Rodríguez, 2012; Yglesia, 1980).

In Havana, with a little over 300,000 inhabitants, the lavish palace of the Centro Gallego was under construction, which would be followed some years later by that of the Centro Asturiano, but neither the Capitol nor the Presidential Palace existed yet, and the seawall (*malecón*) only covered a short stretch of coast. At the time, work was performed on the city's sewage network and paving its streets, while the island's army was modernised and the national navy was created, along with the Academies of Arts and Humanities and of

2 Cuba had 2,049,000 inhabitants in 1907 and of the 367,232 immigrants who arrived in the country between 1904 and 1913, 75 per cent were Spaniards (Centro de Estudios Demográficos, 1976: 10 and 75).

History and a national museum, but primary education had languished. The government came in for a great deal of criticism because of corrupt practices in public services concessions and two hotly contested laws authorising cock-fighting and the creation of a national lottery. By far the worst development, however, was the repression of the uprising of the Partido de los Independientes de Color (Independent Coloured Party, PIC) against the Morúa Law prohibiting ethnic parties. The army was responsible for massacring 3,000 of its alleged followers, for which it was rewarded with a banquet in its honour in the central park of Havana (Guerra, 1957).

Catalan master builders were importing Art Nouveau for their construction projects in the now cosmopolitan capital, where Syrian Lebanese, Jewish, Chinese and many other immigrant communities prospered. Gebrayel Maalouf, one of those Syrian Lebanese immigrants and the great uncle of the well-known Lebanese writer Amin Maalouf, who had amassed a fortune in Cuba, wrote to his family in the Lebanon, at the same time that Dihigo was on his travels, “complaining about the fact that he had to manage too many businesses” (Maalouf, 2004: 30). He was fortunate not to have accompanied Boutros, the brother and mainstay of the great Jalil Gibran, 10 years before, thus thwarting the chance that the family of the subsequent author of *The Prophet* had of abandoning Boston to settle in Havana (Najjar, 2004).

3.3 A University Eminence in the Colony and the Republic

Juan Miguel Dihigo (May 8, 1866–February 14, 1952), born in Havana and educated by the Jesuits at the College of Bethlehem since he was aged 11, obtained his bachelor’s degree in linguistics and philology, specialising in classical languages, from the University of Havana in 1887. After successfully defending his Ph.D. dissertation, *La lengua árabe y la historia de España*, in 1888, he was appointed Professor of Ancient Greek at the same university in 1890, subsequent to the submission of an essay on Indo-European phonology. Thenceforth until his death, he was a tenured professor of linguistics and philology, pursuing a prestigious career for 62 years. During the Cuban War of Independence (1895–1898), he participated in a conspiracy against Spain, which nearly led to the loss of his professorship. Later, during the Republican period, Dihigo held various teaching and academic positions without becoming involved in politics. As a renowned Hellenist, he took part in the jubilee of the University of Athens and in the XVI Congress of Orientalists held in the Greek capital in 1912, at which he delivered conferences on the teaching of Greek in Cuba and, specifically on April 10 of that year, on the phonetics of the vernacular of his homeland (Martínez, 1983).

Following his long-awaited visit to Greece, he wrote a letter thanking those "very hospitable people" and praising the "superior mental aptitudes of the natives," as well as the courage of the country's women, citing Cuban poets. He then left for the port of Piraeus, where he embarked on the steamship *Dacia*, belonging to a Rumanian shipping company, to begin his personal journey of discovery of the "old Orient" (Dihigo, 1917: 54–55). As coincidence would have it, while the Cuban scholar was crossing the "pleasant" Mediterranean, a group of emigrants from that region, who had embarked on a voyage in the opposite direction to pursue the American dream, drowned when the *Titanic* sank in the North Atlantic on April 15, 1912. Indeed, 52 of the 1,517 victims were Lebanese (Najjar, 2004: 118).

3.4 His Sojourn in Egypt³

While crossing this "large international lake," the professor recalled the civilizations that had flourished on its coasts and, surely with high expectations, disembarked safely from the *Dacia* in "the historical city of Alexandria," "Egypt's main commercial port." Once on dry land, "duly attended by the travel agency [Thomas] Cook, we toured the city," noting the "sharp contrast between the modern part and what could be called the exclusively Oriental quarter," according to his first writings in Egypt, dated April 16, 1912. This travel agency, founded in Peterborough (England) in 1841, had covered the Near East since 1869 and even transported British troops to the country in 1882, obtaining from the government privileges regarding navigation rights on the Nile. Praising the agency's services several times in his book, the academic tourist visited the necropolises of Chatby and Anfouchy with "Alexandrian parietal decoration that served as inspiration for its Pompeiian counterpart," the Graeco-Roman museum, "the admirable and magnificent catacomb of Kom-el Choukafah [...] a curious model and the most complete of the combination between Graeco-Roman artistic forms and religious ideas and those of the Egyptians,"⁴ and the famous and controversial Pompeiian column, "which has and still is ill-treated by tourists," plus other ruins calling to mind the time when it was founded by Alexander the Great.

3 All the references to his travels through Egypt in Dihigo (1917: 55–76).

4 Blasco Ibáñez (1924: 371) also mentioned a similar syncretism: "In the catacombs of Alexandria, it is possible to see [...] an image of Jesus engraved on the wall, with the adornments and attributes of Osiris, which demonstrates the confusion of the nascent doctrine for many of its adepts."

Yet it also prompted him to admire that “on this soil, thanks to another hero, the great Mohammed Ali, a new prosperous and rich Alexandria with over 400,000 inhabitants has emerged.” The square named after this Albanian who reformed Egypt in the first half of the nineteenth century was “adorned with the equestrian statue of the viceroy” and “can be regarded as the main centre of European life” – 90,000 Europeans resided in Alexandria at the time. “Its streets are pleasing, its pavements broad and its buildings beautiful. The modern city is elegant, whereas the old one leaves a disagreeable impression owing to the filthiness of its narrow streets.” In his view, “whoever wants to form an idea of the characteristics of these people should do so outside the Arab quarter, where the population is unmixed, its customs can be admired and its openair shops can be appreciated,” in addition to “the Easterners in its cafés breathing in a perfumed moka, without anything in their physiognomy expressing concern, more often than not asleep or squatting on a bench while smoking a chibouk or narghile.” His description also mentions “veiled women with only their eyes showing, the bottom and top part of whose veils are joined by an unsightly kohl that covers their nose, with naked feet and bangles that make their ankles shine.” The veils were not always black for “the Ethiopian women we have seen wear a white veil as if to maintain the contrast.” On the outskirts of the city, he visited “the Arab cemetery, a dismal place with an accumulation of white stones indicating that at the foot of them lie compatriots in an eternal rest,” as well as focusing his attention on the misery of the rural world he encountered on his journey:

what has most attracted my attention in this land are the Arab villages, in relation to their construction, miserable low earth huts, with no creature comforts whatsoever, very low and in which it is possible to make out a mixture of mortar and palm branches, with only one opening. (Dihigo, 1917: 58)

To his mind, it was “impossible to live in them, with their foul ambience,” nor could anyone lie down in them, before claiming “that no one lives in them, that the Arab eats and sleeps in the open air, that he makes use of his house like he does his shoes, when he has some.” He was moved to pity when observing in the villages the “state of misery in which the fellah lives his life, accustomed to it as if it were second nature to him.” In the vicinity of Alexandria, in contrast, he was of the mind that Ramleh was “a first-class resort; a place with an extraordinary level of development, being healthy and agreeable thanks to its proximity to the beach and the gardens surrounding its houses,” before commenting that it was possible to reach “Aboukir, by carriage or tram, where the eponymous

battle was fought" during Napoleon's Egyptian campaign (Sánchez, 2004). At midday, on that same date, he took the train to the capital, *al-Qāhira* or 'The Victorious.' His first impression of Cairo was that it was "a first-class city, better than many famous ones" owing to its movement and traffic:

In Cairo, it is as if one were in a different world, despite its modern embellishments. Notwithstanding the attempts of the pashas and most especially the khedive Ismail to allow European civilization to influence it, the capital, as with Constantinople, is still the Oriental city par excellence. (Dihigo, 1917: 59)

With 700,000 inhabitants, the city's population was double the size of that of Havana at the time (it is currently 10 times larger). Regarding his tour of the city, he observed that "this is the city of the mosques," before describing the main bazars "located close to the famous Mousky Street [...] in Khan Khaleel Street, the rich tapestries of the Orient and Persia; the Souk-el-Selah market [...] beyond which there are bookshops, perfume makers, goldsmiths," the narrow streets chock-a-block with "people, camels, donkeys and carts" protected "from the rays of the sun by fabrics hanging from the top of the houses." He also noted the

unaligned houses; windows with mashrabiya⁵ good for spying [...] Arabic inscriptions [...] shops in the middle of the street [...] men wearing different costumes, camels, asses, horse-drawn carts, a surprising and cacophonous concert produced by the cries of the people and the noises of the beasts. (Dihigo, 1917: 61)

He visited the citadel, built by Saladin, dominating the city and, at its entrance, "the famous [alabastrine] mosque" of Mohammed Ali, "the founder of the current dynasty" buried in the southwest corner, while remarking that "the effect that its dome and its two elegant minarets produced was awesome." But with the British occupation, which began in 1882, real power was now in the hands of the High Commissioner Lord Kitchener, implying that the authority of both the Ottomans and the viceregal dynasty, led by the khedive or viceroy Abbas Hilmi until 1914, was now nominal. The same passage addresses the elimination of the Mamluk caste by Mohammed Ali in the struggle to consolidate his

5 This type of projecting second-story window of lattice work, which he illustrates with a photo in his book, is also called 'moucharaby.'

power over Egypt (Sánchez, 2004: 113). In this respect, Dihigo (1917: 62) has the following to say:

The narrow path that the traveller takes from the city to the citadel is where the famous massacre of the Mamluks occurred in 1811, and from which, it is held, only one escaped. The Mamluk's Leap is a terrace high up, 60 feet above the ground, from where it is possible to observe Cairo as a whole, with its domes and forests of minarets.

The Cuban visitor must have felt a pang of curiosity when he took off his shoes to enter the famous mosque of al-Azhar, “also known as the Splendid which is the principal university in the Mohammedan world⁶ with 13,000 students [...] and really a small city” where “jurisprudence and theology” were studied. His account continues with the following description: “Such is the interest in the knowledge taught here in the Muslim world [...] that the nations of the Prophet have the right to specific accommodation and its students have access to the science contained in the works housed in its library,” thus suggesting the existence of a sort of pan-Islamic grant system. As to the pedagogical orientation of al-Azhar, it “is very far removed from the methods that should be applied at the present time,” for “the trivium and the quadrivium, so popular in the Middle Ages, form the backbone of the study programme at this university, the former including grammar, rhetoric and dialectics and the latter, arithmetic, music, geometry and astrology.” Nonetheless, he recognised that the courses taught there, even though they “by no means confirmed this,” are “public and free,” something that certainly was not the case in Europe. However, as a sanctuary institution, it was difficult for foreigners to gain access to it and consular credentials were required, which nonetheless did not dispel the mistrust, as illustrated by the following anecdote:

Almost immediately after entering this building with elegant minarets, it is possible to observe devout Muslims performing their ablutions in a large patio. Beyond this, under marble, granite and porphyry porticos, groups of students can be seen in very different postures: some squatting, others kneeling, repeating their lessons aloud in a monotonous, nasal tone while their swaying bodies marked each phrase, a mechanical, rhythmic movement whose purpose, according to what we were told, is to favour the effort of memorising them, with each of them performing

6 Those professing this religion do not designate themselves as such but as Muslims.

their habitual tasks without the developments around them passing totally unnoticed [...], hence the murmuring that could be heard when our presence was noticed in the sanctuary and the intervention of a number of Arabs uttering the hoarse and guttural sounds characteristic of the native language, and as our guide fully realised the difficult situation, he promptly made us cross the sanctuary. (Dihigo, 1917: 63)

The professor only had kind words for this guide and translator, an individual otherwise unknown, describing him as follows: "Our dragoman Abdul A. Said, tall, kind, intelligent, good looking and cutting an elegant figure," who led him safely through the city and the only Easterner he describes or to whom he explicitly refers in his book. All these occurrences indicate the intensity with which the professor must have experienced contact with such a different university world, 758 years older than his own.⁷

"For the sake of curiosity," the book then includes a description based on the "knowledgeable guide's" account of the centuries-old tradition of the Mach Mâl, a litter that came and went each year during the pilgrimage to Mecca, transporting, according to the version, "the carpet that will remain extended before the tomb of the Prophet throughout the year" and which gave rise to a multitudinous procession from its entrance in Cairo to "its delivery to the khedive [...] in the vicinity of the citadel."⁸ After asserting that "in this country of excavations and archaeological and historical discoveries, the museums are exceedingly interesting," he then goes on to describe the collections of the famous Museum of Cairo, "a French building of which this nation should feel proud," citing its promoters Maspero, Grebaut and Morgan and listing some of its treasures:

The best specimens of Egyptian art there correspond to the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties, for although the artists of the Twelfth Dynasty came close to them, they did not surpass them, whereas those of the Eighteenth Dynasty only built more gigantic temples and sculptured the most colossal statues but without the deftness and ardent spontaneity of their predecessors. (Dihigo, 1917: 66)

Further on, he notes the following: "Egyptian art seems to have stagnated since the time of Chephren," while calling to mind Evelio Rodríguez Lendian,

⁷ Al-Azhar was founded by the Fatimids in 970–972 and the University of Havana in 1728.

⁸ Other versions of this ceremony and its content in Abd-al-Rahman (1979: 374–375); Lane (1993: 423); Lenczowski (1967: 544–545).

a university colleague of his who was “very knowledgeable about the history of these people whose dynasties he described with brilliance and erudition,” to whom he sent a postcard depicting Ramesses II bought in the museum itself, stating that “tourists can obtain bona fide antiquities at reasonable prices.” At the entrance of the museum, he observed a funeral procession that left a “painful impression” on him:

Nothing in the Muslim priests advancing three in a row distinguished them from the common faithful; they were chanting verses from the Quran. They were followed at a short distance by others accompanied by children singing beside them. Six porters carried the corpse, carefully washed and enveloped in white fabric, which, after having been exhibited at the door of his house, now lay on a board covered with a dark cloth. Behind them, a multitude of women screamed and wailed, including at times hired mourners. (Dihigo, 1917: 67)

The author then notes:

I have not forgotten the deep impression that such a spectacle left on me, with the rhythmic swaying of the body, the singsong chanting of those who were out front, whose tone was identical to that of those who responded, the horrendous clamour of the women, some of whom were pulling their hair and slapping themselves as an extremely surprising expression of sorrow. (Dihigo, 1917: 67–68)

In the professor’s view, the pyramids of Giza, “better said of Mena,” were “the main attraction in Cairo,” while remarking that “they can be very conveniently visited by taking the electric tram or a carriage [...] leaving the traveller at the foot of the terrace [...] from which emerge the three colossuses [...] and the Mena House Hotel.” On arrival, the visitors were surrounded by “Bedouins [...] shouting and gesturing for the purpose of hawking their services to us as guides,” but to approach “the foot of the pyramids it is necessary to use a donkey or camel, for it is difficult to walk on the sand,” before explaining that “the great pyramid, the largest of the three, was built by Cheops II, a king of the Fourth Dynasty in 3733 BC, who was called Khut.”

As to practicalities, “to climb up to the top a payment of 2 shillings has to be made to the sheikh of the pyramids, as is also the case to visit its interior” – the second option being chosen by Dihigo – but “it is a very difficult inspection, requiring a guide who leads the visitor by the arm, sometimes even lifting him up in the air.” The route was incommodious because “it is necessary to

stoop [...] it is obligatory to crawl, climbing continuously over a polished and slippery surface [...] keeping one's balance thanks to [...] one's own forward momentum and someone pushing from behind." Finally, "a narrow opening leads to the vast, high burial chamber of Cheops, which the guides illuminate with torches so that it is possible to glimpse an empty sarcophagus at the back." At this point, the professor and his companion Clay could not see more because "the smoke from the torches, the dust raised practically prevented us from breathing." Consequently,

we had to make a great effort to find the entrance [...] to cope with the harassment of a mob of boys who disputed the honour of washing our hands with water from their pitchers, not because of the love of art but for the *bakshish*⁹ to which they are always aspiring and which is their favourite word. (Dihigo, 1917: 71)

After offering a brief historical summary of the other two pyramids, the author remarks that "the Sphinx is only a short walk away, 15 minutes at the most," whose most outstanding aspect is its colour "which is the same as that of the pyramids," although "its face seems to have had a lighter hue." Close by, they visited the place where "the American Archaeological School is carrying out excavations in Egypt, led by Reisner, for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and Harvard University," being "kindly received" by Mrs. Reisner and C.S. Fisher, the architect and curator of the Egyptian Section of the aforementioned museum. Curious to say the least is Dihigo's comment on "the admirable order with which the natives performed their work and the moral spirit reigning among them, who were not allowed to accept the smallest of recompense, while the archaeologists supplied the Bostonian collections."

"Since our travels through Egypt were coming to an end," they "visited the pyramid of Saqqara, that first architectural model which is interesting for its time," catching to this end the "train departing from Cairo at 8 AM for Bedrachein," followed by a donkey ride that the Cuban, now having adapted to this mode of transport, deemed "excellent." "All that is left of ancient Memphis, one of the most powerful and populated cities in Egypt, are the ruins of embankments covered with palm trees, blocks of granite and some or other completely mutilated statue." Nonetheless, on the way they had the chance to admire "two gigantic statues of Ramesses II," followed by "scattered funerary monuments of all kinds from the Old, Middle and New Kingdoms," until

⁹ *Bakshish* is an Arabic term that refers to almsgiving or tipping.

arriving at Saqqara and its discoveries, such as the eponymous great pyramid, “the oldest known monument, in whose interior there are many chambers and a labyrinth.” One of the interesting sights was the house of the scholar Mariette, who discovered many Egyptian monuments and, in 1851, the “Serapeum, which is the most important monument in Saqqara.” In this respect, he lists

the Avenue of Sphinxes, two chapels, 11 statues of Greek philosophers and the tombs of the Apis bulls, in addition to thousands of small bronze statues and other items that, by and large, are housed in the Louvre Museum in Paris.¹⁰ (Dihigo, 1917: 74)

Before concluding that “all these chapels surrounded by a high wall to which the Avenue of Sphinxes led, formed part of the Serapeum” (Dihigo, 1917: 74).

Dihigo then took the train to Cairo, arriving in Port Said 4.30 hours later, “not without first admiring the great achievement of the Suez Canal,” where he recalled a poem by “the unforgettable Merchán” (Rafael María Merchán, 1844–1905), but not addressed to Arabi Pasha or any other Egyptian personage, but to its French builder, Ferdinand de Lesseps, perhaps evoking, when observing his monument, that recently built city “which owes its existence as a whole to the canal:”

You opened a broad avenue to progress and the world then marched through it [...]. You overcame the pharaoh; you broke the Red Sea’s solid prison [...]. And the god of St Nile murmurs hymns of admiration to you [...]. You rent the planet’s tunic, in Suez you seized the golden keys from him. (Dihigo, 1917: 75)

“Allow me to conclude these lines,” the Cuban visitor writes uncompromisingly, “by affirming how poor the idea formed by the tourist is when penetrating Oriental territory.” Although as he was only passing through and thus had not had time to become better acquainted with that society, he yet again contrasted it with the Western model which was his ideal benchmark, criticising “the unhygienic quarters and the posture of the people lying on the ground or sitting for hours in front of the doors of houses and establishments, entrusting the problems of their lives to luck.” He also censured, as before, “the obstinate actions of those who ceaselessly pursue *backshish*, a sacred word, always in the mouths of those abounding in the streets of Oriental peoples,” which on

10 In keeping with the age, he does not morally condemn the transfer of archaeological pieces to another country.

arrival "is the first word the child utters to the foreigner and doubtless the last the latter will hear before abandoning this region." On April 21, in Port Said, he embarked on the steamship *Goritia*, belonging to the shipping company Austrian Lloyd, to make the short voyage to Palestine.

3.5 Pilgrimage to Palestine, before the Chaos¹¹

However, in Jaffa (Palestine), where he disembarked on the same day (21) thanks to the good offices of the aforementioned travel agency – "the trips organised by the Cook agency pose few problems, one could say none" – to him everything seemed worse: although the city seemed agreeable enough from the sea, "with its many different buildings, its cactuses and green palm trees," once on dry land, the streets were narrow, dirty and unpaved, with low houses "with rooftop terraces, which are similar to stone boxes surrounded by a wall [...], an evident sign that one is in a country in which the harem laws are still strictly observed." "What a contrast there is between Egypt and Palestine," for "whereas in the former civilization makes headway to attract tourists, in the latter everything has remained unchanged, as if maintaining the status quo were the highest aim," a sentence that, in light of the subsequent developments, would sound increasingly more controversial. Although the cliché of the immutable East has been discredited for quite some time, it was a constant among Orientalists (Hallet, 1969).

Despite being under the control of the Turks, changes had already been brought about in Palestine. European Jews, followers of Theodor Herzl, had already held ten Zionist congresses in cities on the Old Continent, to plan the colonization of that territory to reconvert it into Israel under the protection of some or other power. And even without waiting for that protective sponsor, in 1882 some had founded the agricultural colonies of Petah Tikva and Rishon Le-Zion, among others, with a total of 24,000 immigrants and, after 1905, the 'practical Zionists' of the second *aliyah* or migration had given rise to new colonies, like those in Daleika and Um-Juni, which subsequently became the Kineret farm and the Degania kibbutz in 1909. In that year, the sixty dwellings of the 'Ajuzat Bait' project, a sort of small Hebrew quarter to the north of Jaffa, had already become to be known as Tel Aviv – the future metropolis of Israel – which by 1914 had 1,500 inhabitants, whereas Jaffa had 40,000¹² (Pappé, 2009:

11 All the references to his travels through Palestine in Dihigo (1917: 76–98).

12 Following the war of 1948, the change was complete. According to the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé (2009: 146), between May and June, "when Jaffa fell, its 50,000 inhabitants

146–147). Throughout the territory, the Jewish community or Yishuv, totalling 85,000 members, had its own schools, including a technical and art school, plus the *Hashomer*, a defence organization for protecting its settlements (Ben Ami & Medin, 1981: 36–38; Kresel, 1951: 112–118).

Dihigo noted that “Jaffa is the Joppe of the Scriptures, a name deriving from Japheh, which means ‘beautiful,’” and also that, apart from the Arabs, “the population is a mixture of Armenians, Greeks and Jews.” “Despite the predominance of Ottoman elements,” it was also possible to see

there those who are not and, together with them, the Europeans who moved by an interest in civilising the place make their beneficial influence felt; this is owing to the preponderance of their trade, their roadstead being one of the most important in the Levant. (Dihigo, 1917: 77)

In this connection, the author then goes on to highlight “the initiatives in favour of the development of public education in the hands of [Christian] religious congregations” of different denominations, “which tend to elevate the minds of a backward race, if intelligent to an extreme, forming their feelings with healthy and elevated ideas,” which, needless to say, are his own. He clarifies that “each rite and each religion has its respective school,” while “in Jaffa there are two German hospitals and a school, two schools and a hospital run by the Church Missionary Society, a girls’ boarding school and an American orphanage.” In his view:

Thanks to these generous souls, the social status of these people is slowly improving, for it is not difficult to observe for whoever travels through Syria or Palestine the huge lack of concern of the Turkish government for the instruction and education of the people, which has not made it obligatory, showing very little interest in whether or not its citizens know how to read and write. A fabulous way of preparing a people for becoming involved in politics! (Dihigo, 1917: 77)

The author then concludes, “What a blemish the permanence of this race in Europe is!” For Dihigo, progress and civilization were equivalent not only to the cessation of Ottoman sovereignty, but also to European control. It was the

were expelled [...] the people were literally forced to cast themselves into the sea when the Jewish troops fired over the heads of the multitude.” With 220,000 inhabitants at the time, it absorbed Jaffa, repopulating it with Hebrews, whereas today ‘Tel Aviv-Yafo’ has more than 4 million inhabitants.

prevailing mindset of the period when even such a progressive man as the educator Enrique José Varona who, although he cautioned against the danger of imperial absorption in his conference, "Imperialism and sociology," delivered at the University of Havana in 1905, saw the British as "the most distinguished and fortunate administrators of whom any nation would be proud," for their governors "of happy memory" like, for example, "Sir Alfred Milner whose management of Egypt is marvellous" (Fernández de Castro, 1943: 112).

In the afternoon of April 22, the Cuban intellectual took the train to Jerusalem, "covering the 54 miles in 3.45 hours" over plains, "[which were] cultivated and in which orange and lemon groves appeared as soon as one leaves Jaffa": "The train headed in a south-easterly direction over Sharon, a splendid plain stretching to the foot of the mountains of Judea." During the trip, "it is impossible to see trees, paths or terrain features at a distance, only the verdure of the fields sprinkled with flowers" and "after the train has passed Yazur, Bane, Barach and Belo Dodjan, it stops at the first station called Lida, 20 km from Jaffa," where he recalled the legend according to which "it is here that the cradle of St George, the patron saint of the British, was rocked, eight minutes away from 'Ramleh, ancient Arimathea.'" In this respect, he mentions "the convent of the Franciscans, where Bonaparte and his staff lodged during the expedition to Syria, a place that would subsequently become the target of acts of vandalism driven by loathing," but, in this case, for the invaders.

The author then continues with his description of the itinerary: "From Ramleh one goes to Deir Aban," but "the departure from Ramleh offers the traveller the first undulations of the mountains of Judea," circumventing deep precipices as the train climbs "those steep slopes." For Dihigo, who clearly enjoyed this part of the trip, all the foregoing paled in comparison "when reaching the first peaks from which, looking back, one can admire, in the distance, the most splendid landscape" and "the plain of Sharon as a whole from Gaza to Caesarea" which "heaves into view adorned by the sea, while the valley of Jeremiah stretches away to the north." In light of his following remarks, it would seem that, en route, the professor was intent on recalling his biblical knowledge:

after Deir Aban comes Bittir, a Canaanite city which Joshua would conquer and which is a sort of prelude to Jerusalem, a city which Targum Onkelos and Flavius Josephus identified as ancient Salem, the Urusalem before the arrival of the Israelites. (Dihigo, 1917: 80)

With the historical city drawing closer, the author devotes a long paragraph to the progressive aridness:

On approaching Jerusalem, the aspect of the country changes more; nature becomes altered, losing the aforementioned exuberance and making it seem as if one were entering a desert, with the mountain peaks now at a greater distance and the lie of the land becoming dishearteningly monotonous. Deeper valleys appear, with dry torrents like grey strips and a lack of nature's most beautiful adornments – trees, grass and moss – offering only stark, barren and dry rock. (Dihigo, 1917: 81)

On April 24, the professor arrived at the biblical city which had an “excellent effect” on him, despite the fact that “the noise and disorder at the station are more intense than in Europe,” while discovering that “the coachmen, the luggage porters, the employees of agencies and hotels, and postcard sellers compete with one another for clients with deafening cries.” Yet “there are new buildings that contrast with the old ones,” although “the arid terrain becomes increasingly more evident, as with the minarets from which the muezzin calls the Mohammedans to prayer at certain times of the day.” After describing the Jaffa Gate, the entrance to the walled old city, “with its appearance of an ancient city, whose steep, badly paved narrow streets make walking difficult, both solitary and evoking a profound sadness,” he remarks,

the main streets are those of David, which runs from the Jaffa Gate to Haram, that of the Gate of the Column between the Damascus Gate to its juncture with that of the Prophet David's Gate, that of the Christian Quarter running from that of David towards the west of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Via Dolorosa, which starts in the Serai and ends to the east of the Holy Sepulchre. (Dihigo, 1917: 82)

Yet he admits that “everything in this region is especially appealing to the visitor,” for “it contrasts with what one usually sees in other civilisations and the greater that contrast, the greater the interest.” However, he then complains about the lack of comfort and the horrible street lighting that makes “the Holy City, al Quds,” calling Jerusalem by its Arab name, “so dark and whose small walled area can be toured in an hour,” albeit claiming that “the streets that Jesus walked were three times wider.” He then describes his visit to the American colony “for the conference of Professor McCurdy of Toronto University and the director of the Palestinian Archaeological School,” where he highlights “the modern part in which it is possible to see the influence of great civilizations,” before describing the old city divided into one Jewish, one Muslim – which he always calls “Mohammedan” – and two Christian quarters. Apart from the Haram al-Sharif or esplanade of the mosques, the “magnificent mosque

of Omar" and the Holy Sepulchre, in his opinion "there is little in the way of artistic aspects that an intelligent tourist can discover." The professor criticises the difficult coexistence between "the many religious congregations that have established themselves in Jerusalem: the Greek Church, Syrians, Armenians, Copts, Abyssinians, Latins and Protestants." Their bitter rivalry and the struggle between these different Christian confessions for the control of portions of space and "on the occasion of the ceremony of the Holy Fire" within the Holy Sepulchre, are to his mind a "shameful spectacle," which "gives rise to such scandalous behaviour and disrespectful acts that the Turkish soldiers have to intervene to restore order, at the expense of the sacrifice" of the "victims of Muslim bayonets," which, he claims, stain the walls with "the blood and grey matter of the fallen." In his own words, this sanctuary

arouses a deep feeling of respect [...] for it is the place where millions of people, driven by pure faith, have worshipped it in the certainty that the Lord was sacrificed there, that this was the place where his body lay and where his resurrection was revealed. (Dihigo, 1917: 84)

Nevertheless, "as soon as the traveller reaches the entrance, he is surrounded by rosary and relic sellers, a motley collection of paupers and an always present Turkish guard" to maintain order. According to him, the architecture of the Holy Sepulchre "is a combination of the Romanesque style [...] and the Saracen ogive [...] its exterior has some very notable elements, but its interior has been much spoilt by the adornments they have added," which "do not make a pleasing impression." As to "the Stone of Unction covering the rock on which the body of Christ lay," according to the tradition, "and even the sepulchre itself," by his reckoning "they are in benighted bad taste, without any other interest for the researcher than the religious idea these objects represent."

Walking down the Via Dolorosa or Road to Calvary "with utmost respect and interest," he received a "painful shock" when coming across "Mohammedans sitting" on the via that Jesus trod, plus "soldiers, girding swords, revealing the empire of force." Nonetheless, this seems to have been compensated by "new buildings that reveal the influence of another superior nation," in his own words. Be that as it may, he was incapable of denying the quality of that other civilization with which he was becoming acquainted: "How many beautiful things there are to admire wherever one turns," he admits when seeing "the famous mosque of the Rock" – which is not really a mosque – occupying "the large square forming a sort of atrium," that is, the esplanade. "The temple is octagonal, with an also octagonal lantern which, with windows on each of its eight sides, completes the building," while "the lantern is covered with a dome

crowned by a vane sustaining a half-moon." The exterior walls are covered with "different coloured bricks with arabesques and verses of the Quran engraved on them in gold letters, which are very impressive," while in its interior "the delicate rays of light passing through those beautiful stained-glass windows are very uplifting for the spirit." Dihigo states that "he is incapable of putting the emotions that have overwhelmed him into words." However, he finds the necessary inspiration to remark, "As has been written, authentic Oriental light is necessary for the mosque to appear in that way at a mysterious midday."

The Cuban intellectual admired "the columns of this elegant temple, smooth like the capitals, exquisitely made, some ancient green, others dark violet and others of mottled granite," which "greatly enhance the monument." Before explaining that "in the middle of this place and surrounded by railings there is the sacred rock, so venerated by Muslims and which is no more than the peak of Mount Moriah," while also referring to the religious legends about "the rock's attempt to fly after the Prophet and others relating to the footprint of Mohammed [...] manifestations that the people as a whole fervently embrace." He then visited the mosque of al-Aqsa, "a beautiful temple whose portico features seven arches corresponding to the seven ships of – what he calls – the Church," followed by the "Gardens of Gethsemani, the place that Jesus frequented so often with his disciples." In this last place, he comments,

the interference of the European monarchs can be observed at each step, each in keeping with his own beliefs, making a modest effort in favour of his religious ideas, which is the reason why their portraits are to be found hanging in the house facing the gardens.

However, without observing that, it was a presence that also represented very earthly ambitions. According to Dihigo, "this city offers both Christians and those who are not so many interesting places that it is impossible to list them all," but "I must mention the Turkish citadel dominated by the Christian towers of David, in which Herod the Great once resided."

Lastly, when referring to "the Weeping Wall of the Jews, a place where these congregate to pray and to wail especially on the eve of Saturday," he describes the "enormous limestone blocks, with a rough surface forming tables," explaining that,

People congregate here on both sides of the wall, standing or seated, old men wearing black turbans and filthy cloths, old women enveloped by large shawls that cover their heads and backs, some merely in a contemplative attitude, others with a psalter or some other book in their hands,

murmuring one lamentation after another, which emerges from their lips while gently swaying their bodies. (Dihigo, 1917: 93)

The professor understood "the exclamations of pain of this race that wanders the world without a homeland," citing the poems of Lorenzo Luaces and Ramón Zambrana about the loss of Jerusalem and the uprooting of the Jews.

Little could he imagine that, in a few years, with the British Mandate based on the Balfour Declaration, the Zionist project would be imposed on the territory of the Palestinian Arab people with the creation of Israel. An initiative that his son, the diplomat Ernesto Dihigo, was dead against and who, in the name of Cuba, cast the only Latin American vote against the division of Palestine at the United Nations in 1947 (Sánchez, 2004: 182–189). Finally, during his visit to the Church of the Holy Nativity in Bethlehem, "where they say Jesus was born," he yet again mentions the rivalry between the Christian denominations "which requires Muslim intervention to keep the peace." After bidding farewell to the three times holy city, he embarked in Jaffa "to continue my trip and to fulfil the mission with which my government has entrusted me."

3.6 Lebanon, Country of Cedars and Universities¹³

The aim of visiting this territory had to do with the need for "performing a study on the organization of the great university that the Jesuits run in Beirut." Arriving in this city, "which the Greeks and Romans called Berytus," by sea on April 29, he got the impression that it was "very commercially developed and very prosperous," yet again contrasting "its new part and its ancient part," the latter with "winding and uneven streets," "without pavements" and not that clean, whereas in the former they were "wide and lit with gas" and with electric trams. The professor notes that "Beirut is the capital of the wilayah or district, under a [Ottoman] wali or governor general" which stretches "from Orontes to Jaffa, without including the Lebanon, which forms an independent organization under the rule of a Christian governor." At the time, this was Youssef Franco Pasha and since 1860 Mount Lebanon, inhabited by Maronites to the north and Druzes to the south, had formed a unit independent from Beirut, a city that in 1888 was placed at the head of its own coastal wilayah, which included Acre, Tripoli, Latakia and Nablus (Sánchez, 2001: 71). Dihigo "spent some delightful days in Beirut," which was inhabited by "Christians belonging

13 The description of the trip to the Lebanon in Dihigo (1917: 98–107).

to several sects," "Mohammedans" and Jews, before explaining that "following the massacre of 1860 many Christians settled there, initiating a period of prosperity in Beirut which surpassed that of the past." A century later, Amin Maalouf would agree that

the massacres of 1860 had been conducive to the flourishing of the city. Many people who hitherto had been indolently inhabiting their mountain villages, believing they were safe there from the ferocity of the world, were rudely awoken by those events. The most adventurous decided to go abroad [...] the less adventurous were content to leave their villages for the port city. (Maalouf, 2004: 88)

In the words of Dihigo, "just as the houses are not all built in the European style, so too are the customs semi-European and above all French, the influence of that country being very great here." Indeed, French companies supplied the gas (1888) and had built the port (1894) and the railway to Damascus (1895). He adds that "the French lay mission has primary and secondary schools that contribute to improving the conditions of the people whose government is unconcerned about the education of the citizenry." According to Hitti (1967: 448), by then the French must have had some 500 schools in Lebanon-Syria-Palestine, representing 20 congregations, with around 50,000 pupils. Dihigo seems to pre-empt the distribution when suggesting that "Palestine and Syria would be great countries if they were ruled by other governments," an interesting statement eight years before the French Mandate for Lebanon. This is followed by a description of the Syrian Protestant College, established by the Presbyterians of the United States (called the American University of Beirut since 1920) in 1866 and run by Howard S. Bliss. The teaching institution had "departments of Arabic literature, mathematics, natural sciences, modern languages, commerce, moral science, archaeology, biblical literature, medicine, surgery, pharmacology" and a nursing school, as well as "superb buildings" and "an excellent observatory."

Just next door, Dihigo – educated by Jesuits – visited his main objective: "the most famous St Joseph University, run by Jesuits and extraordinarily successful," with great prestige and achievements, which gave it the "very justified renown that it enjoys." He mentions that higher education is also offered here, but limited to theology, philosophy, medicine and pharmacology and that the "oriental faculty is restricted to the teaching of languages and Oriental literatures which open horizons for the country's young people." As a linguist, he was interested in the obligatory courses of "classical Arabic, Syriac, Hebrew, Oriental history and geography and Oriental archaeology" and the optional

ones of "dialectal Arabic, Coptic and Graeco-Roman antiquities." "The Oriental Faculty has its own bulletin, *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale*, containing a wonderful collection of articles on which their authors have lavished their profound knowledge," showing a photo of the journal *Al-Machriq*, "run by the professors at St Joseph University of Beirut," plus others of the two universities and "Luis Ronzenvalle, professor of Arabic at St Joseph University, Beirut."

In addition to "very knowledgeable professors and a well-stocked library," he observes that the university's "Faculty of Medicine has the wherewithal for developing its subjects in keeping with scientific progress," offering courses of "physics, chemistry, natural and medical history, anatomy, physiology, medical subject matter, therapeutics, internal and external pathology and medical and surgical clinical pathology, childbirth, surgical medicine and hygiene," in which doctors were trained in three years. "The hospital and the maternity hospital also play their role in university education," he remarks, before concluding that "I will take it upon myself to inform the government of all this." Despite the visitor's interest in special secondary education which "together with French and the modern languages useful to the country, includes bookkeeping, the general principles of commercial law, history, geography, mathematics and philosophy," he claims that, as he could not obtain permission to visit the state schools, "I am incapable of offering an idea of their organization."

Dihigo recounts that, after touring the city, he made "several trips, the first to Nahr-el-Kelb,"¹⁴ a stream that reaches the sea 15 km to the north of Beirut, next to a narrow defile, a place of historical ambushes and battles where the conquerors left reminders of their deeds. There were Roman inscriptions, Egyptian sculptures "of Ptah, the god of Memphis, another of Ra, the sun god, a third recalling the expeditions of Ramesses II," plus Assyrian ones that "have not weathered well the passing of time," although "it is still possible to read the names of Assur-resh-ishi, Tiglath Pileser, Shalmaneser and Sennacherib." During the return journey, he admired "the beauty of Mount Lebanon" and, at the top, "the most exquisite landscape:" to the right "the rugged and superb gorge of Wady Hummâna," "down below the promontory of Beirut, with its white houses" and in the distance "the wide blue Mediterranean."

The author also visited the "important and famous" ruins of Baalbek, making the most of the railway between Beirut and Damascus, which "crosses two mountain chains, the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon," until approaching Baalbek, in the intermediate valley of Bekaa, to see "one of the great wonders of the world [...] the very centre of the cult of Baal." Once there, he remembered

14 A river located between Beirut and Byblos, whose Arab name means 'river of the dog.'

Professor Robertson of Columbia University who, in Athens, had praised the place's splendid artworks, when admiring "the Great Temple and the Temple of the Sun", which "rises up majestically before the tourist" while, amazed, asking himself how "those gigantic limestone blocks weighing more than 1,000 tons" could have been lifted and "placed on high." These monumental works "have been restored after a fashion by the German emperor, after the sultan had given his archaeologists permission to perform the necessary work," with the risk that "the allure of those ruins might be lost, for in that state of destruction they tell the world more than the changes made for the sole purpose of making them look more impressive." After his agreeable week in Lebanon, on May 6, Dihigo continued on his way to the political centre of the Ottoman Empire.

3.7 Discovering the Heart of the Empire¹⁵

In Beirut, Dihigo embarked on the steamship *Niger*, belonging to the Messagerie Maritime, for the Turkish port of Smyrna or Izmir, but a colonial war got in his way, and it was necessary to avoid unnecessary problems. Italy had been attacking the 'Turks' for months, after an ultimatum and the declaration of war on September 30, 1911, with the aim of seizing Libya on the North African coast. After the conflict had spread to the Eastern Mediterranean, the government in Rome ordered the bombing of Beirut on February 23, 1912 – the book includes a photo of the *Avn Allah* sunk by an Italian squadron deployed there – in addition to several fortifications in the Dardanelles on April 18. After passing Cyprus on May 7, the *Niger* arrived at Rhodes two days after the invaders had occupied it, that is, on May 8, the date on which Dihigo turned 46, while the Italians seized the islands of the Dodecanese. "The Italo-Turkish War has caused many an inconvenience," the professor writes in his peculiar way. As it was thus impossible to reach Istanbul directly by sea, he decided to disembark in Smyrna, "it being impossible to enter the port until late in the afternoon because of the large quantity of mines that had been laid which made navigation dangerous." Nevertheless, "after many formalities [...] the Turkish government authorised the entry" with misgivings and great danger, since the night before "a ship flying the American flag had exploded after hitting a mine, with the death of many passengers." The passengers were fearful as the ship attempted to reach the coast amidst the furious waves:

15 The description of the trip to Constantinople in Dihigo (1917: 107–112).

The calmness of those skilful boatmen who braved the danger without blinking an eyelid, saved us from death and, after continually battling the elements, we reached the dock [...] crestfallen and with our clothes wet and salty and shivering in the low temperature [but alive].

The city, set in a beautiful bay, "occupying the mountain slopes," made an "excellent impression" on him, for perhaps it reminded him of his native city, for "it is the capital of the wilayah of Aidin, with a population as large as that of Havana, a major trade centre for tapestries, figs and opium." The city had 250,000 inhabitants at the time, half of whom were Greek. Although for Dihigo "Oriental life is externalised there without changes," there was "much movement" and "its streets, through which many people and modes of transport flow, are well kept and clean." A visible difference was that 'the modern part has no elements that show foreign influence'. He visited the Latin churches¹⁶ close to the port, St Polycarp of the Capuchins and St Mary of the Franciscans, plus "the ruins of a Byzantine castle," surely in Kadifekale, Mount Pagos, which, as is currently claimed, was built by Alexander the Great. In 1901, the sultan Abdul Hamid donated a clock tower to the city, which became a typical element of the urban landscape. Most of Smyrna was destroyed ten years later during the Graeco-Turkish War in a fire that raged from September 14 to 15, 1922, while the Greeks were expelled. As before, it is evident that much of what the Cuban traveller saw on his trip would soon undergo a radical transformation, thus becoming a mere memory.

Making a digression, Dihigo writes that "the closure of the Dardanelles was a huge setback for me, as anxious as I was to reach Paris and to fulfil the last part of the mission with which the Secretariat of Public Education had entrusted me." Regrettably, neither does he elaborate on that official government mission, nor can it be inferred that, on his return, he must have reported on the state of education in the region and perhaps the possibility of sharing experiences. He then embarked on another voyage "with great unease, leaving behind us the great dangers that the fury of the people had posed for us," for "a port on the Turkish coast called Dedeagâch," from where he took a train to the capital of the Ottoman Empire. That small town in Western Thrace would soon change hands and even its name, for it was annexed by Bulgaria between 1915 and 1918, before ultimately forming part of Greece under the name of Alexandroupolis. Yet for the professor "Dedeagâch is a very poor locality and, to my mind, bereft of all creature comforts for the traveller," where he stayed at

16 The author is referring here to those of the Catholic cult.

a “medium-sized” hotel before catching the direct train to “Constantinople.”¹⁷ As to the journey, he comments enthusiastically that “the second-class wagons are magnificent in Turkey, as they generally are in Europe, and differ little from the first-class ones.”

Among so many satisfactory moments, however, there were also bad memories, like, for instance, “the foreigner travelling through Turkey is the victim of many annoyances resulting from extreme distrust,” because “it is impossible to take a step without someone demanding documents proving one’s identity, from whence one has come, where one is heading, where one is lodged.” But in his case, there was an aggravating factor, for his passport had been issued by the Cuban legation in Rome. On arrival in Istanbul in the early hours of the morning, “a Turkish policeman woke us up to ask us for our documents [...] but after noting that it had been issued by our ministry in Rome” and had the word ‘Italy’ printed on it, an enemy country, he retained the document. Again in uncertain terrain, he finally understood that it was his duty to “ask the traveller for money” and

I did not for a moment hesitate to give him the sum he had demanded from me because, in view of the agitation between Turks and Italians, the danger was plain to see, without forgetting that in Jaffa and Beirut, I had been mistaken for an Italian subject.

Indeed, the Cuban linguist’s experiences during his trip were very varied.

Once in historical Constantinople, he of course visited the superb “mosque of St Sophia,” “an architectural monument,” among other famous mosques in the city, as well as a museum of antiquities, “the tomb of Mohammed II, the convent of the Howling Dervishes and the obelisk of Theodosius,” to which should be added the domed bazar and the ancient Hippodrome. In his book, he observes that the city is “built on seven small hills” and “surrounded by triple walls,” dilapidated tokens of its power in other times. For him, “it is the Oriental city par excellence,” like Cairo, but certainly unique “because of the combination of Oriental and Western peoples,” because of the “merging of the remains of a classical past with the tumult of the present.” In that distant past, it had an extremely cosmopolitan population in the region of 1,000,000 inhabitants, 15 per cent of whom were foreigners, 30 per cent Greek and 15 per cent Armenians and Jews, which soon afterwards led to split loyalties with the outbreak of the Great War. In the postwar period, deportations and population

17 Constantinople is the Graeco-Roman name for modern-day Istanbul.

exchanges with Greece reduced the number of inhabitants in Istanbul to 700,000 (1927), two-thirds of whom were Muslims (Kasaba & Keyder, 2008: 506).

In the professor's view, the great city was "a confusing labyrinth of strange and narrow streets [...] with palaces in ruins, churches, and under the feet of the visitor lie unexplored labyrinths including passageways, prisons and cisterns forming part of the ancient Greek city." Built around the sixth century, these giant underground deposits supplied the Byzantine palaces with water from the surrounding forests. In a final surprising comparison between the city on the Bosphorus and the most Caribbean Cuban city, "the layout of its streets reminds me of that of the city of Santiago de Cuba, in Oriente, which is also very irregular." In a final assessment, he refers to "the Greeks as eternal enemies of the Turks" and the "horrible despotism of the Ottoman yoke." This was a traditional contrast in the Cuban imaginary throughout the nineteenth century, which led to the exile of the poet José María Heredia after using as an example for Cuba's struggle against Spain that of the Greeks against the Turks, in his poem "A la insurrección de la Grecia" (1823). Dihigo then says no more about his travels through the Eastern Mediterranean.

3.8 Towards the Collapse of the Worlds¹⁸

"When my time in Constantinople came to an end" – the author subsequently wrote from Berlin, on May 20, as the guest of his friend Gonzalo de Quesada, the Cuban ambassador there – passing through Sofia, he took a train "to Vienna, via Belgrade, thus crossing the Balkan states." He was not to know that, five months later, in October, Bulgaria and Montenegro, followed by Serbia and Greece, would declare war on the Ottoman Empire, turning those "pleasant landscapes," which he was now observing from the Orient Express, the train that Agatha Christie would later convert into a legend, into the battlefields of the First Balkan War. Yet always with the landscape of Cuba in his mind's eye, like when faced with those splendid Balkans, he admits that "the valleys of Yumurí and Viñales are not the only ones where nature has expressed the most exquisite concept of beauty." Unfortunately, that May 20 coincided with the uprising of the Independent Coloured Party, whose members would be massacred when Dihigo was still in Europe, in what was the most heinous racial crime of the young republic.

18 The last section of the book corresponds to Dihigo (1917: 112–125).

It was in those Balkan lands and cities, such as Macedonia and Salonica, which would soon cease to form part of the Ottoman Empire, that the unexpected constitutionalist revolution that prevailed over the sultan Abdul Hamid broke out. It was not an easy task to make political predictions about the fate of the Ottoman Empire, for which, as the 'Eastern Question', the powers were competing. It would have been unfair to ask the recently arrived Cuban linguist such a question, when visitors like Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, who had stayed there much longer and was therefore much more acquainted with the situation, had opined only six months before that revolution broke out that "it is useless to dream of reforms and revolutions: Turkey could disappear but change [...] never! It can only be as it is and will thus live or perish" (Blasco Ibáñez, 1916: 196). Together with the wave of nationalisms in the region, nor was the overestimation of Western culture that exceptional even in the region itself, as Edward Said (1990: 379) notes: "When in 1936 Taha Hussein remarked that the modern Arab question was European and not Eastern, he did no more than reflect the opinion of the Egyptian cultural elite, of which he himself was a distinguished member." It would be hard to cast doubt on the nationalism of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who in about 1908 stated, "We should change our Oriental image and advance towards Western civilization" (Atatürk Research Center, 2001: 21).

3.9 A Few Closing Remarks

The Cuban professor had the opportunity to travel through three empires and a peninsula that were destined to be blown apart, substantially altering the political geography of the Near East, the Balkans, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Germany of the Kaiser. Once in Paris, he could perceive the deep resentment to which the pernicious European nationalisms had given rise, dividing and opposing the continent and availing themselves of the image of historical enemies promoted by the press, school education and propaganda to elaborate an organised lie. Hence, the final words of his book are: "The tense relations that can be currently perceived between France and Germany cloud the horizon of happiness, and only expressions of courage and resolution in the face of the storm that may break can be heard."

In his own personal circumstances, Juan Miguel Dihigo bequeathed us an unparalleled account of his vision of the 'old Orient', inherent to his time, status and reference framework, with special emphasis on the state of the region's education centres and, in particular, its universities. The professor had that rare stroke of luck, which very few Cubans must have shared, to visit an eastern

world that would be shattered two years later with the outbreak of the First World War and which would be recomposed at the discretion of England and France on the bases of the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 aimed at parcelling out the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

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Rodolfo Gil Benumeya and Carlos de Baraibar: Two Spaniards in the Rapprochement between Spanish America and the Arab Islamic World

Juan José Vagni

The reconstruction and visibilization of the cultural exchanges and the transnational activities between the Arab world and Latin America is still a broadly pending task in the academic world that calls for attention to certain actors who had previously been neglected, forgotten, or even questioned. In this regard, two singular figures emerge from Spain: Rodolfo Gil Torres Benumeya and Carlos de Baraibar, both of whom were highly influential in the thought, action, literature, and politics of the regions under consideration during the first half of the twentieth century. These journalists, who prove to be fundamental to understanding the Arab-Latin American rapprochement under Spanish mediation, played a significant role as actors, witnesses, and interpreters of the Maghrebi and Middle Eastern realities, with public lives which comprised journalism, espionage, the academic world, cultural diplomacy, and even political and propagandist action. In this research, I propose a contrasting reading of their biographies that will enable us to see not only the persistence of discourse with multiple adaptations throughout time, diverse circumstances, and scenarios, but also the different responses they presented to the position adopted by Spain regarding the colonial event and the Arab diaspora in the Americas.

Rodolfo Gil Benumeya¹ was a renowned Spanish writer and journalist with an extensive public life beginning in the early 1920s. His personal, intellectual, and political life is not exempt from contradictions. In his youth, he studied the Arab culture, grew close to the Andalusian and Sephardic ideals, and was involved in several Africanist publications. In that context, he adopted the last name “Benumeya” in an effort to reclaim the alleged Omayyad roots of his maternal family (González Alcantud, 1996; López Enamorado, 1998).

During the Republican period, he was involved in diverse and varied collaborative tasks for the colonial authorities, including espionage. At the

1 Onwards, all references will be done using only “Gil Benumeya,” the name which he was best known as and that he used in most of his publications.

same time, he developed a strong relationship with the Moroccan nationalists. In 1932, he was involved in the establishment of the *Asociación Hispano Islámica* (Hispano-Islamic Association) in Madrid, one of the earliest institutions dedicated to promoting collaboration between Spain and the Muslim world. The creation of this institution, of which Gil Benumeya was appointed undersecretary, was promoted by the Syrian Lebanese emir Shakib Arslan and the Moroccan nationalists Abdeslam Bennuna, Allal al-Fassi, Ahmed Balafrej, and Abdelkhalek Torres, among others. Gil Benumeya's closeness to the Andalusians is evident in these formative years, and he shared with them many of his reflections, especially with Blas Infante, the ideologist behind the new Andalusia (Gil Grimau, 2003).

After the 1936 coup d'état, Gil Benumeya worked for different publications and in educational, cultural and diplomatic institutions established by the Franco regime.² Beyond these apparent fluctuations, however, he was constantly concerned with keeping an open dialogue between the Ibero-American and Arab worlds, considering Spain and the Protectorate in Morocco as the central connecting node (Vagni, 2016a, 2016b). His prolific career includes multiple articles and books which showcase his extensive connections with representatives of political factions and cultural movements from different latitudes, such as Pan-Islamism, Arab Nationalism, Moroccan Nationalism, and the dominant narratives of the Arab immigrants in the New World.

Similarly, Carlos de Baraibar Espondaburu was a complex and multifaceted character whose personal and public life achievements spanned three continents. He played a remarkable role as a man of thought and action in the political and journalistic scene in twentieth-century Spain, and his influence expanded beyond the peninsular borders (Vagni, 2019).

In the 1930s, he combined his journalism career with various political activities. In April 1933, Francisco Largo Caballero appointed de Baraibar Espondaburu as the general director of labour. Two years later, he became one of the founders of the weekly newspaper *Semanario Claridad*. After the military uprising, he was appointed director at Telefónica, the information service, and served as undersecretary at the Ministry of War, under Francisco Largo Caballero's government from February to May 1937 (Fundación Pablo Iglesias, n.d.; Auñamendi Eusko Entziklopedia, n.d.). For the remainder of the

2 His relationship with the Franco regime was ambivalent. At the *Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica* (Documentation Centre of Historical Memory), he is registered in the Socio-Political Section (Sección Político-Social, 1937). However, in 1962, his loyalty to the regime was compromised following the arrest and prosecution of his brother-in-law, Julián Grimau, the leader of the Communist Party in Spain.

Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), Baraibar continued his journalistic career as the director of the socialist newspaper *Adelante*, an agency of the Valencian Provincial Federation (ABC, 1937), and later at the *Timón de Barcelona*, a magazine founded by the anarchist leader Diego Abad de Santillán.

Once the conflict was over, Baraibar was prosecuted by the new regime. His name was included in the case for political accountability filed against the leading Republican authorities in late August 1939.³ He went into exile and arrived in Chile in October 1939,⁴ where his prolific and extensive journalistic and political activities continued expanding to the Southern Cone. Towards the end of 1939, he took part in the new release of the anarchist magazine *Timón – Síntesis de Orientación Político Social*, published in Buenos Aires by Diego Abad de Santillán (Di Salvo & Minguzzi, 2018). In 1941, Baraibar left the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) and became actively involved in multiple mass media outlets of Basque immigrants and members of the resistance against Franco in Chile.

A detailed look at the biographies of both writers will allow us to identify similarities in their actions and thoughts. All along their unique journeys, Gil Benumeya and Baraibar were greatly influenced by the historical context and a largely shared agenda. The following pages will explore aspects such as their roles as cultural mediators, the initial actions taken within the context of Spanish colonial politics in Morocco, their involvement in the heart of Arab politics in Egypt, their ideas about the articulating role of Spain, and their relationships with Arab immigrants in America.

This interconnectedness makes them even more relevant to understanding the political and ideological tensions shared by the Arab and Latin American societies during the first half of the twentieth century. They acted as a “rhizomatic network” or “transcontinental alliance” (Anderson, 2008: 10, 30), which included nodes or reference points between resistance movements and schools of thought that worked simultaneously (Bergel, 2015). In this context, they both questioned the Eurocentric colonial model and made “the imperial

3 Baraibar was prosecuted alongside notable figures such as Manuel Azaña, Augusto Barcia Trelles, José Giral, Santiago Casares Quiroga, Marcelino Domingo, and his partner Luis de Araquistáin. Furthermore, the *Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica* (Documentation Centre of Historical Memory) in Salamanca holds records under his name in the Social Political Section from the National Delegation of Documentation Services, an agency of the Presidency of the Government (1937–1977).

4 Baraibar is not included in the list of 2,200 Spanish refugees who arrived in Chile a month earlier, on September 3, 1939, in the trip aboard the famous ship *Winnipeg*, organized by the poet Pablo Neruda while he was serving as a consul in Paris (Ferrer Mir, 1989).

order appear less natural, thereby engendering a more profound questioning of the status quo of global power relations” (Goebel, 2015: 9–10).

In order to effectively reconstruct transnational circuits and verify essential data, I mainly draw from sources from Spain and Latin America, some of which include articles, books and various publications by both journalists over an ample temporal range. I also checked the official documentation about the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco contained in the *Archivo General de Administración* (General Archive of the Administration)⁵ and about the Spanish Civil War in the *Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica* (Documentation Centre of Historical Memory).⁶ The research also includes newspapers and magazines dealing with Spanish colonialism in Morocco. I have also incorporated the most important Arab magazine in Chile, *Mundo Árabe*.⁷

4.1 Cultural Mediators

Gil Benumeya and Baraibar can foremost be considered nomads, whose trajectory reflects the processes of appropriation and cultural hybridization typical of the travelling elites during the first part of the twentieth century. The onset of both careers took place in a moment of early mundialization, characterized by intercontinental migrations, the consolidation of colonial empires, and the creation of global means of transport and communication (Anderson, 2008).

The possibility of travelling and being in contact with places far away from their homeland helped them develop complex and diverse transnational bonds. One of the first historians to conceptualize this phenomenon was Christophe Charle, and he did so through the notion of “double men” (from the French term *hommes doubles*) (1992). As mediators, “double men” act as bidirectional mirrors between the producers of culture and the receiving audience. At this point, the contribution of Serge Gruzinski is particularly relevant to our case study, as he views cultural mediators as actors who establish

5 Located in Alcalá de Henares, it gathers official documentation coming from the public administration at the end of XIX and XX centuries. The Archive also contains special records of the Spanish Administration in the North of Africa.

6 Known also as *Archivo de la guerra civil española*, this centre located in Salamanca has important folders and files about the war, especially the documentation about the Civil War victims, the exile and the repression during the Francoist dictatorship.

7 *Mundo Árabe* is a newspaper of the Chilean Arab community established by Jorge Sabaj owner of *La Reforma* publishing, a Spanish language publication between 1935 and 1941. After a halt, it returned to the streets in 1947 under the name *Mundo Árabe* which was highly nationalist, focusing in the Palestinian conflict and the European colonization.

links between different cultural universes. By acting as *passeurs culturels* (a French expression translatable as cultural carriers), they serve as connectors or creators of international networks. Considering their roles in the fields of politics, literature, intellectual thought, and symbolic language, these writers and journalists can be viewed as social agents who “from their liminal position between two cultures, favoured the transference and dialogue between seemingly incompatible universes, elaborating frequently unusual mediations, and collaborating in this way to their interaction and the permeabilization of their borders”⁸ (Gruzinski, 1997: 10).

This chapter argues that the role of both journalists transcends that of a “producer of culture” because their intervention was far more diverse, complex and active, with a strong focus on dialogue and negotiation with multiple actors: colonial authorities, leaders of Arab and Maghrebi nationalism, and even leaders of the Arab diaspora and the cultural and political scene in Latin America.

4.2 Intrigues and Espionage in Morocco

A shared feature of the two figures under analysis is that they were prominent actors in Spanish colonial politics in Morocco since the 1930s, representing, overtly or covertly, different institutions and apparatuses of the Spanish government.

At that time, the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco – established in 1912 as a French concession – was at the centre of the domestic politics debate in Spain, especially due to the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic in 1931 and the demands of the progressive sectors to retreat from that territory. Meanwhile, the military sectors and some Africanist thinkers considered this the natural way to recover the positions of power lost in the Concert of Europe and the Scramble for Africa (Benjelloun, 1998; Villanova, 2004; Calderwood, 2018). It was not until 1927 that the pacification of the area was achieved with the defeat of Abdelkrim al-Khattabi. Since then, resistance to colonial occupation – both in the Spanish and French zones – moved to urban centres. As a result, a nationalist movement emerged, led by young local individuals from the upper classes who were imbued with the ideas of the Arab Awakening and Islamic Modernism. In Tétouan, capital of the Spanish Protectorate, the activists came from traditional Andalusian families led by Abdeslam Bennouna (Benaobud, 1999; Stenner, 2016).

⁸ Unless otherwise stated, all translations into English of works published in Spanish are done by the author of this chapter.

The Protectorate was a central interest to Rodolfo Gil Benumeya during the 1920s and 1930s. It was also his alternative residence, where he worked as a publicist and activist (1927, 1929). This context's geographical, legal, and historical characteristics proved to be essential nourishment for his reflections. At the same time, this territory, together with Andalusia, allowed him to reflect upon not only the Arab East and the Islamic ummah, but also upon America: "Morocco (is) the key to the Strait of Gibraltar, the quicker route to Canarias, the colonies and the American hispanicity," he said in 1942 (Gil Benumeya, 1942: 8).

Towards 1934, he moved with his family to Tétouan and Tangier, where he worked at the *Compañía de Transportes Eléctricos Hispano-Marroquíes* (Spanish-Moroccan Electrical Transport Company). During this time, his relationship with the nationalist movement in northern Morocco deepened, particularly with Abdelkhalek Torres, a closeness evident in both the letters and the numerous essays written by Gil Benumeya about the movement. According to his son, Rodolfo Gil Grimau:

From the very beginning, my father was their friend, and he was involved in their goals and struggles. It was a friendship that lasted his whole life, and a commitment which is still alive in the memory of Morocco, where the figure of Gil Benumeya is deeply appreciated. (Gil Grimau, 1996: XVI)

According to the records of the General Administration Archive, during period of the Republican government, he also provided "confidential services regarding political information" about the situation of the Protectorate to the General Directorate of Morocco and the Colonies (*Dirección General de Marruecos y Colonias*, 1935: 1). In a letter sent to the technical secretary of Morocco in August 1934, he described the task as "linking services between the state technical agencies and the Arab opinion in three ways: liaison, cooperation and national Spanish propaganda with the Islam" (Gil Benumeya, 1934c: 1).

This paradoxical journey, however, is insufficient to consider him as merely a professional spy. Arguably, during the years of the Republic, his complex role aimed to strengthen the relationship between the Spanish authorities and the nationalists in northern Morocco, serving as an interlocutor for their differing perspectives and proposals. He tried to persuade the nationalists of the "uniqueness" of Spanish colonialism and the usefulness of Spanish politics for the nationalists. At the same time, he attempted to explain to the colonial authorities the legitimate aspirations of the Moroccan movement.⁹

9 Gil Benumeya's activities aroused the concern of the colonial authorities in the area. A note from the High Commissioner in Morocco to the Presidency of the Government, represented

Gil Benumeya defends the need to shape Moroccan nationalism according to the interests of Spain. Instead of applying assimilationist politics as the French did, the writer proposes to build a relationship of affinity and closeness, similar to what happened with the countries of Spanish America.¹⁰ In his view,

It is no longer possible to avoid nationalism. But it is still possible to transform it, give it a Spanish look, that even in the worst-case scenario, if Morocco leaves, it would still be something in the likes of Chile or Argentina. (Gil Benumeya, 1934a: 4)

In another recommendation to the authorities, he points out that “Morocco represents for Spain the same moral dilemma as Cuba or Mexico, where absolute independence was, and still is, for Spain more preferable than an assimilation by its big neighbour to the North” (Gil Benumeya, 1934c: 2).

Meanwhile, Carlos de Baraibar had a continuous interest in Morocco and the North of Africa in the context of the struggles for emancipation and the emergence of new countries in the Third World. In the first years of the Second Spanish Republic (1931–1936), Baraibar visited both areas of the Protectorate several times and wrote about his impressions and opinions in his column *La Hora de Marruecos* in the newspapers *Luz*, *El Sol* and *La Vanguardia*. His texts present the typical arguments of progressive media: the idea of the “pacific penetration” and “civilizing role” of colonization (1932a, 1933, 1938a). However, they also demonstrate an opposition to the potential politics of abandonment of the Protectorate by the Republican authorities, as well as the hopes that the main representatives of Tétouan had placed in the new authorities (1932b).¹¹

The relationship between Baraibar and the Protectorate, as well as the Moroccan nationalist movement, can be traced back to February 1934. This was

by the Technical Secretariat of Morocco, states that “coexistence of such individual with the nationalists of Tétouan is not convenient for the policy to be developed with the latter because they assign a disproportionate value to their friendship with a Spanish writer, which serves as an encouragement for them to continue their campaigns”. (Moroccan Technical Secretary, 1935: 1).

- 10 In this chapter, Spanish America (*Hispanoamérica*) is understood as the set of countries in the Americas that are, for the most part, Spanish-speaking, and came to be as a result of Spanish colonization. The term was consolidated around the mid-nineteenth century, although currently the preferred term in the American Continent is “Latin America.”
- 11 Baraibar seems to be referring to the manifest presented by the Agrupación Nacionalista (Nationalist Association) – the first nationalist organization in the North, led by Abdeslam Bennuna – to the president Niceto Alcalá Zamora on June 8, 1931. The note included a set of demands regarding political, administrative, social, and cultural issues but did not include the specific claim for independence (Madariaga, 2002).

during the second government of the republican radical Alejandro Lerroux¹² when Baraibar was sent to investigate the scheme of a potential coup d'état in the Spanish Zone. There, he met Abdelkhalek Torres and Abdeslam Bennuna and issued a report detailing the uprising. But the leaders of the Frente Popular (Popular Front)¹³ disregarded his warnings, "maybe thinking that the suspected military conspiracy was a product of the Moorish fantasy, or a vague rumour deliberately exaggerated by them to obtain political concessions in exchange for their 'loyalty,'" according to María Rosa de Madariaga (2002: 123).

It is important to remember that, after the military coup and the beginning of the Civil War, sectors of the Republican government began negotiations with prominent Moroccan nationalist members and leaders to secure their support for an uprising of the Protectorate against the military forces. The agreement included a promise of autonomy for the Spanish Zone. However, the agreement failed due to the opposition of the French government (Paz, 2000).

In that context, at the beginning of 1937 and in the midst of his appointment as undersecretary of war, President Francisco Largo Caballero assigned Baraibar the task of planning a revolt by the Riffian Kabyles against the Franco military government. This project was conceived towards the end of 1936 by government members, Republican leaders from Tangier, and Communist Party members. The plan included supplying weapons and money to the Kabyle chiefs; however, there were obstacles at different levels: the internal competence within the government and the administration of the Protectorate, and, most importantly, the questioning of the French colonial authorities, who feared the domino effect of an uprising in the Spanish Zone, among others (Adila, 1992; Azaña, 2000; Luna Alonso, 2002; Madariaga, 2002).

In May 1937, with the new government led by Juan Negrín, Baraibar left his position as undersecretary of war, yet the Republican government continued to trust his delegates to initiate the plan for a few more months. In the face of numerous oppositions and operational obstacles, the mission ultimately

12 The Radical Republican Party was one of the foremost political line ups in the Second Republic, under the leadership of Alejandro Lerroux, who held presidency of the government three times between 1933 and 1935. Gradually, he adopted right wing policies which lead into severe political and social crises (the uprising in Asturias and the proclamation of the Catalan state). Lastly, a series of corruption reports prompted his demission and final decline of the party.

13 It was a Spanish left wing political coalition which emerged in January 1936 during the Second Republic. As in many European countries, it emerged as an expansion of left-wing policies after the defeat in recent elections. Even so, in February the coalition scored a victory in the polls months before the Coup d'état which would ultimately unleash the civil war.

failed, and it remains a dubious event with several unanswered questions (Luna Alonso, 2002).

During the war, Baraibar published *La guerra de España en el plano internacional* (*The Spanish war in the international context*) (1938b), in which he included his first reflections on the anti-colonial Moroccan struggle. In his book, he highlights the Maghrebis' spirit of autonomy, how they defend the land, and the courage and efficiency in the fight.

His dedication to the Maghreb issue is observed not only in his role in the Protectorate during the Republic and amid the war, but also in the close relationship he cultivated with the main leaders of the Moroccan nationalism, and in the way he exposed the problem of colonialism (Baraibar, 1950, 1952a, 1952b, 1960, 1961a, 1961b). In 1952, he published *El problema de Marruecos* (*The problem in Morocco*) in Santiago, Chile, with the publishing house *Editorial Alonso de Ovalle*. According to the writer, this work answered a request from Allal al-Fasi, leader of the Moroccan party Istiqlal, during his visit to that country in October of that year. Reportedly, the nationalist leader pointed out the need to give the people of Spanish America basic information about the situation in Morocco and their claim for independence. Throughout the text, the writer's first-hand knowledge is evident, as well as his relationship with the leaders mentioned (Baraibar, 1952c).

In his work, Baraibar provides a description of the nationalist government, with particular attention to the conditions and context that favoured its emergence. It is described as an urban movement fostered by the idea of cultural resurrection and the struggle "against the assimilation and relegation to the invaders" (Baraibar, 1952c: 27). In his analysis, he recreates the nationalist effervescence after the proclamation of the Berber Dahir in 1930 and the establishment of the first organizations – both in the French and Spanish Zones – which opened the way for the emergence of prominent figures such as Abdeslam Bennuna, Allal al-Fasi, Mohammed El Ouazzani, and Abdelkhalek Torres, among others.

He also reviews the evolution of the nationalist movement, taking into account the changes that the metropolis and the international world order underwent after World War II, as well as the emerging leadership of the United States in the Atlantic context. He offers a positive assessment of the new role that the Americans were adopting in North Africa and the Middle East in favour of the collective defence of the Western world. He especially highlights the absence of colonial interests by the Americans, the promises made in the Atlantic Charter of 1941, and the landing of the Allied powers in 1942 (Baraibar, 1952c). Finally, it should be noted that four years after this book was published,

Morocco gained independence and started building the foundations for a modern state.

4.3 Meetings in Egypt

Another unique feature these two writers have in common is their relationship with the rest of the leaders of Arab nationalism, particularly via Egypt. Gil Benumeya and Baraibar were close to these leaders precisely when the possibility of liberation from the colonial powers began taking shape.

It is important to note that, in a context of political and intellectual effervescence, Arab and Islamic societies expressed their desire for independence through student associations, conferences, and publications. Such actions were instrumental in creating different Arab nationalist parties belonging to a broad ideological spectrum (Albert, 2008). In this context, Cairo was at the heart of the emancipating ideas of Arab nationalism and Islamic modernism, attracting young students and political leaders persecuted by the colonial authorities in their home countries.

In 1935, Gil Benumeya repeatedly tried to persuade the Republican authorities to send him to Cairo to provide information and propaganda services. His reports included different recommendations regarding the capital of Egypt, such as sending young Spaniards to be trained as Arabists and translators and the transportation of Moroccan students, among others (Gil Benumeya, 1934d).

However, his plans regarding Moroccan nationalism and Spanish-Arab unity were disrupted by the new authorities who took over after the military coup, especially the Delegate of Indigenous Affairs and the High Commissioner in Morocco, Juan Luis Beigbeder. In September 1936, he was appointed as a teacher at the Centre for Moroccan Cultural Studies in Tétouan. He was later sent on a cultural mission to Cairo, where he started another stage in his career at the hub of Pan-Arab activism. He was a teacher in the residence for Moroccan students and a professor at al-Azhar¹⁴ University (High Commissioner of Spain in Morocco, 1936). In 1949, he moved to Algeria, where he worked as a Spanish language lecturer in Algiers.

¹⁴ The bonds between his family and Egypt were long-lasting. His son, Rodolfo Gil Grimau, also an Arabist, was a professor at Ayn Shams University in 1963. He then served as the Director of the Spanish Cultural Centre in the Egyptian capital.

After returning to Spain in the early 1940s, he worked as a writer in *Revista de Estudios Políticos* at the Instituto de Estudios Políticos (Political Studies Institute), in *Cuadernos de Estudios Africanos* of the Instituto de Estudios Africanos (African Studies Institute) and at the *Arbor* and *África* magazines of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC) (Spanish National Research Council). At the same time, he continued working as a collaborator for a number of magazines, such as *Mundo*, *El Español*, *Mundo Hispánico*, and *Nuestro Tiempo*, among others. In these publications, both academic and for the general public, Benumeña endeavoured to analyse the state of the Arab world, writing about current phenomena such as the role of Nasser and the Arab League, the evolution of the situation in Palestine, and the various conflicts in the region (Gil Benumeña, 1951, 1952b). His knowledge and first-hand experience “on the field” turned him into one of the most reliable sources on the topic in the Spanish-speaking world. Due to his dedication to the Arab Spanish-American dialogue, he gained recognition in multiple contexts and was singled out as a candidate to represent the Arab League in Latin America.

Carlos de Baraibar, who was already exiled in the Southern Cone, made several trips to meet the Arab leaders over the decades and played a fundamental role in the ideological debates of the Cold War in Latin America. His journeys still exhibit some confusing and elusive aspects.

In May 1947, he made his first journey back to Europe with a purpose that still remains unclear. According to the monthly magazine *Euzkadi*, he returned “following an invitation by the Basque government and due to his wife’s fragile health” (Fariña Díaz, 2006: 36). Baraibar stayed temporarily in Paris and then moved to Cairo to meet Abdelkrim and the exiled Maghrebi nationalists. In this sense, José Félix Azurmendi hypothesizes that the purpose of this meeting was to replicate the project of the previous decade: trying to bribe Moroccan tribes and troops to rise against Franco and, at the same time, gather information about the Riffian leader, the Maghrebi leaders, the Arab League and the Pan Islamism movement. This author links Baraibar to secret diplomacy and espionage, as Azurmendi states:

He considers that his presence in Cairo could benefit our interests, the interests of the French, and could help Americans better understand the problem. His plan would be to stay in Cairo for a few weeks to obtain that information, backed up with documents and photographs, and then move to Tangier. (Azurmendi, 2013: n.d.)

Baraibar worked for the Basque Services of Information and Propaganda, a network of Basque exiles from nationalism who waged their anti-Franco struggle

in close relation to North American interests during the early years of the Cold War. In light of the European expansion of the Soviet Union, these democratic Basques asserted that, if communism was defeated, there would be no reason for the Franco regime to persist. These agents emerged in the context of the Civil War and appeared in the next years “in other wars, causes and scenarios” (Azurmendi, 2013, n.d.).¹⁵

Baraibar’s account his time in Egypt is different from the interpretations of other authors. In a newspaper article published fifteen years after the death of the Riffian leader Abdelkrim al-Khattabi, Baraibar presented his version of the events:

Due to reasons that are not relevant for the reader, at the beginning of 1947, I decided to go back to the Old World, with the purpose of settling down in Paris with my family (...). As soon as it was confirmed that the Abdelkrim family chose Egypt as their place of residence, I decided to personally meet the heroes of – until then – the longest and bloodiest colonial war in history. The sacrifice of those heroes was crucial for the national spirit’s awakening and the independence of the Moroccan people, which I always supported no matter what, with my very limited forces to their maximum extent, in view of their resistance to the military occupation by the French and Spaniards (...). The context fascinated me in such a way that I stayed there for three years, mainly thanks to the close relationship between my family and the three families that formed, at the time, what we could call the Jatabi del Cairo clan. (Baraibar, 1963: 4)

In the same way, the journalist mentions the important group of Maghrebi leaders who worked in the Northern Africa Liberation Committee offices led by Abdelkrim. Some of them included the Moroccan Abdelkhalek Torres, Allal al-Fasi, and Mohamed Ben Aboud, and, on the side of the Tunisians, the future president Habib Bourguiba, among others (Baraibar, 1963: 4).

¹⁵ The writer states that, during World War, these Services acted against Franco and the Axis powers, but, at the same time, they reported on Spanish communists. In the second stage, they began to engage in operations unrelated to the Basque cause on behalf of the United States. Some of these Basque delegates, residing in Central and Eastern Europe and North Africa, had the protection and complicity of Guatemala through their appointment as *ad honorem* consuls. On many occasions during 1948, the president of the National Council of Euzkadi in London, Manuel Irujo, proposed Baraibar as a candidate for a position in Cairo to his Guatemalan interlocutor, the Business Director in Paris, Carlos Manuel Pellecer (Azurmendi, 2013).

By March 1949, Baraibar had returned to the Southern Cone and, in an interview with the Chilean magazine *Mundo Árabe*, provided further details about his trip and his role at the heart of Arab and Muslim liberation movements:

I have travelled through part of Western Europe and the Middle East, studying international problems mainly in London, Paris and Cairo, where I stayed the longest, since my fundamental desire was, after eight years of living in Chile, to catch up with the problems in the Arab and Muslim worlds, which I had been studying for 40 years. (*Mundo Árabe*, 1949: 5)

The writer also states that, in Egypt, the government and the Arab League provided the means to delve into local issues, something he lacked in the Maghreb, still under colonial powers. Baraibar also mentions some impressions from his stay: the high cultural and economic standards in Lebanon and the thriving political independence and the industrial development in Egypt, in contrast to the dramatic situation of the Palestinian refugees, an issue “that calls for all the Arab leaders in the world to make their biggest effort and establish, once and for all, the unity that history, geography, language, economy, and the pure instinct of conservation demand” (*Mundo Árabe*, 1949: 5).

At the beginning of the 1950s, Baraibar achieved a more transcendental role when he became one of the most important anti-communist activists in the Southern Cone, representing the Congress for Cultural Freedom (Congreso para la Libertad de la Cultura) in Chile. This institution was established in Berlin in 1950 in opposition to the World Peace Council, which was closer to Moscow and represented in the region by the poet Pablo Neruda. The Conference brought together intellectuals with a wide range of political ideas: Social Democrats, Social Christians, Anarchists, Trotskyists, Liberals, and Conservatives, all united by a shared anti-communist and anti-Soviet stance. Additionally, numerous Spanish exiles and figures from the Ibero-American context contributed to the publications and events organised by this network. (Ruiz Galbete, 2006; Glondys, 2012; Janello, 2012; Nállim, 2014; Iber, 2015).

During the 1950s and 1960s, Baraibar went back to Europe at least three times – in 1955, 1959, and 1962 – to attend the meetings of the World Committee of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Paris. On each of those visits, he stayed longer in some of the countries in the Arab world. For example, in 1955, he stayed in Egypt for five weeks,¹⁶ following closely the development of the

16 His daughter Elena, who was married to an Egyptian lawyer, was living there.

Egyptian 1952 Revolution and the growing leadership of Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser (*Mundo Árabe*, 1956).

By 1959, he returned to Cairo and met the president of Al-Azhar University on behalf of the School of Government and Public Management of the University of Chile (*Mundo Árabe*, 1959a). Later in 1962, he visited West Germany, Algeria, and Morocco. In North Africa, he met the new heads of state: the president of the newly independent Republic of Algeria, Ahmed Ben Bella, and the king of Morocco, Hassan II (*Mundo Árabe*, 1963).

In his reflections about his travels, written in *Mundo Árabe*, Baraibar made an effort to highlight not only the pervasiveness of European colonial actions, but also the incompatibility of the new Arab regimes with the communist parties and the Soviet Axis. In 1959, when the negotiations between Egypt and the Western world for the funds to build the Aswan High Dam came to a halt and Soviet support was envisaged, Baraibar insisted on the idea that the Arab people were not permeable to communist doctrines and that “said danger” – the danger of indoctrination – did not exist, unless the circumstances lead him to believe that “Russia [was] the only country willing to help the Arab people” (*Mundo Árabe*, 1959a: 16). In 1962, he reaffirmed his position, highlighting the proscription of the Communist Party in Algeria by the Ben Bella government, and the illegality of the organizations that promoted the single-party model in the first Moroccan constitution passed in December of that same year (*Mundo Árabe*, 1963).

Despite these references, it remains difficult to evaluate the full extent of his visits and the connections he forged with the Maghrebi leaders. At the same time, as several specialists have observed, his position within the Spanish exile community was itself ambiguous and remains difficult to define.¹⁷

4.4 The Spanish Nexus

As I noted at the beginning of this text, Gil Benumeya and Baraibar shared a worldview that was common among Spanish Arabist and Africanist thinkers of that era: the resurgence of Spain’s international presence through a policy of collaboration between the emerging Arab and Ibero-American worlds. This geopolitical vision, subject to the emerging forces “from the South,” stood in

17 While the Franco government questioned his public activities as an alleged Republican delegate (ABC, 1960: 34), the historian of the Spanish Civil War Ángel Viñas accused him of having offered his collaboration to the Francoist ambassador in Chile in order to spy on the exiles (Viñas, 2013).

opposition to the prevalent roles of France, the British Empire, and the United States.

In that sense, according to these ideologists, the two historical constituent elements of Spain – Al Andalus and the conquest of the American continent – represented the legitimation of future rapprochement policies, both towards the republics of Spanish America and those of the Arab world in the process of decolonization.

For Gil Benumeya, the creation of a bloc of Spanish-American and Arab nations was a fundamental condition for leaving the peripheral position and occupying a more relevant place in global politics. These ideas, which, as already mentioned, had been taking shape since the early 1920s, were only heard after the establishment of the new Franco regime.

Gil Benumeya's reflections became stronger and more transcendental with the publication of his work *Hispanidad y Arabidad* in 1952. In this work, Gil Benumeya probably shows the most systematic effort to outline this nexus between the Arab world and Spanish America. Firstly, he highlights the external similarities between both regions as natural associations that share a common history, identity, language and even a similar internal hierarchy among all the countries. He then notes that Arab and Ibero-American countries hold a marginal position and lack a strong influence in the international system, leaving them subject to the force of the big powers. Lastly, he emphasises the common response they should adopt in the future, advocating resistance to the inequalities of the international order through mutual cooperation (Gil Benumeya, 1952a).

In this work, Gil Benumeya reflects on the shaping of his own thought around the Hispanic-Arab encounter – with the help of Habib Estéfano (1888–1946,¹⁸ an activist of the Arab cause in America, whom he met in 1925) – and his extended stays in Morocco and Egypt:

The transatlantic orientation of Spain and its vicinity with the North of Africa by way of the Mediterranean, emerged as two directions that could be complementary in a balanced way [...] They were, as an answer to the wishes of Estéfano and myself, two orientations that could erase wrong views of foreignness and isolation from large areas of Arabism, giving back their necessary Hispanic sense [...] The following pages present the natural guidelines or the fundamental consequences of a period of twenty-seven years of work in the two worlds of Spanish language

18 Habib Estéfano was one of the most significant cultural representatives of Arab migration. His work as a journalist, writer, and activist reflects strong support for the integration of this community into Latin American societies (Vagni, 2015, 2022).

and of Arab language [...] We should also include an affectionate and special mention to our Arab friends in the Americas, who merge in their lives two splendid realities of two magnificent lineages. (Gil Benumeya, 1952a: 10–11)

In the early 1950s, this discourse found renewed scope under the Franco regime amid a context of international isolation and search for support from Arab and Latin American partners (Gil Pecharromán, 2008). In these policies of substitution, the return to the Al Andalus mythology and the Hispanic-Arab unity worked as a bridge to appeal to these countries and gain their support for membership in the United Nations. With the Cold War in its beginnings, countries were urged to establish a “third block” that could provide an alternative to Communism and the “old-fashioned and materialistic” Western democracies (Parra Monserrat, 2008: 2).

Baraibar also shared the idea of the role of Spain as a connecting node between the Arab-Muslim Eastern world and Spanish America. In a 1949 newspaper interview, he pointed out the need to activate multiple dimensions of contact between these worlds:

I want to work in the future and on a transcendental plane, indifferent to any current politics, for what has been my lifelong dream: the truthful understanding among the Arab, the Muslim, and the Ibero-American worlds, on the basis of peace, culture, and mutual cooperation. (*Mundo Árabe*, 1949: 5)

In this manner, these ideas were reiterated in the opening pages of his book *El problema de Marruecos*, where Baraibar singles out the role of a liaison, highlighting that it was intelligently adopted by Francoism in the context of the actions taken as regards the Protectorate and international isolation. Furthermore, in light of this appropriation of a legitimate cause by Francoism, Baraibar does not hesitate to show his sympathy:

Personally, we should not take advantage of this opportunity either to breach the trust of our brothers, the Moroccan patriots, nor to go against Francoism, precisely, when it announces Hispano-Moroccan and Hispano-Arab politics that are consistent with what we have been advocating for, so uselessly, for more than twenty-five years. Thus, we would not be reluctant to cooperate, while maintaining the same position we have always had about what the current Spanish regime means at a national level. (Baraibar, 1952c: 4–5)

Consequently, this reflection shows the transcendence that such a cause had on his thoughts and actions, regardless of who executed it.

4.5 The Role of the Arab Diaspora in America

At the end of the nineteenth century, considerable masses of people from the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire settled in South American countries, representing one of the most numerous immigrant groups. They were mostly Christians from the Levant who kept a close eye on the political evolution in their home countries, mainly after the First World War, with the Anglo-French colonial occupation and the establishment of the League of Nations mandates system.

Moreover, integration into the new world and preservation of their Arab identity were among the main concerns of these groups, hence the relevance gained by Arab newspapers and publications, mainly in Argentina and Chile (Del Amo, 2006; Martínez Lillo, 2009). Furthermore, as a way of contributing to this nexus, their leaders and ideologists made an effort to emphasise the affinities of the Hispanic-creole tradition of America with the Arab culture, especially through Al-Andalus (Madariaga, 1997; González Alcantud, 2014). In this context, the writers analysed here drew their attention to this community and perceived it as relevant in the dialogue between Spanish America and the Arab world.

The works of Gil Benumeya display, since the mid-1920s, references to the significant role of the Arab diasporas as a nexus between Hispanicity and Arab identity, primarily based on the ideas of Habib Estéfano, a Lebanese activist and speaker (Estéfano, 1931). However, in Gil Benumeya, this interest in immigrants had an essentially pragmatic aspect related to the development of the Spanish colonial policies in Morocco and their influence on the Arab world in general (Gil Benumeya, 1934b; 1935a).

With its communal and commercial networks deployed on both sides of the Atlantic, this community would constitute a political interlocutor and a potential economic agent to revitalise the economies of Spain and the Protectorate in Morocco. To this end, the group established an action programme meant to “attract the American Semitic element” through collaborative work with different organizations and institutions, such as the Ibero-American Union, the Spanish Africanist League, the Hispanic-Moroccan commercial centres, the *Comités de las Exposiciones sevillana y granadina* (Committees of the Sevillian and Granadan expositions), the *Junta para Ampliación de Estudios*

e Investigaciones Científicas (JAE) (Board for Advanced Studies and Scientific Research), the Colegio Mayor Hispanoamericano de Sevilla (Hispanic American Major College of Sevilla), the Casa de América Barcelonesa (House of America in Barcelona), among others (Gil Benumeya, 1925: 47). In a report to the colonial authorities in 1935, Gil Benumeya stated:

Half a million of these Syrian Lebanese and Palestine people live in Spanish speaking countries, and their language coexists and intermingles with ours. Three thousand Arabs who live in Argentina made Buenos Aires, together with Damascus and Baghdad, the intellectual capital of the purest Arabism (...). We believe that, for Spain, the problem of the Syrian immigrants has an extraordinary interest, and the country should prepare for it by establishing a double contact with Buenos Aires and Chile, on the one hand, and Beirut, Damascus and Cairo, on the other. (Gil Benumeya, 1935b: 20)

Accordingly, these reflections upon the role of the Arab immigrants as central agents of the dialogue between Spanish America and the Arab world continued to be an essential part of their intellectual production through the subsequent decades.

Regarding Carlos de Baraibar, his links with the Arab diaspora in Chile, specifically with the institutions and media of the Palestinian immigrants, were direct and started upon his arrival in that country in 1939. He had an active public life with journalistic activities in the newspaper *El Mercurio*, and as a speaker at conferences about international issues of the Arab world. As part of his integration into the Arab community, he served on the board of the Directorio del Instituto Chileno-Árabe de Cultura (Chilean-Arab Institute of Culture) and participated in several activities organized by the Unión Árabe de Beneficencia (Arabic Charity Union).

At the same time, and as we have seen before, he worked as a correspondent when travelling around Europe and the Middle East, sending notes and reports about the situation in different countries, especially for the newspaper *Mundo Árabe*. In an interview held in December 1949, the newspaper highlighted “his concerns as a researcher and his Orientalist spirit [...] our group has a loyal friend in him” (*Mundo Árabe*, 1949: 5).

However, when the connections that the Congress for Cultural Freedom had with the American intelligence services began to be revealed in the mid-1960s, Baraibar’s public image within the community and intellectual circles started to fall apart. He faced criticism for questioning the Nasser government and

supporting the mediating positions of Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba regarding the Palestine question and the State of Israel, among other topics. Baraibar was subsequently regarded as an agent of Zionism and Imperialism.

From the pages of *Mundo Árabe*, criticism and reprobation about his articles published in *El Mercurio* newspaper started to proliferate. The harsh headlines published in the newspaper exemplify the aggressive tone of the accusations: “Bourguiba, Talbot, de Baraibar and Other Agents at the Service of Zionism” (1965a: 16); “Don Carlos de Baraibar, a Character from Fables, Sold his Soul to the Devil” (1965b: 4); “Carlos de Baraibar Spits Out Again his Phobia Inoculated by Criminal Hands” (1966a: 4,10), “Carlos de Baraibar and His Master, Imperialism” (1966b: 7), “Imperialism and Collaborators against the Arab People” (1966c: 7), and “Carlos de Baraibar, Missing Person” (1966d: 27). Taufiq Rumie, leader of the Muslim community in Santiago, concluded: “A sad ending for a man who was able to earn the sympathy and admiration of the people instead of the disdain and repudiation that surround him” (1965b: 4).

4.6 Conclusions

This revision of the careers of Rodolfo Gil Benumeya and Carlos de Baraibar represents an initial approach to uncovering glimpses of closeness between two traditionally distant regions.

The writers analysed here adopted the roles of mediators, interpreters, and translators of experiences among multiple actors, scenarios, and historical moments, embracing the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco as the first crossing and meeting point. From various approaches and positions, they introduced to the Spanish-speaking audience the new forces that were re-emerging: the Maghreb and Arab East peoples. These were people who, after overcoming colonialism and the weight of other emerging powers, could build a new civilized order together with the people of Spanish America.

Their contact with leading Arab nationalist leaders, their prolific journalistic production, and their work in key positions in political and cultural institutions established them as relevant figures of the Hispanic-Arab dialogue. In that context, they developed a series of interchanges that illustrate the emergence of innovative transnational networks: the confluence of cultural and political movements as diverse as Arabism, Spanish Africanism, and the ideas of the Arab American diasporas.

These writers shortened distances and recognized the Levant immigrants as agents who facilitated the dialogue between Spanish America and the Arab world, with multiple participation opportunities in the economic, political,

and social fields. Benumeya highlights their role as interregional economic actors while simultaneously transferring the American post-colonial experience to Moroccan territory. Baraibar, for his part, tries to explain to the South American audience, especially to the Arab group, the problems of the Moroccan liberation and the challenges faced by the peoples that become to attain independence. In both writers, the Arab diaspora is seen as a significant transnational social actor.

In this analysis, Spain emerges, beyond its different internal and external political moments, as the main point of articulation between Arabs and Spanish Americans. This nexus has its basis not only in a shared past but also in future cooperation opportunities. According to their perspectives, the unity of these three peripheral spaces could serve as the seed of a renewed global order.

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A Bridge between East and West? The Conflicts inside Chilean Zionism and the Role of Sephardic Communities (1909–1935)

Mario Matus González

5.1 Introduction

Although the initial activities of the Jewish-Chilean Zionist movement commenced in 1909, its consolidation did not occur until 1919. This is notable given that the inaugural Zionist Congress in Basel had taken place in 1897 and other organizations in the Southern Cone had emerged several years prior. The movement's beginnings can be characterized as relatively abrupt, precipitated by the enthusiasm surrounding the Balfour Declaration in 1917, the conclusion of the First World War in 1918, and the mandates established in 1919 in the Treaty of Versailles concerning the future of Palestine. However, this initial burst of enthusiasm also revealed contradictory traits. While it engendered a degree of cohesion among diverse groups and organizations that had already begun to show signs of heterogeneity and internal discord at the onset of the 1910s, it was also subject to the very contradictions and tensions it sought to regulate. This was exemplified during the 11th Chilean Zionist Congress in 1930, where a contentious debate ensued, centring on the question of who could truly be considered Zionists. This caused a rupture that persisted until 1933, when the crisis of refugees escaping Nazism compelled them to resolve their issues. In this process, the Sephardic group,¹ which shared interests with diverse Jewish

1 Deriving from the word 'Sepharad,' it refers to the Jewish diaspora, which has a significant presence in Spain, particularly following the expulsion of the Jews in 1492. Most of these Jews sought refuge in the Ottoman territories of Asia Minor, the Balkans and North Africa. At the beginning of the 20th century, Chile also became a destination for Jewish emigration. By 1920, Chilean Sephardic Jews constituted slightly more than 25% of the total Jewish population (approximately 500 of a total of 1,852 Jewish people, according to the 1920 Census). The largest groups were concentrated in Temuco, Valparaíso, La Serena and Santiago (Matus, 1993: 56). In contrast, Ashkenazi Jews derive their name from the word Ashkenaz, a name given in Yiddish to Germany and, in a broader sense, to Central Europe. Further movements to Poland, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Russian Empire geographically extended the Ashkenazi Jewish world to Eastern Europe, transforming it into the largest Jewish group.

branches and had accumulated experience of living in multiethnic communities in the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire, acted as a pragmatic, mediating and supportive axis, maintaining organizations grouped around the first Zionist congresses.

This chapter aims to explain how Zionism became an element of unification in the early years of the Chilean Jewish movement. It will also explore the divergent forces that emerged within Zionism and the contradictions and conflicts caused by them, focusing finally on the mediating role that Sephardic Jews played.

To achieve this objective, the chapter follows the clues given in the works of Moisés Senderey (1956) and Moshé Nes-El (1984; 2009) on the conflicts inside Zionism, contrasting them with information found in the two major magazines of the Jewish Chilean community of the period, *Renacimiento* and *Nosotros*. It is presumed that the first Zionist movements in Chile (1909–1935) had a coordinating role for all Jewish organizations, although this role resulted in significant fragmentation in 1930, when doctrinal divisions from Israeli Zionism emerged and consolidated in the nation.

The chapter commences by addressing the global context of Zionism in its early stages and its development during the first decades of the 20th century. It then proceeds to analyse the unifying role of Chilean Zionism in the context of internal tensions. The subsequent section details the emergence of tensions during the 1919 Zionism Congress, while the final section examines the decline of Chilean Zionism in 1930. The conclusions provide a concise overview of the problematic areas along this path, situating the Sephardic groups' role on several occasions and proposing reasons to explain these circumstances.

5.2 The Context of Zionism and Jewish Immigration to Chile in the Early 1900s

By the late 19th century, Zionism had evolved into a secular nationalist and redemptorist movement, driven by messianic beliefs that had been present since previous centuries. However, it did not initially attract diaspora communities during the early decades of the 20th century, at least until the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of Germany in 1933, which made it evident that Jews were not going to be fully accepted in European societies and continued to be at risk.

The period known as Jewish emancipation, which took place from the 18th century to the start of the 20th century, resulted in the establishment of political and citizen rights for Jews residing in Western Europe, as well as

fostering a stronger sense of identification with their host societies. In these regions, Jews experienced increased urbanization, educational opportunities and higher levels of employment, leading to a process of assimilation into Western modernity. Conversely, in Eastern Europe, where Jews were predominantly rural, less educated and earned lower wages, modernization and integration into the gentile world were eschewed, and Hasidism flourished (Suárez, 2005: 485–545).

Beyond these contextual factors, both divisions experienced notable levels of prosperity and had more favourable options than responding to the Zionist call and emigrating to Palestine. Notably, the Dreyfus affair in France (1894–1906)² profoundly impacted Theodor Herzl, motivating him to publish his seminal work and subsequently organize the First Zionist Congress in Basel (1897). However, between 1900 and 1914, the project failed to persuade most Jews residing in Europe, and no discriminatory wave or persecution occurred in the West during this period. Concurrently, those who had endured pogroms in Tsarist Russia during those years opted to emigrate to the Americas, particularly to the United States, rather than to Palestine. This phenomenon is evidenced by the mass migration of Jews from Western, Central, and Southern Europe, which was interrupted in 1914 by the outbreak of the First World War and subsequently halted entirely in 1924 by the United States' imposition of immigration restrictions (Avni, 1992).

Moreover, after the issuance of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and the assumption of the Mandate for Palestine by the British, stringent restrictions on Jewish immigration were not imposed by the British until 1939. Consequently, despite the numerous pogroms that occurred in Tsarist Russia during the 1900s, the initial two Alliot (Jewish immigration to Palestine) did not exceed 175,000 settlers by 1931, despite the presence of 860,000 non-Jews in the territory during that year (Ruppin, 1934: 27). The reluctance of European Jews to emigrate to Palestine between 1918 and 1933 was explained by the improvement in their living conditions in the Soviet Union since 1920, where the death penalty was imposed for antisemitic actions, and especially in Germany, where the Weimar Constitution (1919) – whose “father” was Hugo Preuss (a Jewish lawyer and politician from the German Democratic Party) – granted full rights to the Jewish population (Spector, 2008: 5–17).

2 It refers to the treason accusation made by the high command of the French army in 1894 against Captain Alfred Dreyfus, of Jewish origin. From the outset, the process was questionable due to the prominent role played by prejudice in reaching a premature sentence. This demonstrated that antisemitism was deeply rooted in 19th-century French society.

Only the most committed militants and those with little to lose answered the Zionist call between 1918 and 1933. Higher migration waves were triggered by the Nazi persecutions, the growing confinement in concentration camps and the late knowledge of the Shoah, leading most refugees and survivors to the British Mandate territory, which acquired the new meaning of a desperate shelter (Louvish & Skolnik, 2007: 660–661).

In this challenging environment for Zionist ideas leading up to 1933, the movement's growth in diaspora communities was hampered. Its effectiveness largely hinged upon its ability to fulfil a constructive role in various communities, including recently established ones such as the Chilean community of 1909.

The Jewish community in Chile during the early 1930s was estimated to be approximately 4,000 people. According to the 1930 Census (INE, 1931), 3,697 individuals identified as Jewish, although this figure may have excluded non-religious Jews and those who were reluctant to disclose their religious beliefs (Matus, 1993: 56).³ According to Ruppin (1934), the number of Jewish people was significantly lower than the populations of the United States (4,228,000), Argentina (220,000), Canada (170,000), Brazil (45,000), Mexico (12,000), and even Uruguay (9,500). Due to the relatively modest size of the Jewish population, the influx of Jewish immigrants in Chile during the early 20th century did not provoke significant antisemitic sentiments or any other intense forms of opposition, in contrast to the experiences in Argentina. This dynamic underwent a shift in the aftermath of the Great Depression, marked by the influx of approximately 12,000 Jewish refugees between 1938 and 1940, and the emergence of pronounced antisemitic movements around 1940. Jewish immigration in Chile was part of the broader migratory trend from Europe to the Americas that persisted from the late 19th century to the onset of the First World War. This wave resurfaced with diminished intensity between 1918 and 1930 due to mounting restrictions following 1914. Jewish immigration in Chile was distinguished by two features. Firstly, it comprised a smaller number of immigrants. Secondly, it was characterized by a significant gap between *Conversos* who arrived during the three colonial centuries and those who came after independence in 1818. This was exacerbated by substantial discriminatory barriers that impeded the formation of a cohesive community during the 19th century. The combination of these factors elucidates the delayed consolidation of the Jewish community in Chile (Matus, 2013).

3 According to Ruppin's (1934) calculations, the Jewish population of Chile was estimated to be around 4,000 in January 1933.

5.3 The Cohesive Role of Zionism in Chile

By the end of the 1890s, Chile received its first significant group of Jewish immigrants. The first manifestations of community life were observed in 1906, when a *Minyan* of ten men was formed to perform religious worship. On August 8 1909, 87 individuals established the first Jewish organization in the country in Santiago, known as the Jewish Union Society of Chile (*Sociedad Unión Israelita de Chile*). The main concerns of this new organization were defined in the statutes of its first general meeting (which gathered 30 members). The first article stated that “all Jewish people living in Chile, *no matter their country of origin or gender* [emphasis added]⁴” could be part of it. At the same time, the second article declared that the Society, “did not have a political character and was plainly destined, as indicated by its name, *to unite all Jews* in order to follow and keep their customs and religious teachings [emphasis added].”

Furthermore, the fourth article stated that “The Society will make mutual protection its objective and will constitute an *arbitration and conciliation council to settle and resolve difficulties or disagreements* that may occur between members or with non-members of the Society [emphasis added].” Finally, among the witnesses signing the declaration stands out, “In between lines – The Union of *different nations* [emphasis added]” (Unión Israelita de Chile, 1909).

It is important to note that, although most of those who arrived in Chile until that moment were from Eastern Europe, as was the case throughout the Americas, there were also some Sephardi and German Jews. Moreover, they came from different regions and cities, carrying their languages (Yiddish, Judeo-Spanish, and German, among others), religious branches (mainly Orthodox and conservative) and other traditions (Russian/Slavic, Arab or German cuisine and folklore). Despite the language barriers, they were able to successfully gather and unite nearly 100 people of diverse backgrounds, achieving a significant accomplishment that was acknowledged in the text.⁵

Furthermore, the arbitration and conciliation functions of the Society were emphasized, as it sought to address the absence of knowledge among groups – which resulted in inherent mutual mistrust – by promoting the recognition of diverse traditions within Judaism. At this time, leadership roles were nascent, and there were no established mechanisms to manage discussions and conflict.

4 All quotes in this chapter were translated into English from the original sources in Spanish.

5 Gunther Böhm (1983) notes that, with the exception of one person who signed in Yiddish, all those who signed the act of meeting did so in Spanish, revealing the homogenizing function of this language in a group with diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Following the rejection of any political character, the movement distanced itself from identifications such as “Russian” or “Maximalist” (i.e. revolutionary). After the failed 1905 Russian Revolution, in which prominent Jewish anarchists and socialists participated, a strong antisemitic prejudice arose, inflamed by the Tsarist police force, who published in 1902 “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion”, encouraging antisemitic actions. The text was rapidly translated into multiple languages, disseminating worldwide (Cohn, 1995: 69).

Lastly, the statutes lacked any explicit Zionist content. Despite the movement’s recognition in Europe following the 1897 First Zionist Congress in Basel, it had not taken root in Chile due to its geographical isolation and the primary activities of migrants in the country.

The Zionist movement at the beginning of the 20th century was initiated by a small group of scholars, lawyers, journalists, and writers who belonged to the liberal professions, along with some qualified artisans, feminist pioneers and individuals with political experience.

Almost none of the Jewish immigrants in Chile at that time had received any form of Zionist education or experience. According to data collected in Valparaíso and Viña del Mar between 1920 and 1944 (Matus, 2018: 117), although most of them used to live in the city and had completed primary and secondary education, they worked independently in the services sector (commerce), in qualified crafts (tailors, fur traders, clockmakers and jewellers), the industrial sector (textiles and mattresses), or were healthcare professionals (doctors and pharmacists).

They were mostly pragmatic, suspicious of political activity and excessive attachment to ideas and doctrines. In order not to give in to assimilation, they brought with them a rich communal heritage, consisting of critical organizations that were established throughout the diaspora, such as internal courts, cemeteries, ritual baths, tax collection and budgetary bodies, Talmud Torah schools, synagogues, *Maccabi* sports clubs, recreational centres and care facilities for the sick. Building up an organizational structure that would reunite the majority of them and begin to transmit their identity to the next generations was far more urgent and essential than debating doctrine.

This does not imply that the organization initially failed to embrace Zionist initiatives. Since 1910, the Society has facilitated the sale of *shekalim* (a fee that permits individuals to cast a vote for a delegate in a Zionist congress) and has contributed to the Keren Kayemet (Jewish National Fund), which since 1901 has purchased and administered lands in Palestine. Additionally, a small Zionist group was assembled in 1911 with no more than ten activists and slightly more affiliates, but it was divided in 1916. Nevertheless, these actions did not develop into the creation and diffusion of Zionist content (Senderey, 1956).

In general, between 1909 and 1919, there were more practical advances, such as the establishment of the recreational centre “Russian Philharmonic” in 1911, which was subsequently renamed the “Welfare Commercial Centre”. Concurrently, the Benefactress Ladies Society, a charitable and assistance body, was founded. The Centre underwent a merger with the Jewish Union Society (a pioneering organization founded in 1909) in 1914, following the acquisition of a mausoleum in the Santiago General Cemetery, financed through general and mortuary fees. In 1914, the Centre established its first school; by 1916, it had relocated to a more spacious facility. However, as previously mentioned, in 1916, the organization began to experience its first divisions. In that year, a parallel organization named the Jewish Congregation and Talmud Torah (Ashkenazi) was founded, with a more religious, communitarian and cultural orientation, showing some Zionist inclinations. The rise of a socialist tendency in 1916, coming from Eastern Europe (*Poale Zion*), led to this break (Senderey, 1956).

In 1917, the Congregation purchased a substantial two-story residence in San Diego’s 1130 Street, strategically located in the heart of Santiago. This property served as a focal point for Jewish activities in the capital for numerous years, with community members demonstrating a strong preference for this neighbourhood. Concurrently, the predominantly Sephardi Max Nordau Society in Valparaiso was established that same year. Due to its limited capacity, the Society also included Ashkenazi Jews (Senderey, 1956). In addition, the Russian Social Circle was established in Santiago, primarily attracting Russian-speaking Jews and non-Jews. Following the 1917 Revolution, these individuals sought to distance themselves from any association with “Russians” or “Maximalists” (Renacimiento, 1919a: 22).

In the early years, Zionism was not a priority, so its initial manifestations were subtle and sporadic. However, the events of 1917 proved to be a turning point. Following the publication of the Balfour Declaration on November 2, which expressed British support for establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine, there was a surge of enthusiasm, as evidenced by the formation of the National Jewish Committee, which exhibited a pronounced Zionist orientation. The visit of Dr. Ber Epstein, a Yiddish Zionist speaker who was interpreted into Spanish for Sephardi listeners, inspired the creation of a Redemption Fund in June 1918, leading to an increase in funds raised to purchase land and finance the influx of settlers. This enthusiasm forged a sense of unity and belonging within the small community, uniting the concepts of Judaism and Zionism. Consequently, the Centre, which had joined the Union in 1914, became the Jewish Centre in 1918 (Senderey, 1956).

In addition to the geographical distance and the absence of intellectuals, there was a lack of forces rejecting the Zionist agenda in Chile, in contrast to the situation in Europe, where there were enlightened assimilationists, Hasidic Orthodox Jews and integrationist socialists.⁶ Consequently, disagreements between the Centre and the Congregation did not stem from a rejection of Zionism, but rather from differing priorities. The former, comprised of higher-income individuals, adopted a more recreational approach, with stronger ties to the host country and serving as an outlet for elite voices. In contrast, the Congregation gathered people with lower incomes seeking Jewish community, educational and cultural activities, including the Yiddish language and Zionism. The Congregation separated from the Centre in 1916 and came to represent the populist wing. As a result, the executive board encouraged the strengthening of the acceptance of Zionism.

The first manifestation of this movement took place on November 2, 1918, at the theatre “La Comedia” in Santiago, during the celebration of the one-year anniversary of the Balfour Declaration. The Jewish community was able to share this event with important diplomats, ministers, and parliamentarians (Senderey, 1956: 71). The consistent support of authorities, political parties, and Chilean institutions for Zionism continued until the end of the 1960s for reasons that will be explained. Before the establishment of the Israeli State in 1948, Zionism was regarded as a nationalist movement that asserted the necessity of creating a Jewish state in Ottoman Palestine, from where most of the population originated, to address the ongoing aggressions and persecutions affecting Jews in the diaspora. To achieve this, it promoted the purchase of land and the establishment of settlers (*halutzim*) to lay the foundations of the state. The agreements of the aftermath of the First World War did not impede the project; in fact, they channelled diverse self-determination demands raised by nations previously subordinated to big empires, as the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman empires.

The demands were also supported by a nearly romantic nationalism led by United States President Woodrow Wilson, who advocated for the creation of these states. At the time, the establishment of both an Arab and a Jewish state within the borders of the Palestine province seemed plausible. This would have enabled them to coexist peacefully with other Arab states in the region

6 This shortage was linked to the limited number of university graduates (Matus, 2018), frequent complains for a lack of rabbis, who had to be brought from Argentina, and the absence in Chile of socialist movements such as the Bund (General Jewish Labor Bund), created in Vilna in 1897, which had a significant presence in Russia until 1917 and in Argentina up to the late decades of 1930.

without undermining the interests of the nations around them (Suárez, 2020: 26). However, some works claim that Zionism proposed from the beginning to eradicate the Arab population from Palestine (Sand, 2013). The intention of this chapter is not to determine whether the initial Zionist thought had those intentions and went beyond the proposal of two states, from which the Transjordan region was later separated, constituting the Kingdom of Jordan.

The Zionist documentation from the period is ambiguous and appears to combine several visions, including ethnocentrism, orientalism, and a naive and messianic civilising role. This was mainly based on the erroneous perception that Palestine had a small population, so there would be enough space for everybody to thrive. However, the formation of a State in foreign lands was a disturbing concept that would seriously damage the fundamental rights of its inhabitants. The legitimacy of such a project required a precise and impartial approach in its definitions and commitments, one that would be acceptable to the surrounding Arab nations. Unfortunately, as the colonial logic of the postwar era privileged the distribution of lands lost by the Ottoman Empire between Great Britain and France, Great Britain did not make strong efforts to create a project that could be barely acceptable to all parties involved, resulting in an unsurprising progressive aggravation.⁷

Due to the complexity of the situation, which was not fully comprehensible in Chile, and the Zionist demand's growing popularity and perceived fairness, the country's primary institutions and authorities did not voice any opposition to its acceptance. This shift in sentiment was officially initiated on November 18, 1918, when approximately 400 Jews paraded through the streets of Santiago in a celebration of the war's conclusion, displaying their symbols without hesitation (Senderey, 1956). This enthusiasm was further fuelled by discussions in Versailles regarding the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and subsequent talks held in the American Jewish Congress in Philadelphia in December 1918. The *Renacimiento* magazine, in its edition dated March 1919, contained an article titled "The American Jewish Congress," which said:

7 Recent works, such as Ramos Tolosa's (2020: 25–30), have emphasized the incompatibility of the unilateral and colonial character of the Balfour Declaration with its promise to grant independence to the local Arab-Palestinian population, while also allocating lands to the Zionist organization for the establishment of a Jewish National Home. Furthermore, Joan Culla (2024:74–84) outlines the miscalculations in this double promise and the limited effort made by England to address them. Finally, Rolf Reichert (1973: 215–218) emphasizes the insincere tone of British promises, suggesting they were functional tools to consolidate its territorial presence.

Can we remain indifferent when the world powers are deciding over the sovereignty of Palestine, where our monarchs reigned, our prophets lived, and our national language starts to revive? The country where we founded our colonies and where we placed the cornerstone of our future Hebraic home? (*Renacimiento*, 1919b: 46–47)

In contrast, the anti-Semitic riots that took place in Buenos Aires during the ‘Tragic Week’ in January 1919 raised questions about the integration of the Jewish community in the Americas. The magazine’s editorial board provided the following commentary on the aforementioned matter:

Oppressed in Europe, Jewish people sought in the free democracies of America an adequate field to develop their activities and liberal laws guaranteeing freedom of conscience and allowing the ample unfolding of individual faculties. Until recently, they believed to have found what they looked for. Today, old racist hatreds that appeared to be definitively buried among the prejudices of past eras seem to resurface in the infinite Pampas and the Argentinian metropolis. (*Renacimiento*, 1919c: 41)

Indeed, the apprehension of an uptick in antisemitism catalyzed the Zionist awakening, which was further propelled by the accolade paid to Theodor Herzl in the Hall of Honour at the Universidad de Chile on July 17, 1919. On this occasion, Santiago Labarca, president of the university’s Student Federation, gave a speech titled “The concept of homeland for Hebrew people”, stating that:

Today those men, who preserved the feelings of race and love to the land of their ancestors, through time, countries, injustice and persecutions, organize a global movement to, following the principle of nationality proclaimed by Wilson, be allowed to come back to Palestine to the lands of their grandfathers and traditions, to found a new Judea that can be a spiritual guide to the world, as in the old times [...]. Isn’t it fair then that they be granted the right to definitively set their nomadic tent in the lands where their grandfathers’ ashes rest, the land scented by their legends? (*Renacimiento*, 1919d: 35)

Despite these advances, the article titled “The People of Israel in between Nations. Thoughts on the Zionist Conference” (Epstein) recognized the barriers that hindered the achievement of these objectives:

But today we are witnesses to the complete awakening of this nationalist aspiration, born from the current war, the tragic problem imposed on

Jewish citizens living in diverse fighting countries where fatality forces them to combat, to kill their brothers. It is such the weigh on their consciences ... that even Jews who firmly oppose Zionist ideas have adhered to the movement [...]. [B]ut it is unlikely that all who had established their homes in welcoming countries go back to Jerusalem, especially those from the free America. (*Renacimiento*, 1919e: 5–7)

Another article, titled “When, How and What?”, was more pragmatic in its approach:

We already know that when a community desires a territory, they must go there. From afar, through others’ powers, no matter how well-meaning they be, nothing will be obtained [...]. There is a way in which Jews who are not in Palestine can help: contributing with money, money for those who go and for those who are already living there [...]. Jerusalem will be freed by the fighters, the pioneers who settled there and the means to do it. The first will form the peace army that will conquer the country, the others, by supporting the army, will also contribute to the liberation of Israel. (*Renacimiento*, 1919f: 2)

As a result of the entrenchment of Zionist concepts and actions, in April 1919, the National Jewish Committee asked all Jewish societies in Santiago to cooperate for the common cause and send their delegates to meetings, besides:

requesting accounts of financial movements of all commissions prior to Zionism [...] [and] to have a collecting box made (with donations for the National Fund) and distribute them among the houses of Jews so that all children of Israel contribute, within their means, to the work of reconstructing our homeland in Palestine.

In addition, it was announced that a register would be compiled of all Israelis over the age of 18 residing in Santiago who expressed an interest in joining the Zionist organization:

The historic moment we are living in is the most solemn in all the centuries of our expatriation. The situation of our fellow countrymen in Western Europe, their lack of fundamental rights, their defenceless state against the mobs in many countries of the world tangibly demonstrate to us that, if we want to survive as a nation, if we want to continue being a nation, for the sake of our ancestors and all the previous generations who gave their blood and sacrificed their lives, we must concentrate our

efforts in order to obtain what we have desired for ten thousand years: Palestine ... We have the sympathy and help of all nations, to which we only need to show our integrity and union, organized under the Zionist flag. (*Renacimiento*, 1919g: 54–55)

The Zionist awakening in Chile between 1917 and 1919 can be characterized as a sudden and rapid realization of the movement's goals, precipitated by a confluence of external factors that came together in a brief period. This period marked a significant shift in language and action, erasing the perceived divide between Judaism and Zionism. A parallel can be drawn to the success of the Zionist campaign in the Jewish communities of the United States and Argentina, where fundraising and emigration to Palestine witnessed a notable increase. This stands in contrast to the trends observed in Western Europe and the USSR during this period.

In this sense, Zionism functioned as an articulating axis, thereby enabling the containment and channelling of internal differences that stood in the way of a converging organizational action. This lends further support to the notion that Chilean Zionism served as a unifying force, akin to a 'glue' (Senderey, 1956). In other communities, this role was assumed by a network of religious organizations (rabbis, synagogues, schools); however, these institutions were still in their early stages of development in Chile.

As it is shown below, Zionism played a significant role in the reduction of disagreements and rivalries, which were often excessively individualized due to the absence of a robust institutional framework:

The only way in which we will be considered as a respectable entity is by showing the collective that we are one will, one spirit, one end. It is now, when this union is most needed, when being divided should be considered a crime against our nation, when we see that in Europe nations are clustering by racial groups, and we, wretched and miserable, are divided by questions of such importance as shallow passions, vanity or being from different countries, while they throw at us the name of "Jews" as an insult. (*Renacimiento*, 1919h: 45–46)

Despite its unifying nature, Zionism was devoid of content and paradoxically promoted both immigration to Chile and emigration to Palestine. Overall, the sudden enthusiasm for Zionism led to a reduction in internal conflict. The call for the inaugural Zionist Congress, which took place between September 18 and 20, 1919, underscored the necessity for it to be adequately representative, as articulated by the leader, Boris Cojano:

Who can then legitimately represent the whole Jewish community in Chile? In my humble opinion, the only body that could enact that representation would be a Jewish congress composed of delegates from all Jewish societies in Santiago and the provinces of Chile. (*Renacimiento*, 1919: 18–19)

5.4 The 1919 Zionist Congress and the Eruption of Internal Tensions

The First Jewish Congress in Chile was Zionist in outlook and demonstrated the pivotal role of this movement in centralising Jewish organizations. It was resolved that a central body would be established to unify all Jewish-Chilean organizations: the Zionist Federation of Chile. This body would represent Chilean Jewish interests in key international Jewish organizations, including the Jewish delegation in Versailles, and advocate for establishing the Jewish Home in Palestine. This marked a definitive convergence of the Chilean Jewish community's identity with the Zionist movement. The news was published in an article in the *Renacimiento* magazine titled "The First Jewish Congress in Chile. Its Most Important Resolution":

In voting to create the Zionist Federation of Chile, a legal entity that represents Zionism, the Jews in this welcoming Republic have, like those in America and Argentina, declared their principles. Jewish people do not pursue the abolition of current values due to the crisis, nor seek the elimination of borders. Jews only have one dream: the nation. They want to recover Palestine and rebuild the Kingdom of Israel. They are, above all, Zionists. (*Renacimiento*, 1919j: 1–2)

In a similar vein, a resolution was reached to petition the Chilean government to lodge a formal protest with international bodies regarding the massacre of Jews in Western Europe, with the governments of Great Britain, the United States and France also being addressed. Additionally, the Congress committed to the following: the first census of the Jewish population in Chile; the construction of a building that could accommodate all community organizations; the construction of a central library that met the needs of organizations in the provinces; the creation of an official news outlet for the community; and the development of cultural, artistic and sports activities (Senderey, 1956). However, the way in which representation in the Congress was arranged showed the autonomy gained by the already existing organizations. Rather than electing all delegates universally, it was decided that each organization

would have the right to designate a certain number of delegates according to size. Consequently, when the Directive Board and the Executive authorities of the Zionist Federation were chosen, the interests and leadership pursuits represented were legitimate, but opposite. As set out in the article “The First Zionist Congress of Chile”, the following assertion was made:

In this situation, it is understandable that everyone tried to take advantage of the circumstances and get representation for their group in such a favourable way, which will hardly occur again, to tackle this work. The Congress, although reaching a solution to the problem, remains taken aback, and in the unavoidable obligation to act, does it in a hesitant and imperfect manner. Let’s not blame it for it. It has done everything that could be done. On the contrary, let’s congratulate ourselves for taking this initial step and trust that time and experience will perfect the institutions whose grounds have been built in good time. (*Renacimiento*, 1919k: 51–52)

Consequently, considerable endeavours were required to avert the fracture. In this situation, the First Zionist Congress,

would have been condemned to failure without the Sephardim. There were continuous disputes between Ashkenazi institutions and their representatives; Sephardim brought peace and harmony. The labour of Matías Albala was of key importance. He was elected vice president of the Congress together with Najum Trumper as second vice president and Jacobo Kusnetzoff as president. (Nes-El, 1984)

This information confirms the key role played by Sephardi Jews. Indeed, two Sephardi Jews from Temuco were members of the governing body, namely the vice president and the spokesperson. Furthermore, the Zionist Centre Bene Kedem, founded on June 3, 1926, was a locus of intense labour, particularly in relation to Keren Hayesod, the primary fundraising organization for the State of Israel, established in 1920. This trajectory ultimately led to the establishment of the Maghen David Centre in 1926, which served as a gathering point for the Sephardic Jewish community in Santiago. The stipulated regulations were as follows:

The Chilean Central Zionist Organization Bene Kedem, founded on June 3, 1926, aims to spread among Sephardim in Chile the aspirations of Zionism in all its aspects and organize the forces dispersed in the country in centres named “Bene Kedem.” Also, to contribute with all means at its

disposal to the reconstruction of the Land of Israel based on the directive principles informing the work of the World Zionist Organization, represented in Chile by the Zionist Federation of Chile. (*Sociedad Bene Kedem*, 1926)

Jewish congresses began to be celebrated on an annual basis. During this period, the Sephardi wing had close ties with numerous Russian/Ashkenazi youth groups, which were active in educational, community and press organizations, including the schools of Vaad Hajinuj, the Bicur Joilim organization, that cared for the sick, and the *Nosotros* magazine, which served as the community's official publication between 1926 and 1930. The amalgamation of the Sephardi Bene Kedem and various Ashkenazi youth organizations resulted in the establishment of the Jewish Youth Association (*Asociación de Jóvenes Israelitas*, AJI) in 1928. Since 1929, the AJI has been responsible for managing the Jewish Polyclinic, which was founded in 1922 on the popular San Diego Street. From 1929, the polyclinic began to offer free medical attention to the entire neighbourhood. Furthermore, the AJI established a free legal assistance office for the general public (Senderey, 1956: 84).

Paradoxically, the establishment of connections between Sephardic Jews and Russian/Ashkenazi youth organizations occurred due to a growing discrepancy between the visions and interests of the youth and those of the Ashkenazi adults responsible for the direction of these organizations. A significant proportion of young Ashkenazi individuals were not proficient in Yiddish, had completed secondary education, were pursuing tertiary education, and expressed a strong sense of involvement in the significant transformations occurring in the country following the election of Alessandri in 1920.⁸ The

8 The election of Arturo Alessandri Palma as the Chilean president marked the conclusion of an oligarchic era, during which the right to vote and be elected was largely unrestricted, excluding most adult males. Additionally, a significant social divide existed during this period, as the state was unable to establish the foundations of a social security system, and the economic benefits derived from the nitrate cycle were beginning to wane. The first government of Alessandri (from 1920 to 1925, interrupted by a military coup in 1924 and resumed in 1925) responded to these demands for change by implementing the demands set out in the 1925 Constitution, adopting a presidentialism model that addressed all the demands. However, the period between 1925 and 1932 was characterized by confusion and volatility, leading to the authoritarian regime of General Carlos Ibáñez del Campo (1927–1931), who was deposed in 1931 due to the severe economic and social consequences of the Great Depression (1929–1933). Following an intense period of political turbulence, Arturo Alessandri emerged victorious in the elections of 1932, marking the start of a new presidential term that lasted until 1938. During this period, Alessandri's primary objectives were to steer the country out of the economic crisis and establish a new constitution.

combination of these factors, in conjunction with the passion characteristic of their generation, rendered them more impatient, fervent and resolute. They naturally assumed leadership roles within these organizations due to their higher education and the leadership skills they were developing. However, their vision aligned more closely with the popular side of the community, leading to clashes with the organization's founders, who adopted a more pragmatic approach, were reluctant to engage in ideological debates and were more focused on achieving material wellbeing that could be associated with social prestige.

These differences became apparent when, at the insistence of the new Zionist Federation of Chile, the main organizations in Santiago joined together on September 12, 1920, to form the Jewish Circle of Santiago (Senderey, 1956).

The Circle brought together, under one roof, a wide range of functions that had previously been spread across the community. These included the synagogue, school, library, cultural club, charity and cemetery administration. The Circle's board of directors was composed of individuals from the old elite, and its primary focus was fundraising and the construction of facilities to support existing organizations. This approach set aside the complex ideological debates emerging within the Zionist movement. The organization also brought together the first generation of direct immigrants and engaged in the establishment of a basic economic foundation in the retail industry and certain manufacturing and craft activities that required a certain level of specialization and qualification (Matus, 2018: 117). Consequently, from 1909 to 1919, the initial organizations did not prioritize Jewish education or Zionist content.

In any case, the promotion of Yiddish by the populist wing aggravated the generational and social conflict. Sephardic Jews were excluded from deliberations in Yiddish, as were Russian-Ashkenazi youth, a factor that united these groups. Because the Sephardic group had a stronger cohesion of ideas, customs and interests, forged in their centuries-long experience under the Ottoman Empire, and because they were also a minority fraction linked to the Zionist organizations (*Bene Kedem*), they were able to distance themselves from the generational, social and linguistic conflicts of the Ashkenazi world. In addition, because it had links with both groups, it was able to act as a mediator, giving it greater importance than it should have had because of its small, relative weight in the Zionist organization.

The youth of AJI had been allies of the Circle on the issue of Yiddish between 1928 and 1930, but their social and political views, which were also close to Zionism, inevitably distanced them from it. The best expression of this gap was what happened with the *Nosotros* magazine, a weekly publication founded in

1926, which became the official voice of the Zionist Federation of Chile after merging with two previously existing magazines. In February 1927, the magazine's director was Natalio Berman, a young doctor who, in 1930, became president of the AJI (Schonhaut, 2020). Berman led moderate pro-Yiddish, Russian/Ashkenazi youth with the populist wing of the AJI. This confrontation, coupled with the debate surrounding the representation of Zionism, ultimately led to Berman's departure from community activities and the subsequent collapse of Chilean Zionism.

In the face of the initial manifestations of the 1930 Great Depression and the imminent prospect of being compelled to divest their recently acquired edifice, the Circle decided to discontinue its financial assistance to external entities. Historically, under the direction of the old elite Russian/Ashkenazi, the Circle had been a proponent of populist organizations and the AJI, albeit not through the allocation of direct financial contributions, as these were earmarked exclusively for the synagogue. However, after Bicur Joilim, an organization that assisted the sick, received an unfavourable response to an exceptional request made to the Circle, they chose to disband. As a result, they founded their own organization and, on September 8, established Jevra Kedisha, which handled Jewish funeral practices and eventually managed its cemetery (Senderey, 1956: 97).

In subsequent years, the Circle encountered difficulties in meeting its financial obligations for acquiring its premises in 1927 and expanding its new building in 1930. As a result, it opted to rent the spaces previously occupied by the AJI and the Cultural Centre (moderately populist and pro-Yiddish) to address its funding challenges. The Centre faced increasing criticism when it became unable to pay for the use of the community cemetery, which resulted in a woman being buried in a non-Jewish cemetery (Senderey, 1956).

In essence, a considerable number of projects initiated in Chile during the prosperous presidency of Ibáñez del Campo (1927–1931) were financed by external debt. Consequently, these projects became unsustainable and unfeasible when the economic crisis intensified in the late 1930s.

These sacrifices contributed to exacerbating the prevailing division between the Russian/Ashkenazi youth, who exhibited a greater affinity for the populist faction, and the senior old elite leaders of the Circle, who utilized Yiddish as their symbolic representation of authority. In an article in the *Nosotros* magazine titled "Open Tribune: The Art of Disguising Sacrilege as Sanctity," Jacobo Pilowsky described a contentious exchange between the magazine's editor and the editor of the *Semanario Israelita de Chile* magazine (a Yiddish publication representing the ruling group).

Nosotros reported that the directive board of the Circle was planning to transform the organization into a joint-stock company. However, the *Semanario* categorically denied this information and launched a critique of young people for their apparent lack of knowledge of Yiddish. The editor of *Semanario* (No. 10) stated that: “The editor of *Nosotros* does not want to understand that the times of the Spanish booklet of copied material headed by the Spanish-speaking editor are in the past”. Subsequently, the editor of *Nosotros* provided the following response:

And why does the one who speaks Yiddish put on a saint face [...]. Nobody would believe that the one writing these present lines is against Yiddish. However, I prefer a pinch of truth in Spanish than a lot of lies in Yiddish [...]. Why brag so much about Yiddish when it is not being made proud by you. If your *blettel*⁹ is going to be accounted for in the Yiddish word, it will be in passive rather than active mode. (*Nosotros*, 1930a: 22)

Subsequently, an article by Natalio Berman, entitled “N.V. (Naum Vital) or the Initials of Discordance”, was published:

The remark he throws at us, that we do not know anything about Judaism, that we do not have a Jewish soul and that that is the reason why *Nosotros* does not have value, is an argument we need to counter. Not for ourselves, but for the hundreds of young Jews who are in our situation, at the margins of total assimilation. In our case it was easy to ignore everything and enjoy the comfort of indifference towards Jewish life, as that is precisely what N.V. is inviting us to do. They induce us to abandon our Jewish activities for lacking a Jewish soul. Fortunately for us, we know our conscience, we know that despite living in an environment that leads us to assimilation, we belong to our people, we must work for it and it for us, and the leaders of our childhood days did not do that.

[...]

And the second [offense] was made by N.V.,¹⁰ who, using the press in the way that hooligans [thug in Yiddish] used the *nagaika*,¹¹ lashes out against *Nosotros* and our director, as cowardice forbids them to go for

9 Possibly meaning ‘sheet’ or ‘paper’ in Yiddish, similar to the word for ‘role’ in Spanish.

10 Editor of the *Semanario Israelita*.

11 From Russian, short whip used by Cossacks.

the people that generated the idea of those actions and that N.V. rejects. (*Nosotros*, 1930b: 35)

This bitter discussion led the president of the Zionist Federation of Chile, Adolfo Crenovich, to express in the chronicle section that “because of a social issue, a controversy between bodies of the collective exploded.” He does not provide a qualification for the comments, but he goes on to state the following:

I'd like to make it very clear in this opportunity that the *Nosotros* magazine gave Zionism all it was expected from it. Although it is true that it is easier to reach certain ideas in Yiddish, in my opinion, it is of great value to have a magazine in the language of the country in which we are living. What catches my attention the most is that a colleague of mine from social work, Mr. Melnick, dared to say that Mr. Berman is receiving benefits. From the directive board, I have the responsibility to say that *Nosotros* brought and keeps bringing value, and its director does not profit from it. I'd like to state for the record that we will look out for the *Nosotros* magazine and that, in our opinion, it has given great benefits to Zionism and the Federation. (*Nosotros*, 1930c: 41)

However, the matter was not concluded there. In the following pages of the same number, Mauricio Faivovich expressed strong opposition to the idea of transforming the Circle into a joint-stock company:

Given the fact that the Jewish Circle is an institution that was created and is sustained until now by social means, and having the Jewish collective responded in an effective manner when a work so encouraging as the construction of a social building was promoted, I do not think it reasonable today, when a great part of the work was funded by such means, to turn it into a joint-stock company, which in the end will become an antidemocratic entity, where those who own larger economic means will command and settle decisions. (*Nosotros*, 1930d: 46–47)

In the aforementioned article, Jacobo Pilovsky made the following contribution:

It is time that Jews stop thinking of their social interests as negotiable. Those who support the joint-stock company say that it will satisfy the middle class. But that is not the case: the middle class gave their donation gladly, without expecting any return [...]. On the contrary, those who gave

large sums want to secure themselves with documents [...] What will happen with members who did not contribute, those who do not have stocks? [...] We should not forget that the history of the Circle does not begin now, but rather, in the times when members voluntarily brought their chairs from their homes to the Hall. (*Nosotros*, 1930d: 46–47)

At the culmination of the discussion, Mauricio Baltiansky offered the following perspective:

For me, the question of the joint-stock company is merely a commercial association, which should only be concerned with business and ensure that stocks return good dividends [...]. Ultimately, I do not see any risk regarding debt, as there are no expected difficulties, especially when the Circle is in good, responsible hands. (*Nosotros*, 1930d: 46–47)

Three months later, issues underpinning youth reproaches to their elders came to the fore. In an article in *Nosotros* entitled “Appealing to the Conscience of Youth”, the AJI critiqued the minimal effort made by parents to involve their children in Judaism between 1910 and 1930:

Respect for the Jewish flag and the Torah were preserved, but it seemed as if they were the last Jewish people that would live in Chile, as they allowed a generation of a thousand young Jews to grow up without notions and appreciation of Jewish customs and lifestyle. Young people have lost their childhood years in which their souls should have been shaped. And our elders are to blame.

[...]

To the elder leaders ... We do not demand that they encourage us, as we cannot, by principle, repay them, but we vigorously condemn those who express contempt to youth, which, besides being ill-mannered, indicates that manners are not obtained by contact with fabrics, furniture or fur. (*Nosotros*, 1930e: 5–7)

Conversely, the emphasis was placed on their dedication to their host nation:

We take charge of recognising Chile, its generous hospitality concerning the care of people with physical, moral or spiritual illnesses. We have the Polyclinic that spreads wellness to a populous and grateful neighbourhood. We have placed the basis for a legal office that will give relief and defence to the destitute, who, victims of the powerful groups, do not have

the means to implore justice in front of the court. Also, a night school, conferences for workmen and a public library complete our community work for the moment. (*Nosotros*, 1930e: 5–7)

In conclusion, the emphasis was placed on their Zionism:

Zionism will be our ideal and it will receive the attention it deserves. Propaganda, a donation campaign, and deliberations made with a broad vision will take preference in our sessions. (*Nosotros*, 1930e: 5–7)

Consequently, the forces that propelled the schism were further strengthened before the 11th Chilean Zionist Congress, held on September 15, 1930.

5.5 The Collapse of Chilean Zionism in 1930

As outlined in the preceding section, these dynamics were further exacerbated during the absence of the Zionist Federation president, Adolfo Crenovich, who was obliged to attend the 16th World Zionist Congress in Europe as a representative of the Chilean Federation. Crenovich was able to suppress the discussions between factions until March, but, in his absence, the 11th Chilean Zionist Congress was not adequately prepared (Nes-El, 1984: 150) and, between June and mid-September, mutual reproaches accumulated. The escalation of tensions can be attributed to the significant generational gap between first-generation immigrants, who primarily spoke Yiddish and exhibited a cautious or conservative political disposition, and young Jews, who entered the country as children or were born in Chile, spoke Spanish and became university students, becoming influenced by the changes that shook the country during the period between 1920 and 1932.

In 1921, Daniel Schweitzer, an adherent of anarchist ideology and a figure closely aligned with Arturo Alessandri and his minister (Navarro, 2023), assumed the role of president of the Student Federation of the Universidad de Chile, an organization founded in 1906 and recognized as the oldest in Latin America. Volodia Teitelboim, a law student who won a literary prize in the Floral Games of 1931 and went on to have an outstanding political career in the Communist Party during those years, was also a prominent figure. Natalio Berman founded the Chilean Socialist Party and later joined the Communist Party. Lastly, Ángel Faivovich was a prominent senator of the Radical Party. These movements and parties were distinguished by their secular character, representation of the middle class (Radical) or the emerging populist sector

(Communist and Socialist), inclusivity towards Jews, alignment with the transformative events of the era (such as the Mexican Revolution, First World War, Russian Revolution, student movements in Latin America), and their perception as avant-garde spaces during that period (Nes-El, Moshé, 2009: 109–110).

Consequently, at the inception of the 11th Congress, a discernible confrontation emerged between the leaders of the Zionist Federation/Jewish Circle – who were old elite and staunchly pro-Yiddish – and the alliance that had coalesced around the Russian youth and the AJI, the populist moderate pro-Yiddish wing of Bicur Joilim, and the majority of the Sephardi delegates who represented Santiago and Temuco. The sessions were characterized by significant discord, insults, discredit, and acrimonious accusations, ultimately culminating in the contentious election of a new directive board, with Berman assuming the role of president and Arueste (Sephardi) as vice-president.¹²

However, the erstwhile directive board, representing the Zionist Federation and the Jewish Circle, declined to relinquish the funds and the offices to the new directive and prohibited the AJI from the premises on Serrano Street. In response, and by mediation of the Sephardic wing, the Argentinian-Sephardi Zionist journalist Daniel Elnecave, who had attended the Congress as an observer, was entrusted with assuming the role of deputy president of the Zionist Federation of Chile (Nes-El, 1984). In his letter dated October 1 and addressed to Naum Zokolov, chairman of the World Zionist Executive, which was published in the November edition of *Nosotros*, Elnecave attempted to be conciliatory. However, as demonstrated below, it became evident that the break was grave:

From the beginning of the Congress, it was evident that it was divided into two. On one side were the elder, those who were in charge, together with the delegates of the Jewish Circle; and on the other the delegates of the AJI, other societies and provinces, adding up to three quarters of the Congress. This indicates that the opposition was a majority [...]. Then the executive board of the Congress was elected. An incident followed: the members of the directive board withdrew, arguing that they would not give accounts of their labour to the new Congress. Under these conditions, the Congress could not produce effective work. Thanks to the intervention of some influential members of the community, Dr. Berman was asked to resign from the presidency. He immediately accepted and the members of the Federation were reincorporated.

¹² The atmosphere is delineated in meticulous detail from the perspective of young people in *Nosotros* magazine, No. 43.

Then, I was requested to assume the vacant president position. Both sides insisted, seeing that I was neutral in these local issues, and thus, I was proclaimed president unanimously. Calm and serenity were back thanks to my encouragement and the speeches I gave any time I sensed that a storm was about to break [...]. Now the new directive board elections are approaching. Most delegates ask for a combination of old and new members. The elders, on the contrary, demand to enter as a block. I call for understanding and peace. The elders show intransigence, while the youth seek conciliation. Everybody wanted the cooperation of Mr. Crenovich, the ex-president, and some of his collaborators, so I did what I could to recommend a coalition list, but it was to no purpose; no agreement was reached.

Then, a single list of candidates was put forward, gaining 54 votes and 16 abstentions in a universe of 70 members present [...]. My personal impression is that the Zionist work will make great progress with the new directive board, so it is necessary that they receive all the moral support they expect on your part. (*Nosotros*, 1930f: 35–36)

Despite these efforts, the outcome was negative. A few weeks later, Berman was removed from the directive board of *Nosotros* on the grounds that he was considered a “bone of contention.” The publication ceased to exist because of its funding being withdrawn. Berman ceased participating in community organizations and turned to Chilean politics, becoming the founder of the Chilean Socialist Party (1932) and deputy of the Republic.

Furthermore, the internal structure of the Circle was found to be fractured. In 1930, the Zionist Federation of Chile was subjected to a severe reprimand from the World Zionist Organization, which instructed them to maintain peace and unity (Nes-El, 1984; Senderey, 1956).

Despite the subsequent resolution of internal conflicts within Chilean Zionism, these tensions persisted in 1931 and were further exacerbated by the influx of divergent doctrinal currents from Palestine, including the *Mapai* (subsequently known as the Labor Party), *Pole Sión* (socialists), *Revisionists* (nationalists of the right), and *Mizrajistas* (Arabs). However, the *Sephardim*, such as Robert Levy, ultimately succeeded in restoring unity. On January 20, 1933, the *Semanario Israelita* published the following statement:

We are on the verge of a chaos of societies worse than the one of 1931 [...]. We do not want to put the blame on anyone, but we neither want to remain apart as witnesses when the time to speak comes [...]. All honest Zionists know the cost of the famous conflicts inside Zionism and the

Jewish society in Chile, and society activists do not deny it [...]. It is precisely because we all know the price we paid that we cannot allow the chaos to grow [...]. We have to regulate each other and prevent personal attacks, always looking for mutual understanding. (Senderey, 1956)

However, the publication of the *Semanario* was suspended shortly after the previous editorial was published, coinciding with the rise of Hitler to power in Germany in 1933, the onset of persecutions and murders, and the increasing influx of refugees escaping the Nazis. This event compelled Chilean Zionists to unite and resolve their internal divisions. In that same year, Ángel Faivovich succeeded in extricating the Circle from its most onerous debts, and a significant number of members were re-recruited, with their membership fees being settled. The 17th Zionist Congress (1935) established that debates were to be conducted in Spanish or with simultaneous interpretation, in exceptional cases where they were in Yiddish. The Sephardic wing played a pivotal role in this decision, securing three seats in the elected directive board. Their influence persisted until 1937, contributing to establishing a sense of unity within the community (Senderey, 1956; Nes-El, 1984).

5.6 Conclusion

Zionism's initial lack of favourable conditions for development in the emerging Jewish community in Chile was countered by external factors, including the Balfour Declaration, the end of the First World War and the discussions in Versailles about the creation of a Jewish Homeland in Palestine. These events promoted Zionism and assigned it an articulating role inside Jewish organizations.

As the Zionist discourse did not conflict with other forms of leadership that held significant influence in various countries – whether religious, socialist or integrationist – it succeeded in uniting all Jewish segments, divisions and organizations that had previously operated independently. However, this role transformed Chilean Zionism into a space where pre-existing disruptive tendencies converged and were subsequently reinforced during the 1920s. This led to the emergence of tensions between Jewish “nations” (Russian, Sephardi, Ashkenazi, and Mizrahi), along with generational, social, political, and linguistic differences.

These tensions were contained until 1930, when the country was still enjoying traces of superficial prosperity, organizations were not overwhelmed by debt, and they had not exceeded their cap. However, by the end of 1930, the economic crisis had led to significant social unrest, with the rise of new left-wing

political parties. These groups were better able to represent the interests of young, educated Jewish people, who felt represented by the first generation of centrist parties. In this context, the Zionist Congress of 1930 exceeded the limited financial and organizational capacities of the reduced collective of Jewish organizations in Santiago, whose strength dwindled when the economic crisis intensified, and the president of the Zionist Federation was absent.

The collapse was caused by generational, sociopolitical, and linguistic divisions, and debate inside Zionism was not about doctrines, but rather about assimilation against authenticity. Youth accused elders of not giving them a minimal Jewish education, lacking notions on doctrine and focusing instead on mundane objectives with no Zionist prospect, and using Yiddish as an unjustified tool to legitimate their authority. These arguments led them to question the elders' leadership. This ongoing tension predated the emergence of Zionist divisions from Palestine, highlighting the fragility of Chilean Zionism beneath its outward appearance.

In these circumstances, the Sephardic community assumed an essential mediating role. Despite their smaller size, their higher organization around Zionism and their centuries-long experience of multiethnic cohabitation in the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire prepared them to act as a bridge between the West and the East. This was expressed in the pragmatic arbitration between Jews from different countries living in Chile. Furthermore, the use of Spanish by Chilean Sephardim fostered closer ties with the younger Jews in the AJI, many of whom were based in Santiago at the Bene Kedem Zionist centre or hailed from families in Temuco, Valparaíso, and La Serena. This proximity enabled them to serve as mediators and arbiters in tensions with the Ashkenazi, a role facilitated by prominent leaders such as Robert Levy, a seasoned journalist trained in Strasbourg, Alsace, Alejandro Gateño, and Elías Albala. Despite constituting less than 10% of the community, Sephardim gained prominence in certain debates and important decisions (Matus, 1993).

This chapter reconstructed how Zionism played a pivotal role in shaping the Jewish community in Chile, making it difficult, if not impossible, to separate Judaism from Zionism in this context. The implications of this remain relevant today.

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Approximations and Confrontations between Revolutionary Cuba and the Imperial State of Iran during the Cold War (1959–1979)

Fernando Camacho Padilla

6.1 Introduction¹

Political developments in Cuba and Iran profoundly influenced international relations during the Cold War, both regionally and globally before and after their revolutions, and continue to do so, especially concerning Iran (Gärtner, 2020: 1). Due to these two processes, which occurred 20 years apart, in – 1959 and 1979, respectively –, the United States lost influence in territories of significant geostrategic importance. In the case of Cuba, this was due to the country's dominance in the Caribbean Sea, its sugar production, and its territorial proximity to the United States. In the case of Iran, the responsibility of containing the Soviet influence in the area, the significant oil production of the Persian Gulf, and the control of the commercial routes were paramount.

During this period, Cuba and Iran were significant political actors in the Third World, particularly in certain Middle Eastern and African countries. While Cuba's internationalist policy in North Africa began in 1963 and became more active after 1965 in Sub-Saharan Africa, Iran's first foreign military actions started in the Arabian Peninsula in 1972 to support Sultan Qaboos of Oman against the rebels of Dhofar. Both countries were very distant from each other, but very close to the two major superpowers. While Cuba is less than 145 km from the United States, Iran shared a long border with the Soviet Union. A weak position of Washington could lead to the invasion of Iran, and a weak position of the Soviet Union could result in the invasion of Cuba. Iran never planned any military actions in Latin America, where all the countries had tight relations with the United States during this period, except for Chile under the government of the Unidad Popular (1970–1973). Still, Iran had embassies

¹ I would like to thank Domingo Amuchaústegi, Raysa Rodríguez Gómez, Mohsen Rezvani, and Afshin Matin-asgari for the information provided for this research.

in Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela,² and Mexico, and most Latin American countries had embassies in Tehran at that time, especially in the late 1970s when more delegations were opened (Camacho Padilla, 2019: 76–77). Nevertheless, Cuba's military cooperation with the Soviet Union, and the presence of Cuban troops in South Yemen, Ethiopia, as well as in other African countries, put the Shah on alert, especially when the continent became a major strategic region for the Iranian oil trade routes. In addition, due to the increasing subversive actions that were also taking place in Iran by insurgency groups that received guerrilla warfare training in socialist countries, including Cuba, the Iranian intelligence service, *Sāzmān-e Ettelā'āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar* (SAVAK), started to pay attention to Cuba's collaboration with regional insurgent groups. Simultaneously, the Cuban government was concerned about Iran's potential collaboration with its geopolitical rivals in Africa, like Rhodesia, Somalia, and South Africa. However, due to the collapse of the Pahlavi regime, there were no direct confrontations between Cuban and Iranian forces in Africa or the Arabian Peninsula.

The global history of the Cold War has gained popularity since the beginning of the 21st century, when Westad (2005) began to expand the global scope of this political tension. Also, the Cuban and Iranian revolutions have been deeply studied. We have an extensive production of academic and journalistic works that analyse the two cases, including aspects of their foreign policy. In relation to Iran, also Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's foreign relations (1941–1979) have been a significant topic among different historians, mainly regarding the United States (Gil Guerrero, 2016; Alvandi, 2016; Offiler, 2015), but also with Spain (Stampa, 2022; Camacho Padilla, 2020b), and a few African (Chehabi, 2016; Steele 2021a; Steele, 2021b; Steele, 2023; Steele, 2024) and Latin American countries (Camacho Padilla, 2023; Camacho Padilla, 2019). For decades, Cuba has received much attention from US and Latin American scholars due to the international consequences of Castro's revolution, although when it comes to its relations with African and Asian countries, there are not many publications available yet, with just a few good exceptions (Gleijeses, 2002; Taylor, 2023). Even fewer academic publications exist about Cuba's relations with the Middle East (Fernández, 1988; Camacho Padilla & Stites Mor, 2023). Nevertheless, to date, no academic investigation has focused exclusively on the specific relations between Cuba and Iran during the last century, nor on how

2 In the 1970s, Venezuela and Iran intensified much their bilateral relations due to their discussion within the OPEC. Ambassador Manucher Farmanfarmaian worked much on this subject while he was appointed Ambassador in Venezuela since November 1972 to November 1977 (Farmanfarmaian & Farmanfarmaian, 2005: 407–435).

both countries perceived each other in relation to their political processes and influence abroad. I conducted preliminary research on this topic in a previous article on Iran-Latin American relations in the 1970s, where I outlined the early contacts between Castro and Khomeini (Camacho Padilla, 2019: 91–92).³

Given the significant restrictions on access to diplomatic or political documentation in Cuba and the impossibility for foreign scholars to do so in Iran, tracing the relations between the two nations during the Cold War is challenging. Consequently, most of the sources for this research primarily comprise diplomatic reports from various countries, including the United States, the Dominican Republic, France, Canada, Great Britain, Spain, Mexico, and from the Arabian Gulf. However, a few interesting files were also consulted in Cuba and Iran. All these sources provide a comprehensive yet detailed overview with various perspectives on the topic addressed. Furthermore, since 2018, I have conducted oral and email interviews with Cuban officials who held political or diplomatic responsibilities in the Middle East, providing detailed information on Cuban political strategies in the region. The information they provided is highly relevant to understanding Cuba's foreign policy in the region, given the significant limitations on access to diplomatic materials. Finally, this chapter does not cover the bilateral relationship between the two countries after the Iranian revolution due to its scale and complexity.

The chapter is arranged in chronological order, encompassing the most salient aspects of the subject over a twenty-year period (1959–1979). This approach enables the observation of the dynamics of the various junctures in the relations between Cuba and Iran, both in the bilateral context and in the covert activities carried out by both States against each other. This period also coincides with the intensification of the authoritarian nature of the Shah's regime, which occurred following the ousting of Prime Minister Mosaddegh in 1953. This process of political oppression was sustained by several events that were perceived as posing a significant threat to the stability of the Shah, including the Iraqi Revolution of 1958 and the 1963 protests led by Khomeini against the Iranian government's reforms, known as the White Revolution (1963).⁴

The chapter commences by addressing the initial endeavours made by revolutionary Cuba to formalise diplomatic relations with Iran, which proved unsuccessful. In the context of the Cold War, the following sections demonstrate how antagonistic positions developed between the two countries during the 1960s. This rivalry ultimately led Cuba to provide support to armed opposition groups against the Shah, thereby exacerbating the situation. The final

3 A general overview of Cuba-Iran Relations during the 21st century is available in Brun (2020).

4 For more details about Kennedy and the modernization process in Iran, see Offiler (2015).

part of the chapter focuses on two aspects of the 1970s decade. Firstly, another Cuban endeavour to establish bilateral relations was made between 1975 and 1976, which again failed. Secondly, Cuba's efforts to extend its ideological influence, in addition to providing support for other revolutionary processes underway in the Arabian Peninsula and sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in South Yemen and Ethiopia. This scenario was met with concern by Iran, primarily due to its territorial proximity, but also because it was part of the primary commercial route for its oil. Consequently, both Cuba and Iran found themselves providing support to opposing sides in several of the political processes that took place in this region, thereby engendering profound uneasiness that was expressed at various times and locations by both Fidel Castro and the Shah. The 1979 revolution occurred during a period of heightened political tension between the two countries, resulting in a comprehensive transformation of Iran's foreign relations with the international community, including Cuba.

6.2 Early Contacts of Revolutionary Cuba and the Imperial State of Iran

At the time of the Castrist revolution, Cuba and Iran had not established formal diplomatic relations. However, there had been sporadic political contacts between their respective ambassadors in Washington,⁵ and eventually in European cities such as Paris and London over the century.⁶ The sole initiative undertaken with the objective of enhancing relations between the two nations prior to the revolution was attributable to the interest of the dictator Fulgencio Batista in extending Cuba's relations with multiple countries in the Near and Far East. Consequently, in 1953, it was determined that a diplomatic mission would be dispatched to multiple nations, as stipulated in the Official Gazette of the Cuban Government:

5 In September 1902, soon after gaining independence, Cuban President Estrada Palma informed the Persian ambassador to the United States, Isaac Khan, about his interest in formalizing diplomatic relations. Document GH1321-K30-P21-32. Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran. Three months later, Mozaffar ad-Din Shah Qajar responded by confirming that "every effort will be made to develop relations between Persia and Cuba." However, this effort was not carried out in a short period (*Secretaría de Estado y Justicia*, 1904: 115).

6 For details about Iran–Latin America historical relations in the early 20th century, see Camacho Padilla (2020a) and Camacho Padilla (2021).

In order to consolidate the friendly relations between Cuba and the Republic of Indonesia, the Union of Burma, the Dominion of Ceylon and the Kingdom of Iran, it is considered convenient to appoint a Special Embassy to visit these countries on a goodwill mission. (Ministerio de la Gobernación, 1953: 19)

Following the coup d'état of March 10, 1952, Fulgencio Batista sought recognition from the international community. This aspect became increasingly important after the formation of the United Nations. To legitimise his government, he called elections for November 1, 1954, of which, as expected, he was victorious. The inauguration of the president was held on February 24, 1955, with representatives from several foreign countries in attendance, including Indonesia, India, Korea, Pakistan, Lebanon, and Turkey.

It is possible that the political instability which characterised Iran in 1953, and which ultimately led to the fall of Prime Minister Mosaddeq, may have contributed to the delay in notifying the Iranian government about the Cuban diplomatic mission. This visit finally took place at the beginning of 1955. The mission was led by the renowned Cuban intellectual Santiago Claret,⁷ owner of several prominent newspapers and with some diplomatic experience. The team also included his brother Pompei Claret and Francisco Leza, who served as counsellor. The Cuban delegation stayed in Iran between 23 and 29 January, and according to the US Embassy in Tehran:

The three members of the Mission were received as guests of the Iranian Government. They had arrived in Iran after an extended tour of the Far East and were on their way to Beirut and Rome before returning to Cuba.

In the course of the visit, Ambassador Claret made protocol calls on the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Court. A luncheon was offered in the Ambassador's honor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Mission also attended a few other receptions. Otherwise, the better part of their stay in Tehran was spent sight-seeing. Unfortunately for the Mission, the weather closed in on the day that they were to visit Isfahan, so that they were obliged to spend their entire visit in Tehran.

As far as the Embassy has been able to determine, the Mission's purpose in undertaking this trip was in fact limited to promoting good relations with Cuba. Some newspapers carried stories of the Mission opening

⁷ In 1953, Santiago Claret visited Japan, Thailand, India, and Iraq. In 1955, the countries involved were Ceylon, Burma, Indonesia and Iran. In 1957, he also went to Korea.

conversations with the Iranian Government regarding the sugar trade, but these seem to have been unfounded and to be the type of story which inevitably seems to exercise the imagination of the Tehran press.⁸

In the wake of the Cuban Revolution, Canada too became intrigued by Fidel Castro's foreign relations. In this regard, Canadian representatives in Tehran communicated with the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; however, the response they received from the head of the Americas Department in 1960 was incorrect, likely due to a memory deficit. The information provided to the Canadians was most probably not from the previous year, but from the Cuban mission that visited Tehran before the revolution, in 1955. In any event, the observations recorded on the scope appear to be in alignment with the evaluations previously articulated in the US dispatch:

We recently had an opportunity to discuss Cuban affairs with Mr. H. Safinia, Director of the Fourth Political Department (North and South America) in Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mr. Safinia mentioned that a Cuban good will mission which visited Iran last year had been entertained officially by the Foreign Ministry and had been received by the Shah: He did not seem to be aware of any particular purpose of the mission other than good will, mentioning negatively that he did not think that sugar sales were dealt with in the mission's conversations in Tehran.⁹

It is clear that the mission sent by Batista to Iran in 1955 had no impact on improving diplomatic relations. The reasons for this are principally attributable to the difficulties that began to arise once Fidel Castro's guerrilla forces initiated their activities on the island at the end of 1956.

In a move that echoes Batista's strategy for gaining international recognition and credibility for his government in the aftermath of the 1952 coup d'état, the new Cuban leaders adopted a similar approach a few months after the 1959 revolution. Ernesto Che Guevara, who was probably one of the most internationally

8 Unclassified Despatch No. 394. From the US Embassy in Iran to the Department of State. Tehran, February 23, 1955. RG 59. 1955-1959 Central Decimal File. Box 2601. National Archives (NARA). Between late January and early February 1960, Eugenio Soler, Cuba's ambassador to India, visited Iran. However, it is not clear if he met with the Shah; he did, however, offer sugar at a favorable price. For this reason, it is possible that the Iranian diplomat was actually referring to the mission that Fulgencio Batista sent to Tehran a few years earlier.

9 Letter of the Canadian Legation in Iran to the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Tehran, 18 July 1960, Ref: 5/3-40-PT-2. Vol: 5018. Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

charismatic figures in the new government of Fidel Castro, was assigned to the mission, visiting several countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.¹⁰ At that time, the new revolutionary government did not officially have a communist ideology.¹¹ However, some states began to view their political process with distrust, including Iran. According to Leland Rosemberg, the Dominican Chargé d'affaires in Tehran of dictator Leónidas Trujillo, already in the middle of 1959, the SAVAK was following Cuba's movements in the Middle East, most probably after giving them many details about Castro's delegation:

General Baktiar has expressed to me his concern about the tour of a Cuban delegation around countries of the Middle East, and he is surprised that Commander Guevara has been received by General Nasser in Cairo. General Bakhtiar has immediately sent a new telegram to all Iranian diplomatic missions with clear instructions to deny him entry visas to Iran. He also informed me that he is going to notify friendly countries about Commander Guevara.¹²

In any case, Che Guevara never tried to visit Iran during his tour. A few weeks later, Rosemberg informed the Dominican Secretary of Foreign Affairs that Che Guevara was visiting India and that SAVAK had notified him that the Iranian and Pakistani governments were working together to reject Guevara's visa application to Pakistan.¹³ However, Guevara, along with the rest of the Cuban delegation, finally visited Pakistan and held several meetings with the country's highest political authorities (Fernández, 2005: 117–121).

During this period, the Cuban government also decided to open new embassies and raise the level of diplomatic representation in countries with which it already had relations.¹⁴ Iran was in the priority list, but according to Rosemberg, neither the Royal Court nor the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was willing to have a Cuban diplomatic mission in Tehran.¹⁵

10 Details of this Guevara tour can be read in Fernández Cañizares (2005).

11 The new slogan in the early years after the revolution was: "Ni capitalistas ni comunistas, simplemente cubanistas" ("Neither Capitalists neither Communists, Cubanists simply").

12 Confidential letter no. 303 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Santo Domingo, June 20, 1959. Reference: 3114528. Archivo General de la Nación (AGN).

13 Letter no. 340 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, December 28, 1959. Reference: 3114961. AGN.

14 Letter no. 632 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Tehran, July 19, 1959. Reference: 3114528. AGN.

15 Letter no. 632 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Tehran, December 28, 1959. Reference: 3114961. AGN.

Soon Castro's revolutionary language began to echo ideas and criticisms of the intellectual leaders of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity movement, such as Gamal Abdel Nasser, Josip Broz Tito, Jawaharlal Nehru, Kwame Nkrumah, and Kusno Sosrodihardjo Sukarno (Glick, 1960: 87–89). Due to the growing confrontation with Washington and the rising tension with the rest of Latin America, in 1960, Fidel Castro started to reach out to other governments from the nascent Third World.¹⁶ However, the idea of creating a united block to face Washington's aggressions could also include countries without strong anti-colonial and anti-imperialist sentiments. Hence, the Cuban government considered the possibility of hosting a Conference of Underdeveloped Nations in Havana with similar characteristics to the Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung in 1955, where Latin America was not officially represented, but Brazil attended as an observer state. Notably, Iran was among the participating countries. However, it decided not to continue with the Non-Aligned Movement project due to its high level of confrontation with some of the movement's main sponsors, such as Nasser. Also, Iran had a distant relationship with India because of its strong collaboration with the Soviet Union and its permanent tension with Pakistan, a close ally of the Shah. During 1965 and 1971, Iran gave military support to the Pakistani generals in power (Pasha, 2014: 6–7).

However, before the Non-Aligned Countries summit meeting took place in Belgrade in 1961, the Iranian position was not fully clear to the Cuban government; therefore, Castro made some efforts, as he did with other leaders, in trying to gain the support of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi for the Conference of Underdeveloped Nations. In January 1960, the Cuban ambassador to India,¹⁷ Eugenio Soler Alonso,¹⁸ contacted the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to plan a meeting in Tehran to invite the Iranian Government to participate in the Havana multilateral conference, as he had done with other Asian countries. The Dominican Chargé d'Affaires Rosemberg, together with his US counterpart, Edward T. Wailes, met the Iranian vice minister of foreign affairs. The three diplomats decided to meet Soler Alonso, but by then it was clear that none of their governments was willing to attend the conference in Havana.

16 For the history of this concept, see Palieraki (2023).

17 For details about the beginning of India-Cuba diplomatic relations, see Prasad (2024).

18 Eugenio Soler Alonso was a veteran of the International Brigades that fought in the Republican side during the Spanish Civil War. It is a matter of interest that his appointment was made November 2, 1959, when he was already living in India since 1956 as an employee of United Nations. In 1960 he traveled also to Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Pakistan, Ceylon, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines to present the idea of the conference in Cuba. In July 1961 he was resigned from office for disagreements with the Cuban government and move to Caracas (Venezuela). Exp. 6304. Collection: Eugenio Soler Alonso. Centro de Gestión Documental – Ministerio Relaciones Exteriores (CGD-MINREX).

The only purpose of meeting Soler was to get more information about Castro's plans. The ambassadors of Argentina and Brazil in Tehran were also informed by Rosemberg and Wailes about this episode.¹⁹ Finally, Eugenio Soler visited Tehran between January 29 and February 2, 1960, carrying out protocol activities and holding meetings with Iranian government officials. In addition to the invitation to participate in the aforementioned conference, the Cuban government expressed its interest in establishing diplomatic relations and in exploring cultural and commercial ties, particularly regarding sugar. Following the visit, the United States Embassy reported that the Iranian authorities did not attach great significance to the event and did not formally confirm their participation in the conference, despite having already made the decision not to attend.²⁰ The Mexican Chargé d'Affaires in New Delhi was also interested in the result of his activities:

I have the honour to inform you that I have been in contact with Mr. Eugenio Soler Alonso, Cuban Ambassador to India and former Director of the United Nations Information Centre in New Delhi.

In terms of the SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization] countries,²¹ the ambassador has been reticent in the conversations I have had with him. This suggests that he has not yet achieved success with those governments.

Today, the Cuban Ambassador is departing for Havana to inform his government of the outcome of the negotiations. His absence is scheduled to last two weeks.²²

19 Secret letter no. 28 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Tehran, January 21, 1960. Reference: 3114961. AGN.

20 Confidential telegram 31 from the Embassy of US to Iran to the Embassy of US to Cuba. Tehran, February 4, 1960. RG 84, U.S. Embassy, Havana, Classifies General Records, 1940–1961. Box 94. NARA.

21 SEATO primarily comprised countries situated outside the region, yet demonstrating a vested interest in both the region and the organization itself. The following countries were involved: Australia (which administered Papua New Guinea until 1975), France (which had recently relinquished French Indochina, by 1955), New Zealand, Pakistan (which, until 1971, included East Pakistan, now Bangladesh), the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom (which administered Hong Kong, North Borneo and Sarawak) and the United States.

22 Exp. No: 54/342/60. ASUNTO: Conferencia Afro-asiática y de la America Latina, from the Mexican Embassy in India to the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs. New Dehli April 6, 1960. File: III-1986-8. Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada / Acervo Histórico Diplomático de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores.

Because Cuba received little support for this initiative, it put the idea aside in late July 1960, but began to consider inviting left-wing organizations or national liberation movements to an international meeting instead of State representatives. This event, known as the Tricontinental Conference, took place six years later, in January 1966 (Gettig, 2020: 251). According to the Canadian records:

Mr. Safinia was quite certain that Iran had never had any intention of participating in any Conference of Underdeveloped Nations organized by the Government of Cuba. He did not, in fact, seem to be aware of any such project. As Mr. Safinia put it; however: "Given our relations with the Soviet Union, and our Mutual Security Pact with the United States, not to mention our commitments through CENTO,²³ how could we take part in such gathering?"²⁴

When the confrontation between Cuba and United States increased in the middle of 1960, Iranian authorities considered that President Eisenhower lacked determination to react firmly against Castro. According to Rosenberg, this situation worried Iran greatly due to its proximity to the Soviet Union because, according to the Iranians, any show of weakness on the part of Washington could be exploited by Moscow to take military actions in the country.²⁵ This concern became bigger when they considered that Venezuela could eventually become a communist country, and how that could affect its oil production.²⁶ The Shah was also worried that the Soviet Union would pressure Venezuela to nationalize its oil industry.²⁷ After the creation of Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in September 1960 during the Baghdad Conference,²⁸ the director of Shell in Iran, one Mr. Jochen, told the Dominican Chargé d'affaires:

23 Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) was a military alliance of the Cold War among different states of the Middle East with close relations with the United States. It was also known as the Baghdad Pact.

24 Letter of the Canadian Legation in Iran to the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Tehran, 18 July 1960, Ref: 5/3-40-PT-2. Vol: 5018. LAC. This document suggests that Mr. Safinia was unaware of Eugenio Soler's diplomatic mission to Tehran.

25 Letter no. 262 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Tehran, July 13, 1960. Reference: 3114961. AGN.

26 Letter no. 321 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Tehran, August 4, 1960. Reference: 3114961. AGN.

27 Letter no. 318 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Tehran, August 4, 1960. Reference: 3114961. AGN.

28 Manucher Farmanfarmaian's memoirs regarding the creation of OPEC are interesting for revealing the Venezuela-Iran connection (Farmanfarmaian & Farmanfarmaian, 2005: 344-345).

The situation in Venezuela is risky and the high percentage of communist employees in the oil sector could let to an immediate threat. A new Fidel Castro could emerge, and therefore, oil companies are trying to take advantage of their relations with the present government to save their capitals in case such event occurs.²⁹

Due to the Shah's concern regarding Caracas' attitude at the OPEC meeting in Baghdad, the Venezuelan delegation that visited Iran in September 1960 following an invitation by the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) was not received by any member of the Iranian government.³⁰

According to Dominican records, also in 1960, Cuba attempted to sell 100,000 tons of sugar to Iran through the mediation of the Zetle & Beacard company, based in London, in order to obtain revenue for the acquisition of weapons in Belgium, a country that had previously supplied arms to Castro. This operation was carried out by a friend of the Cuban Ambassador in London, named Zettland, who contacted different banks for the transaction, including Edmond Adolphe de Rothschild. However, Iran declined the offer right away. According to Rosemberg, Edmond Adolphe de Rothschild fully supported the Trujillo regime against Cuba when he was contacted by Zettland, so there was no interest in helping Cuba to get the arms.³¹

6.3 Early Geopolitical Tensions between Iran and Cuba

Soon after the Cuban revolution, Havana and Cairo intensified their political relations,³² which most likely alerted the Shah due to his diplomatic tensions with Nasser. The formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958,³³

29 Letter no. 446 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Tehran, September 29, 1960. Reference: 3114961. AGN.

30 Letter no. 418 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Tehran, September 18, 1960. Reference: 3114961. AGN. The delegation included Venezuelan oil Minister, Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonso Venezuela's Ambassador to UAR, and an oil expert.

31 Letter no. 214 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Tehran, June 8, 1960. Reference: 3114961. AGN.

32 No deep academic research has been yet published on Cuba-Egypt relations after revolution. Diplomatic documents have not yet been declassified in Cuba or Egypt. For some details about Nasser-Che Guevara meetings see Heikal (1973: 343–358).

33 The United Arab Republic was initially a political union between Egypt and Syria from 1958 to 1961, when the new government of Damascus decided to secede from the union. Egypt continued to be known officially as the United Arab Republic until 1971.

and the new strategies of its foreign policy in the region, especially towards the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, made the Shah feel threatened (Pahlavi, 1980: 141), which was fully justified because Nasser had allegedly been clandestinely sponsoring the Shah's political opponents.³⁴ Already in the middle of the 1950s, after the military coup against Mosaddeq (1953), Iranian exiles in Egypt received guerrilla welfare training, including Mostafa Chamran – who also received military training in Cuba – together with other national liberation organizations from Africa and the Middle East.³⁵ On July 26, 1960, two days after the Shah announced full diplomatic relations with Israel (Menashri & Parsi, 2007: 213–223),³⁶ Nasser broke relations with Iran and expelled its ambassador and all Iranian diplomats residing in Cairo. In the same speech announcing the break, Nasser also expressed full solidarity with the Cuban revolution. Raúl Castro, brother of Fidel Castro and Commander in Chief of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces, was visiting Egypt at that time, and followed Nasser with a revolutionary speech in which he condemned US foreign policy, expressed his hope for coming revolutions in the Americas, and acknowledged Nasser's political support. The following day, Nasser attended a reception at the Cuban Embassy in Cairo, and Fidel Castro also participated in an event at the Egyptian Embassy in Havana.³⁷ The fact that Nasser and Raúl Castro were together in the political meeting when Egyptian-Iranian relations broke, and while both of them expressed cordial gestures to each other, put the Shah on alert.³⁸ Similar reactions had different foreign ministries of different countries, such as Canada:

34 Mainly the clerics close to Mosaddeq and later to Khomeini. See Heikal (1982: 96) and Shama (2019: 115).

35 Other Iranian who received military training in Egypt in the middle of 1950s were Ebrahim Yazdi and Sadegh Ghotbzadeh (Heikal, El 1982: 79). For an in-depth study of Nasser's support for Iranian activists, see Hashemipour (2025: 1–19).

36 Ben-Gurion was the first Israeli prime minister to visit Tehran (December 1961).

37 Letter no. 603 from the Embassy of Spain to Egypt to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Cairo, July 28, 1960. Collection: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (10). Archivo General de la Administración (AGA).

38 Bilateral relations between Egypt and Iran started to improve again after 1967 war, mostly by the initiative of the Shah himself (Heikal, 1982: 10–11). The military defeat of Egypt made Nasser to have a more pragmatic foreign policy in the region. Also, Iraq difficult relations with both Egypt and Iran, made Cairo and Tehran getting closer and full diplomatic relations were reestablished in August 1970, few days before Nasser died (Shama, 2019: 116). By then, political relations between Cuba and Egypt were deteriorating because Nasser started to put distance on Cuba's revolutionary international ambitions already in early 1967 and because the leadership competition of the Third World movement. The situation got even worst after 1970, and Egypt's break with the Soviet Union (Fernández, 1988: 89). While Cuba's relations with Cairo worsened, it improved

It has been reported that Major Raul Castro returned to Cuba a week ago from a visit to the Soviet bloc and the United Arab Republic. Following his visit, President Abdul Nasser severed diplomatic relations with Iran in retaliation for a statement by the Shah that Teheran would continue its de facto recognition of Israel. It was observed that Nasser's condemnation of Iran came immediately after or coincided with Raul's visit to Cairo.³⁹

When Rosenberg wrote to the Dominican Secretary of Foreign Affairs to inform him that an Iranian journalist from *Ettelā'āt* newspaper, Amir Davalou, wished to visit Santo Domingo, he also declared:

And now, the fact of Iran's confrontation with the UAR is supported by Cuba through Raul Castro, who was present during the event in which Nasser attacked Iran, renews, and affirms the opportunity of a visit from a prominent member of the local press. This could promote news publications which will make known the position of the [Dominican] Republic in the Caribbean, and indirectly will influence the Iranian government to reinforce its friendship contact with the [Dominican] Republic, because is confronted with the regime of Fidel Castro, and Castro and Nasser are considered two irresponsible people at the highest point of their political madness as well.⁴⁰

This situation became more complicated for Iran when Nasser decided to expand his political relations with other Latin American countries by sending diplomatic delegations to increase exchange programmes in various areas. An important goal for him was to counteract Israel's influence in the region,⁴¹ a country that was also trying to strengthen its relations with Latin America.

rapidly with Iraq during 1970s when Sadam Hussein was Vice-President of the country (Fernández, 1988: 82–83).

39 Letter of the Latin American Division for External Affairs to the Canadian Legation in Egypt, Ottawa, 4 August 1960, Ref: 5/3-40-PT-2. Vol: 5018. LAC.

40 Letter no. 306 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Tehran, July 1960, 1960. Reference: 3114961. AGN.

41 Nasser's foreign policy in Latin America also caught the attention of the Spanish Embassy in Egypt. Source: Confidential letter, no. 117 from the Embassy of Spain to Egypt to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Cairo, February 8, 1960. Collection: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (10). AGA.

Both Zahedi and Safinia discussed this situation with the Dominican Chargé d'Affaires in Tehran.⁴²

The collapse of other neighbouring monarchies promoted by mounting Pan-Arab nationalism, together with the Mosaddeq experience (1951–1953), worried the Shah. The assassination of Faisal II of Iraq in 1958 that marked the end of the Hashemite monarchy in the neighbour country and the establishment of the Republic, only a few months after the creation of the UAR,⁴³ and the new Baghdad-Moscow alignment was seen as a threat to the security of the Iranian monarchy (Bomatim & Nahavandi, 2019: 329). Therefore, when President Eisenhower visited Tehran in December 1959, the Shah requested him additional military support to deter any possible aggression from Iraq.⁴⁴ A similar demand was made by Teymur Bakhtiar to President Kennedy when they met in Washington in March 1961.⁴⁵ However, the US president was more interested in avoiding political processes similar to the Cuban and Iraqi revolutions, both in Latin America and in Iran. Due to the characteristics of Iranian society, its natural resources, and proximity to the Soviet Union, a pro-communist revolution in Iran could pose a significant threat to global political stability. Therefore, Kennedy considered that economic reforms were a more effective strategy than rearmament to improve the living conditions of the most disadvantaged social classes, because, in his view, revolutionary yearnings could easily grow when substantial social discontent was present. For this reason, Kennedy encouraged the Shah to promote structural changes, which were implemented in 1963 through the White Revolution. Most Latin American countries shared a similar experience through the promotion of the Alliance for Progress program. The key distinction between the two processes was that the United States played a more active political and financial role in Latin America than in Iran, given the more limited economic resources of most Latin American countries.

In late April 1961, Rosemberg met the new Iranian Foreign Minister, Hossein Ghods-Nakhai, and discussed the good relations between the Dominican Republic and Iran. Curiously, Ghods-Nakhai also expressed that the regrettable

42 Letter no. 321 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Tehran, August 4, 1960. Reference: 3114961. AGN.

43 Nasser invited the new Iraqi Republic to join the UAR, but the new president, Abd al-Karim Qasim, rejected the invitation categorically (Lacouture, 1972: 183).

44 Document no. 281. Memorandum of Conversation, Tehran, December 14, 1959. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, Near East Region; Iraq; Iran; Arabian Peninsula, Volume XI, 658–659.

45 Memorandum of Conversation, Washington, March 1, 1961. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961–1962. Document 17, 39–41.

US policy towards Cuba was causing considerable tension and insecurity worldwide.⁴⁶ Probably, this comment was made due to the Bay of Pigs failed operation carried out a few months earlier. These statements are also interesting because they reveal a slight and temporary shift in attitude towards Cuba, possibly due to the official's general dissatisfaction with US foreign policy. However, it was not durable. During the October 1962 missile crisis, in response to the role played by Cuba and the Soviet Union, the Iranian government publicly declared its full support for President Kennedy on multiple occasions. The Shah himself addressed a personal letter to the US President in which he conveyed his complete commitment.⁴⁷

6.4 SAVAK Eyes over Cuba's Support to the Iranian Insurgency

The international focus on Cuba, precipitated by the adoption of a communist political orientation in April 1961 by Fidel Castro and the intensification of revolutionary measures that were then being implemented, prompted the Western bloc to adopt a vigilant stance. Furthermore, the Shah was concerned about Castro's steadfast commitment to enhancing diplomatic relations in Africa and Asia as a means of ameliorating his perceived regional isolation from other American states.⁴⁸ For this reason, and despite the enormous geographical distance, both Iranian diplomacy and its intelligence services began to closely follow Cuba's movements in the Middle East and Asia. However, Iran did not yet have intelligence networks in Latin America, and any information received from abroad would primarily come from the United States. At that time, the only Iranian embassies in Latin America were located in Brazil and Argentina, countries far from Cuba and with political relations that were not yet trustworthy. This is how the Shah relied on the information given by the Dominican Chargé d'Affaires in Tehran, with whom he also had a personal relationship (Camacho Padilla, 2023: 136). Thus, the geographical proximity of the Dominican Republic to Cuba and the growing strength of opposition groups against the Trujillo and Shah regimes led them to collaborate on intelligence. Initially, given Iran's scant knowledge of the Cuban revolution, the Dominican

46 Letter no. 144/61 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Tehran, April 25, 1961. Reference: 3114961. AGN.

47 Confidential Telegram 1959 from the Embassy of the US to Iran to the Department of State. Tehran, November 6, 1961. RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, Central Decimal File, 1960-63. Box 1631. NARA.

48 In 1962, Cuba was expelled from the Organization of American States (OAS). All member countries, with the exception of Mexico, broke diplomatic relations.

representative was asked to share his impressions on what was happening in Havana and, in turn, provide recommendations on the contacts that should be established.

The Cuban revolution in 1959 worried Dominican dictator Leónidas Trujillo, who felt that a similar process could take place in his country under the support of Fidel Castro. Cuba's former dictator, Fulgencio Batista, went into exile in the Dominican capital in January 1959 when the situation in Cuba became ungovernable. But he had a difficult relationship with Trujillo, who demanded large sums of money to allow him to stay in the country and kept him under strict surveillance. Batista was even briefly imprisoned on the order of Trujillo (Batista Fernández, 2021: 65).⁴⁹ The poor reception of Batista by Trujillo was attributable to long-standing political enmities that had arisen during the 1930s (Wiese Delgado, 200: 397). Political repression in the Dominican Republic increased enormously in the following months after the Cuban revolution, which consequently enlarged the agitation and fear of the opposition. The first Iranian delegation arriving in Santo Domingo to start negotiations about sugar supply, but also discuss intelligence cooperation, was composed of Teymur Bakhtiar,⁵⁰ head of SAVAK, and Amir Khosrow Afshar, Deputy Foreign Minister. They stayed three days in the Dominican Republic in October 1959 after participating, together with Prime Minister Eghbal, in the last meeting of the CENTO in Washington.⁵¹ During the visit, conversations took place with the agriculture minister and the director and vice director of the Central Bank.⁵² Moreover, Bakhtiar and Afshar went to the San Isidro air base, which was also a torture and interrogation centre. Then, they visited a weapons factory and the Navy Academy of San Cristobal.⁵³ However, these stopovers at the military installations were not published in either the Dominican or Iranian Press,⁵⁴ probably to avoid generating suspicions of potential collaboration between

49 After several efforts, Batista managed to leave Dominican Republic and settle in Madeira Island (Portugal) with the support of Washington.

50 Head of SAVAK from 1956 to 1961, when he was dismissed by the Shah. In 1970, SAVAK agents assassinated him in Iraq for his active role against the Shah.

51 Letter of the French Embassy in Dominican Republic to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. Santo Domingo, October 26, 1959. Reference: 367QO/21. Centre des Archives diplomatiques de La Courneuve (CADLC).

52 Memorandum no. 56743 from the Secretary of Foreign Affairs to the President of the Republic. Santo Domingo, October 14, 1959. Reference: 311496L AGN.

53 Letter of the French Embassy in Dominican Republic to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. Santo Domingo, October 26, 1959. Reference: 367QO/21. CADLC.

54 In fact, the Iranian press did not publish about this trip until four months later. See: *Kayhan*, February 27, 1960.

the secret services of these two countries.⁵⁵ Since the middle of 1959, Trujillo's diplomats and intelligence service had already collaborated closely with the SAVAK regarding Cuba's and Venezuela's foreign policies in the Middle East,⁵⁶ as Rosenberg stated on 20 June:

General Bakhtiar has been extremely grateful for the cooperation of the authorities of the [Dominican] Republic and especially for the efficiency and the speed shown by the Foreign Ministry under your charge. [...] He pointed that he has given orders to quickly terminate the list of subversive people, which he will provide to our government, and once again demonstrated his interest in receiving a list of the agents of international communism and other subversive people prepared by the Dominican authorities. [...] During our conversation, General Bakhtiar also informed me that he has already given instructions to his agents to follow the movements of the Venezuelan missions in the Middle East.⁵⁷

In any case, from the early 1960s, opposition groups to the Shah would begin to conceive of Cuba, as well as other revolutionary experiences, as a benchmark to follow. Likewise, the guerrilla struggle in Latin America was seen as an example of struggle to overthrow the Shah and generated many discussions among the Iranian left organizations.

There were many challenges in travelling to Cuba from Iran. Due to Havana's blockade and political isolation, flying was difficult. Direct flights from Western countries to Cuba were only available from Spain, and from Latin America, only from Mexico. Travelling to the other side of the Iron Curtain was also risky, especially as it risked interception by national and foreign intelligence agencies. The Spanish language was also a practical limitation, and there was no communication channel with the Cuban political organs. During the early 1960s, young left Iranian students – with critical views of the Soviet Union by then –, and mostly studying abroad, started to meet Latin American activists, mainly in European capitals, especially Paris, and discovered revolutionary writing by Che Guevara and later Brazilian guerrilla leader Carlos Marighella, among others, and started to contact political leaders

55 In the 1970s, the SAVAK also had collaborated with Pinochet's intelligence agency, Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA). For more details, see González (2009).

56 During the early days of the SAVAK, intelligence agencies of western countries, including CIA and Mossad, cooperated also in training and improvement programs (Bomati & Nahavandi, 2019: 390–392).

57 Confidential letter no. 303 from the Legation of the Dominican Republic to Iran to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Tehran, June 20, 1959. Reference: 3114528. AGN.

of other national liberation movements (Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, 2018; Friedman, 2022: 457). Shortly, some of these publications arrived in Iran in French and English. During the second half of the 1960s, the first translations into Farsi were already circulating around the country and being studied by left activists and members of left-wing political organizations, which soon became inspired by Che Guevara's statements (Rahnema, 2021: 232–264).

In this sense, Vida Hajebi Tabrizi⁵⁸ played a key role. She was a member of the *Hezb-e Tude-ye Irān* (Tudeh Party) and married in 1958 the Venezuelan Oswaldo Barreto Milani after meeting in Paris. He was a member of the Venezuelan Communist Party and later one of the leaders of its paramilitary arm, the National Liberation Front. Vida became an admirer of the Cuban revolution and its projection in Latin America and she participated in relevant clandestine missions of his organization, and later she was entrusted with political work both in Algeria and Cuba (Nayeri, 2017).

In early 1965, Cuban leaders came back with the idea of organizing an international conference to deliberate revolutionary strategies and condemn imperialism and colonialism. According to Jorge Serguera, former Cuban Ambassador to Algeria, when Che Guevara visited Algiers in February 1965 to attend the Second Asian-African Conference, they discussed the possibility of proposing that the president of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization host the next conference in Havana. In Algiers, they first talked to the Moroccan Ben Barka⁵⁹ and the Venezuelans Pedro Duno⁶⁰ and Oswaldo Barreto Milani, who at that time were living in the city (Serguera, 2008: 341–342). Barreto had moved to Algeria with his Iranian wife, Vida Hadjebi Tabrizi. They all supported the idea and then shared it with Yousef El Sebai in Cairo, with the help of Mohamed Heikal, director of the newspaper *Al Arham* and close friend of Serguera. Oswaldo Barreto participated in other preparatory meetings (Serguera, 2008 342–343), and when the Tricontinental Conference took place in January 1966, he attended as one of the representatives of his political organization. During the event, there were approximately

58 Vida Hajebi Tabriz (1936–2017). After returning to Iran, she was kidnapped by the SAVAK in July 1972 and imprisoned in Evin and Qasr prisons. For more details about her, see Faligot (2013: 49–57, 322–333, 575).

59 Ben Barka (1920–1965) was a Moroccan nationalist, politician, revolutionary, head of the left-wing National Union of Popular Forces (UNFP) and secretary of the Tricontinental Conference. He was “disappeared” in Paris in 1965 by Moroccan intelligence services with the support of the Mossad.

60 Pedro Duno was a Venezuelan philosopher, university professor, and guerrilla fighter.

500 delegates from 82 different countries,⁶¹ of which some bordered Iran, such as the Soviet Union,⁶² Pakistan, and Iraq. There were also political representatives of revolutionary organizations from Oman and the Protectorate of Aden (also known at that time as Occupied Yemen).

Due to the insistence of the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, two Iranian delegates were invited to the Tricontinental Conference in Havana as representatives of the "Iranian Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity," which was a non-existent organization. Their names were Amir Halamou Amir Dibadj Torkestani⁶³ and Rahaman Nader Zehtab,⁶⁴ who were undercover SAVAK agents (Faligot, 2013: 324). Both were discovered by Vida Hajebi Tabrizi who was also attending the meeting. According to her testimony, the encounter occurred by chance while they were speaking Farsi on their way to their room in the elevator of the Hotel Habana Libre, although it was most likely that she wanted to find out who they really were, since it seemed suspicious that they were not people somehow known to the opposition to the Shah's regime. In addition, two other Iranian nationals participated in the event as active members of the Tudeh Party and the Iranian Anti-Colonial Society. These were, first, Mohammed Reza Ghodwehin, and second, Rahim Namvar, who additionally represented the journal *Mardom*, the Tudeh Party's official organ. According to Azizi:

[Namvar] heavily protested the presence of the Shah's envoys and pointed to their lack of support for the North Vietnamese as the ultimate evidence of their being out of tune with the spirit of Havana [...]. [Namvar] spoke against the Tehran delegation on Cuban national radio and the Tudeh Party's organ *Mardom* subsequently reported on the whole episode. (Azizi, 2023: 225)

However, this episode did not have any repercussions in Cuba, but it confirms that, from an early date, Iran carefully monitored Cuban plans in the Middle

61 For details about the conference, see Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws (1966).

62 The head of the delegation was Sharof Rashidov (1917–1983), First Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party. When Fidel Castro first visited the USSR for first time in spring 1963, he also travelled to Uzbekistan where he visited cotton farms, young pioneer groups and the Mirzacho'l Steppe in company of Rashidov.

63 The name is probably misspelled. The correct one should be Amir-Holakou Amir-Dibad, who became deputy consul in Washington in 1970.

64 His full name was Rahman Nader Zehtab-Tabrizi and he served as an Education attaché at the Iranian Embassy in Washington in 1968.

East, as the Shah was aware of the guerrilla training given to combatants from different countries.⁶⁵

In addition, after the Tricontinental Conference, Cuba ended up establishing more formal contacts with the opposition to the Shah, especially with members of the Revolutionary Organization of the Tudeh Party of Iran (*Sāzemān-e Enghelābi-ye Hezb-e Tude-ye Irān*), a split from the Tudeh Party with Maoist positions. Soon, the instruction of thirteen militants was agreed upon, and Manuel Piñeiro asked Vida Hajebi to act as an interpreter during the military training (Nayeri, 2017). This group saw the Cuban Revolution and the Latin American guerrillas as an example to follow. For this reason, after the collaboration established between Vida Hajebi Tabrizi and Mohsen Rezvani, the leader of the group, the young Iranians arrived on the island to begin the intensive instruction programme (Matin-asgari 2002: 93), including Mohsen Rezvani himself,⁶⁶ Ata Poorhassan Aqaei Kashkooli (Ata Kashkooli), Iraj Kashkooli, Gudarz Borumand, Garsivaz Borumand, Parí Hajebi Tabrizi, Hassan Qazi, Ali Sadeghi, Parviz Vaez Zade Marjani, Mahmood Yalayer, Siavash Parsanejad, Ali kaeidi Chaharmahali, and Siamak Lotfolahi (Adventurers in connection with international terrorist organizations, 1977).⁶⁷ When some of them were arrested after returning to Iran, SAVAK discovered the guerrilla training that was given by Cuba and China (Azarbarzin, 2022: pos 2547). Over the following decade, approximately half of the group was arrested by the SAVAK in various operations, some of them even dying in clashes.⁶⁸ In January 1977, the Iranian newspaper *Keyhan* published a report on the formation of revolutionary cadres abroad, based on information supplied by the intelligence service, which proved to be remarkably accurate (Adventurers in connection with international terrorist organizations, 1977). Soon, Western diplomats became aware

65 This was the case of Mostafa Chamran (Zabih, 1982: 90), who also received military training in Egypt and studied at Berkeley University in the early 1960s. He joined the Lebanese Shiite militia AMAL (*Harakat Amal*) in the middle of 1970s, an organization which established training camps for fighters from Iranian and foreign sister organizations (Bayandor, 2019: 122–123).

66 Rezvani contends that the military training largely depended on the criteria of the Cuban instructor and lacked systematic coherence. He also expressed dissatisfaction with the Cuban political authorities' apparent disinterest for his organization and its political objectives in Iran, which contributed to a disappointing experience during his stay in Cuba. Interview with Mohsen Rezvani. Toronto, December 1, 2025.

67 For more details about this political organization, see: Shokat, 2005; Figueroa, 2023: 313–344 and Vahabzadeh, 2010: 19.

68 Interview with Mohsen Rezvani. Toronto, December 1, 2025.

of this situation after being informed by SAVAK,⁶⁹ but it seems that the collaboration between Cuba and the Iranian political organizations was short-lived since there is no evidence of more military training given to Iranians in the 1970s in the island, or at least significantly.

In those years, the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL), which was founded in Havana in January 1966, during the Tricontinental Conference, and had the responsibility to promote and coordinate revolutionary processes worldwide, gave little attention to the Shah's regime. Therefore, unlike other political adversaries in the region just one article related to Iran was published at the *Tricontinental* magazine before the revolution in 1979,⁷⁰ which is about the high cost of the celebration of the 2,500 years of the Persian Empire in Persepolis (no. 27–28, 1972: 181–183). There are also just three short publications in the *Tricontinental* bulletin (no. 28, 1968: 21–22; no. 66, 1971, 48; no. 68, 1971: 35–37). The first one is about the repression of Iranian university students and the last two are in relation to the murder of 13 guerrilleros after attacking a police station in Gilan province, an operation in which two other opponents also died. Moreover, some of publications of the OSPAAAL circulated in Iran around these years, especially guerrilla warfare tactics (Rahnema, 2021: 234, 251, 259), probably carried by the Iranian militants themselves who came from European countries. In any case, the scant attention given to the Shah's regime in the OSPAAAL publications may be due to that Cuba was not seeking an open confrontation with Iran in regards of a possible establishment of diplomatic relations, or, at least, in order to acquire Iranian oil, since those years is when crude exports began to acquire significant proportions worldwide.

6.5 Unsuccessful Attempts at Interchange and Normalization of Diplomatic Relations between Cuba and Iran during the 1970s

Since the early months after the revolution, Cuba realized that Iran was not going to be on its side. Its refusal to participate in the Belgrade summit

69 According to the records: "Arrested students, prior to March 1971, had revealed that several Left-wingers had been trained in Communist China and Cuba before being sent back to Iran". Political situation in Iran, 1972 Jan 01–1972 Dec 31. FCO 8/1882. Arabian Gulf Digital Archive (AGDA), <https://www.agda.ae/en/catalogue/tna/fco/8/1882>.

70 After the Iranian revolution, the only article published at the *Tricontinental* magazine was a short report distributed by the Islamic Republic (no. 72, 1980: 88–110). Few pictures of the Iranian revolution were also published in the *Tricontinental* magazine one year later (no. 75, 1981: 118).

ultimately confirmed to Castro the Shah's position on world politics. However, Cuba was interested in the sale of sugar abroad. A Spanish company named "Productos España" proposed to implement a triangular operation in order to sell 100,000 tons of sugar/year to Tehran for not less than three years, which was a very attractive possibility because the sugar trade with Iran decreased drastically after the revolution. The plan was to exchange sugar for petrol, which would be sent to Spain, and then use Spanish products to trade with Cuba in exchange for the value of the Iranian oil.⁷¹ Nevertheless, the project failed most probably due to the lack of interest of the Iranian counterpart.

In 1970, Iran was in need of more resources in order to continue with its development programs, and President Nixon was willing to help by acquiring more Iranian oil and even considering the possibility of relaxing some of the restrictions imposed on oil importations from Cuba. In this transaction, Norway would purchase Iranian petrol to resell it to Cuba. However, this never really happened because:

Flanigan and Kissinger warned the president in an action memorandum in 1970, and so he rejected the idea. The administration's desire to help the Shah balance his budget took a much more dangerous turn than a 'softening the U.S. attitude towards Cuba' ever would have.⁷²

However, during the 1970s, Iran indirectly received Cuban sugar from the intermediation of the Soviet Union. Cuban raw sugar was acquired by Moscow and then refined before being re-exported to Iran, as well as to countries such as Iraq, Finland, and Afghanistan, along with other allies that had no direct trade with Cuba (Dominguez, 1979: 158).

At the end of November 1975, Cuba opened its first embassy in Tehran, following the formalization of relations between the two states in early February (*Establecen Cuba e Irán relaciones a nivel de embajadas*, 1975: 1). However, it appears that the logistical preparations for establishing the embassy only began in late October:

Americas Division Chief Mahmud Hatf told Emboff he had been visited by Luis Marisy Figuero, counselor-designate, about a month ago.

71 Letter no. 203/64 from the Embassy of Spain to Cuba to the Ministry of Trade of Spain, September 7, 1964. Reference: 82/24128. File 12. Collection: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores (10). AGA.

72 Peter Flanigan was adviser of the National Security Council during Nixon presidency. See Hoff (1994: 260).

Figuerdo is now counselor of Cuban embassy in Cairo. Figuerdo told Hatéf he was looking for two floors of a building to serve as the location for the Cuban embassy, adding that in a decade the staff might be quite large.⁷³

The negotiations took place in Caracas in early 1975, following a Cuban initiative. Later, diplomatic relations were also conducted from the Venezuelan capital.⁷⁴ According to Pérez Yero, the main idea of this action was to collect information about the Iranian internal situation, especially in relation to the opposition groups.⁷⁵ However, Iran hoped that formalising bilateral relations would dissuade Fidel Castro from supporting insurgent opposition groups, and eventually adjust his political strategies in the Middle East and Africa, which, as was predictable, did not occur. On March 17, Luis Reyes Más was appointed Ambassador,⁷⁶ and this was made public in May (*Designado Luis Reyes Mas embajador de Cuba en Irán, 1975: 1*). However, he did not arrive in Tehran until November 9 of that year.⁷⁷ Prior to his current role, he had served as *Chargé d'affaires* in Beirut (1967–1974), where he had gained valuable experience in Middle Eastern politics, as well as an understanding of the region's traditions and religions, including Shia Islam. In line with his diplomatic duties, while in Havana, he also undertook several official visits to various countries, with a focus on political activities involving Cuban participation. Therefore, shortly before assuming office in Iran, he travelled to Ethiopia in July to express his

73 Unclassified cable n°. 1975TEHRAN11062_b, "Cuban Ambassador Reyes-Mas arrives in Tehran," 1975 November 13. Department of State. Wikileaks, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975TEHRAN11062_b.html.

74 Unclassified cable n°. 1975TEHRAN11062_b, "Cuban Ambassador Reyes-Mas arrives in Tehran," 1975 November 13. Department of State. Wikileaks, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975TEHRAN11062_b.html. According to British records, however, the establishment of diplomatic relations was discussed in Mexico City, and later, the bilateral relations between Iran and Cuba from the Iranian side were addressed from Washington, DC. See: *External relations of Iran, 1975 Jan 01–1975 Dec 31. FCO 8/2501. AGDA*, <https://www.agda.ae/en/catalogue/tna/fco/8/2501>.

75 Interview with Ramón Pérez Yero. Havana, June 15, 2019. Ramón Pérez Yero first worked for the Cuban intelligence agency and later at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He had different positions at the Cuban diplomatic representations in Ceylon, India, South Yemen, Kuwait, Chile, Mexico, and Libya.

76 Permanent Mission of Iran to the United Nations to Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations, New York, March 28, 1975. Collection: Luis Reyes Más Embajador en Irán 1975. CGD-MINREX.

77 Unclassified cable n°. 1975TEHRAN11062_b, "Cuban Ambassador Reyes-Mas arrives in Tehran," 1975 November 13. Department of State. Wikileaks, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975TEHRAN11062_b.html.

support for the revolution that had just overthrown Haile Selassie and establish diplomatic relations.⁷⁸ As expected, the US Embassy in Tehran closely monitored the movements of the Cuban ambassador in the country:

He was met at the airport by a second-rank protocol official, and his arrival was played in low key. Only the French-language paper carried his picture. Reyes-Mas is scheduled to meet Foreign Minister Khalatbari November 17 to present a copy of his letter of credence. Presentation of credentials to Shah will probably occur within a couple of weeks.⁷⁹

Luis Reyes Más presented his credentials on November 26; however, his stay was short, as he returned to Cuba on December 7 for a brief visit. According to his communication to the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the counselor's timely arrival was essential for the continuation of work on the embassy's installation and the establishment of his residence. As outlined in the document, the messages would be sent via the Cuban Embassy in Cairo due to ongoing communication difficulties.⁸⁰

During this time, according to Nancy Nuñez, the Cuban Embassy in Tehran distributed revolutionary propaganda, such as the *Tricontinental* magazine.⁸¹ In addition, the Iranian intelligence services must have closely monitored the movements of Cuban diplomats in Iran and regional countries, particularly South Yemen. This issue was discussed with US diplomats in Tehran:

Alam called charge morning of January 25 to say that the Shah had an additional question he wished our evaluation on, concerning the Cuban presence in South Yemen. He said Cuba's presence now amounts to 4,000 and is a threat of growing concern to Sultan Qabus and Saudi Arabia.

78 Unclassified cable n°. 1975ADDIS08408_b, "Visits by Cuban and North Korean delegations", 1975 July 14. Department of State. Wikileaks, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975ADDIS08408_b.html.

79 Unclassified cable n°. 1975TEHRAN11062_b, "Cuban Ambassador Reyes-Mas arrives in Tehran", 1975 November 13. Department of State. Wikileaks, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1975TEHRAN11062_b.html.

80 Cablegram from the Cuban Embassy in Iran to the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs via Cairo. Tehran, November 26, 1975. Collection: Luis Reyes Más Embajador en Irán 1975. CGD-MINREX.

81 Interview with Nancy Nuñez Pérez, director of *Tricontinental* magazine between 1975 and 1978. Havana, September 15, 2018. The following OSPAAAL publications are in the holdings of the National Library of Iran: Ben Barka (1968) and D'Estéfano (1968). Most probably due to the date of the publications, they were distributed in Iran before the revolution.

Needless to say, it is also of major concern to Iran, given its role in Oman and continued presence there.⁸²

Consequently, it is not surprising that the relationships were transient in nature. On April 7, the Shah instructed the severing of relations with Cuba, an idea that had been under discussion since mid-March. The decision was mainly the result of a meeting between Fidel Castro and Iraj Esfandiari, the leader of the Tudeh Party in exile, during the 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held in the first week of March 1976 in Moscow (Weckmann, 1997: 454). An additional factor was Cuba's backing for the insurrection in Dhofar. According to US sources:

[Foreign Minister] Khalatbari (and presumably Shah) outraged at report of meeting, which came on heels of Iranian intelligence reports that Cuban "advisers" now aiding Dhofar rebels in Oman. Source said Shah also upset by Cuban presence in Africa and had ordered Khalatbari to respond harshly to "give Cubans something to take their minds off foreign adventurism" (source quote). Source speculated actual break would probably depend on whether Castro owned up to meeting or tried to deny it and downplay issue.⁸³

It is worth noting that during the period when the Cuban Embassy was opened in Tehran, one of the most significant military achievements of that time was also accomplished. This success was marked by a decisive victory over South African troops during Angola's struggle for independence from Portuguese rule. This aspect would cause concern for the Shah, in part due to his good relations with the South African regime.

While the Cuban Embassy was shut down, the Soviet Embassy represented the Cuban interests in Iran.⁸⁴ The counsellor of the Cuban Embassy was responsible for handing over the goods, documents, money for potential expenses and the official vehicle to the Soviet representatives in Tehran. On

82 Secret cable n°. 1976TEHRAN00706_b, "Shah's concerns about African developments", 1975 January 25. Department of State. Wikileaks, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1976TEHRAN00706_b.html.

83 Confidential cable n°. 1976TEHRAN02649_b, "Iran threatens to break relations with Cuba", 1975 March 15. Department of State. Wikileaks, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1976TEHRAN02649_b.html.

84 Letter from René Anillo to Foreign Minister Raul Roa, Havana, April 9, 1976. Collection: Irán. CGD-MINREX.

April 17, he departed Iran for Cuba via Baghdad and Beirut.⁸⁵ Bilateral relations were re-established after the revolution in April 1979, when Cuba sent a diplomatic delegation to Tehran to meet members of the new government and Ruhollah Khomeini (Mazola, 2010).

6.6 Cuba's Support for Marxist Movements in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arabian Peninsula in the 1970s

Some months after the celebration of Tricontinental Conference (1966), Cuba sent OSPAAAL delegations to different countries to strengthen political contacts with left and revolutionary organizations. Countries close to Iran were visited, such as Pakistan, Syria, Egypt, and South Yemen, among many others, and contacts with Dhofar rebels began to grow.⁸⁶ For the Shah, it was crucial to keep the stability of the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz because it was Iran's only lifeline to export oil. The Indian Ocean became a major security area as well – especially the Horn of Africa and the historical Cape Province of South Africa –, because these were the main trade routes for the tankers which carried Iranian oil. According to him:

Defence of the Straits of Hormuz required that the nations on the Arab side remain our friends. Our forces had to be strong enough to prevent these friendly but poorly-armed governments from being overthrown. Guerrilla groups could be deterred only if they knew that Iran was prepared to move rapidly and forcefully to protect these nations. (Pahlavi, 1980: 142)

During the 1970s, the Shah was much concerned about the spread of communism in Africa (Heikal, 1982: 26),⁸⁷ including the Soviet and Cuban military intervention in Ethiopia and Angola, and the proliferation of Marxist-oriented national liberation movements which had strong Cuban support (Steele, 2023:

85 Rapport from the The counsellor of the Embassy of Cuba to Iran, Tehran, April 15, 1975. Collection: Irán. CGD-MINREX.

86 Email correspondence with Domingo Amuchaústegi, former OSPAAAL delegate.

87 By 1975, communist governments had assumed power in several African countries, including the former Portuguese colonies of Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Angola. Other examples include Ethiopia, where an important ally of the Shah, Haile Selassie, had just been overthrown by a revolution.

240–245), notably in Mozambique and Rhodesia.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the Cuban military presence on the continent underwent a process of consolidation, receiving substantial support in the form of arms from the Soviet Union.

Due to their fierce anti-communist position and common sympathies, Iran and South Africa began to have a strong political and economic collaboration after the 1960s, which also included military cooperation to guarantee security in the Indian Ocean, to protect the oil trade routes and prevent the expansion of the Soviet influence in the region (Chehabi, 2016: 699–701).

The first delegates from Aden to arrive in Cuba participated in the Tricontinental Conference. The following year, Cuba sent them weapons for their struggle against the United Kingdom. Finally, on the independence celebration on November 30, a Cuban delegation was sent from the Embassy in Cairo. During the early years after independence, Cuba maintained a cautious attitude due to the power balance among the different factions of the internal conflict. Already in 1968, Carlos Lechuga, Director of the Department of Asia, Africa, and Latin America at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, recommended to Raúl Roa, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the establishment of bilateral relations with South Yemen.⁸⁹ The discussion also continued in 1969, and another diplomatic report states:

The presence of a diplomatic mission in Aden will also allow us to set up a reception centre for information on events in North Yemen, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates, as this city is the headquarters of several revolutionary organizations in these countries.⁹⁰

By then, Aden was already hosting a considerable number of armed groups, mostly from the Arab world, and especially from the Palestinian movement (Halliday, 1990: 175–177).

Official relations between Cuba and South Yemen began on May 10, 1972, following nearly five years of deliberation within the Cuban government on this matter. Once Fattah Ismail of the National Liberation Front took control of the situation, Havana finally opted to formalize relations.⁹¹ In 1973, the respective diplomatic representations were opened and soon cooperation agreements

88 Secret cable n°. 1978TEHRAN06558_d, “audience with the Shah: African matters”, 1978 July 10. Department of State. Wikileaks, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1978TEHRAN06558_d.html.

89 Memorandum, June 12, 1968. Collection: Yemen del Sur. CGD-MINREX.

90 Memorandum “Cambios revolucionarios en Yemen del Sur”, June 28, 1969. Collection: Yemen del Sur. CGD-MINREX.

91 Email correspondence with Domingo Amuchaústegi, former OSPAAAL delegate.

were signed in different areas, including the medical field, the fishing industry, military training of local militias and a scholarship program in Cuba for Yemenite students. South Yemen also needed Cuban pilots for their MiG-15 and MiG-17, which were provided by the Soviet Union, because they lacked qualified personnel.⁹² Approximately eight to ten pilots were deployed to provide air cover and defend Aden against any potential aggression. However, they have also participated in air operations along the border with Oman, where some clashes occurred.⁹³

In a diplomatic report on the activities to be carried out by the Cuban Embassy in 1975, the following guidelines were given in relation to the revolutionary struggle in Dhofar:

6. COLLABORATE IN CONCERNING THE AID OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, ESPECIALLY WITH THE PFLO

6.1 On this point, our Embassy must maintain a constant exchange of information and criteria about the situation of the revolutionary movements operating in the area (PFLO, Eritrea, Palestinian Resistance, Revolutionary Organizations of North Yemen and Ethiopia), with the purpose of define the character and political tendencies of each of these organizations, their specific weight in the respective media where they operate, real perspectives of their revolutionary struggle and on this basis, be able to reach conclusions about the propaganda work that we must promote on each of these organizations and determine the amount and type of aid they should receive from the world revolutionary movement.⁹⁴

The Cuban presence in South Yemen alerted both Sultan Qaboos and the Shah, and they expressed their concern on different occasions to the White House.⁹⁵ Since the mid-1960s, Cuban contacts with Omani rebels were established through their political representation in Cairo⁹⁶ and thanks to Faysal

92 The Soviet Union refused to send pilots. Initially they had some Yugoslav flight instructors but for a short period. Informe Yemen del Sur. 1969. Collection: Yemen del Sur. CGD-MINREX.

93 Interview with Ramón Pérez Yero. Havana, February 7, 2024.

94 1975 Draft Directive of the Democratic and People's Republic of Yemen, October 23, 1974. Collection: Yemen del Sur. CGD-MINREX.

95 Iranian military assistance to Oman, 1974 Jan 01–1974 Dec 31. FCO 8/2241. AGDA, <https://agda.ae/en/catalogue/tna/fco/8/2241>.

96 File 274. DHOFAR: Frente Popular de Liberación del Golfo Árabe Ocupado. Correspondence & File 275. Golfo Árabe. Frente Popular para la Liberación de Omán y Golfo Árabe.

Ali Faysal,⁹⁷ the delegate who attended the First Tricontinental Conference. However, he did not belong to any insurgent group from Dhofar but from the Jebel Akhdar rebellion, which took place in the north of the country between 1954 and 1959. First contacts with Dhofari insurgents were established by OSPAAAL agents during their first travels to Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and South Yemen during the second half of the 1960s. Once the cooperation programs between Cuba and South Yemen were launched in 1973, a few Dhofar rebels who were living in South Yemen went to Cuba to pursue further education in a range of disciplines. Some Dhofari leaders also participated in political activities held in Havana, as did Abdel Aziz alQadi when attended to the First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba celebrated in December 1975 (Razzaq Takriti, 2013: 236). The Dhofar struggle became a prominent topic in the OSPAAAL print materials of that period, leading to the publication of several articles on the conflict in both the *Tricontinental* review and bulletin.⁹⁸

Sultan Qaboos and President Ford discussed the situation in Dhofar on several occasions, during meetings and by letters. Qaboos was very well informed about Cuban activities, and on March 16 (1976), told Ford: "In recent years the rebels were assisted with military training by Cuban personnel. Unlike the case of Angola, Cuban advisers did not, as far as we know, actually take part in the fighting."⁹⁹ However, according to Ramón Pérez Yero, Chargé d'affaires of the Cuban Embassy in Aden from 1972 to 1977, "some secrets operations were carried out."¹⁰⁰ According to Razzaq Takriti (2013: 303), a Cuban delegation also

Archivo histórico. Organización de Solidaridad de los Pueblos de África, Asia y América Latina (Cuba).

- 97 His real name was Sayyid Faysal b. Ali b. Faysal. He served as the imamate's delegate to many international events in various communist countries, including Albania and the Soviet Union. However, he returned to Muscat from Cairo in early September 1970 to work with Sultan Qaboos. Since that time, he has held several significant positions, including ambassador to the United States, minister of education, and minister of national heritage and culture. Due to these public responsibilities, there is limited information available about his previous political activities with the opposition. He passed away in 2003.
- 98 Articles and interviews published at the *Tricontinental* magazine: no. 11, 15 (1969); no. 29–30 (1972); no. 74, 77 (1981). Articles and interviews published at the *Tricontinental* bulletin: no. 36, 41 (1969); no. 54–55 (1969); no. 83 (1973); no. 88–89 (1974). For a deeper analysis of Cuba's solidarity with Dhofar, see Losier, et al. (2024).
- 99 Memorandum for Mr. George S. Springsteen. Subject: Letter to President Ford from Sultan Qaboos (S/S 7607970), May 22, 1976. Box 3, folder "Oman – Sultan Qaboos". National Security Adviser's Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders Collection. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.
- 100 Interview with Ramón Pérez Yero. Havana, June 15, 2019. Pérez Yero was designated as the Cuban contact with all the revolutionary organizations in Aden. He met all the well-known figures of the time, including Wadi Haddad and Ilich Ramírez. In Aden, he also

visited Dhofar. In addition, a small hospital was established by Cuban doctors in the village of Al-Ghaydah (Hawf District), located approximately 120 km from the border with Oman. This facility offered free medical treatment to the Dhofar rebels, civilians, and local population (Plekhanov, 2016: 114).

The Cuban mission to Dhofar comprised only three individuals, including Colonel Eduardo Morejón, Eduardo de la Torre – who documented their experiences in a book of memoirs – and an Afro-Cuban English-language interpreter. Guided by the PFLO, they crossed the border into Oman from South Yemen. Their objectives included exploring the terrain and meeting with various guerrilla leaders. They also had the intention of reporting the guerrilla situation to Cuban military intelligence, analysing the war scenario, and publishing a chronicle of their revolutionary struggle. However, no media publication was ever produced. With regard to the presence of Iranian troops, de la Torre makes the following observation:

The guerrilla leaders meet to assess the situation. I believe the discussion focuses on the events of the day. They approach me to share their insights on the international situation. In addition, we received unfavourable news: the troops of the Shah of Iran are stationed in Oman, and they have begun mobilising and advancing towards the area in which we are located.

I have been informed that the Shah's troops have launched an offensive in an attempt to encircle the enemy, with the aim of preventing the Dhofar guerrillas from crossing the border into [South] Yemen. We have been informed that it is imperative to leave at the earliest opportunity and cross the border, as there is a possibility that we may be trapped in the siege. (de la Torre, 2018: 218, 220)

In 1972, the Iranian Army arrived in Oman at the request of Qaboos to provide support in the face of an uprising and to prevent the conflict from spreading to the Persian Gulf (Goode, 2014). However, the Dhofar rebels always stressed that they had no interest in controlling the Strait of Hormuz, but Iran and the other Gulf monarchies did not believe them.

Furthermore, Iran commenced the collection of intelligence regarding Cuban activities in the Oman-South Yemen border region.¹⁰¹ The situation

had the opportunity to meet with representatives of Iranian organizations that were in opposition to the Shah's regime.

101 The Dhofar operation was the only Iranian military action outside Iran which taken by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

became more concerning when it was revealed that a small group of Iranian dissidents were receiving military training from Cuban advisors in South Yemen.¹⁰² Evidently, Iranian operations in Dhofar were on the rise, both by land and by air, but they encountered some difficulties. At the end of November, an Iranian Air Force F-4 jet was shot down inside South Yemen territory thanks to a Soviet-supplied modern rocket,¹⁰³ causing severe complications to the Shah because the plane had secret equipment.¹⁰⁴ One of the two pilots survived and was released to the Saudis a few days later, but the plane remained in South Yemen. The Shah wanted to get it back to rescue the secret information, even considering the idea of a military operation from Oman, which was immediately rejected by Sultan Qaboos.¹⁰⁵ However, Yemenis were already aware of the purpose of the flights over their territory, which was to report to the Shah about Cuban activities in the area, as they informed the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Isidoro Malmierca, during an urgent meeting in Havana.¹⁰⁶

The Iranian opposition groups in South Yemen, who were in contact with the Cubans during this period, were also particularly involved in the Dhofar rebellion against the Sultanate of Oman. Consequently, the Cubans and the Iranians cooperated with each other near the Dhofar border in opposition to Qaboos and imperial Iran. They provided medical care for injured and ill Dhofari people at the Al-Shahida Fatima Ghanana Hospital in Al-Ghaydah, among other activities.¹⁰⁷

102 Secret cable n°. 1976STATE291504_b, "Iranian inquiry on Cuban presence in Iraq, South Yemen and Ethiopia", 1976 November 30. Department of State. Wikileaks, https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1976STATE291504_b.html.

103 Interview with Ramón Pérez Yero, attaché at the Embassy of Cuba to South Yemen (1972–1977). Havana, June 15, 2019.

104 Secret Cable 1976TEHRAN12673_b, "Iranian handling of plane incident with PDRY", 1976 December 22. Department of State. Wikileaks, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1976TEHRAN12673_b.html.

105 Secret Cable 1976STATE298303_b, "Iranian handling of aircraft shoot-down", 1976 December 8. Department of State. Wikileaks, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1976STATE298303_b.html.

106 Information got by the confession of the Iranian pilot and from photographs and documents taken from the jet. Memorandum "Entrevista con Embajador de la República Popular Democrática del Yemen co. Mohamed Saad Ali, con el co. Isidoro Malmierca", undated. Collection: Yemen del Sur. CGD-MINREX. At least 2 other Iranian pilots were also captured by South Yemen during the Dhofar War, but apparently none of them were on a reconnaissance mission and therefore their liberation was not as complicated as it was during the previous incident.

107 Two Iranian sisters who worked alongside Cuban medical staff in southern Yemen, and were members of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, describe their personal experiences in an interesting publication (Afraz & Afraz, 2015). For a more in-depth study of this case, see the work of Marral Shamshiri (2024: 99–120).

When Cuba–United States relations improved during the Presidency of Jimmy Carter, the Shah was outraged. In a sarcastic tone, in June 1977, he pointed out “[...] Andrew Yong, the American ambassador at the UN, even had the gall to announce that Cuban military intervention in Africa is proving a positive help to stability [...]” (Alam, 1991: 258). In his memoirs, written during his exile after the Iranian revolution, the Shah declared:

Communist intransigence was to be witnessed elsewhere. More than 40,000 Cuban mercenaries had begun the bitter process of carving up Africa by fomenting war, rebellion and communism from Angola to Ethiopia. Africa is the continent of the future whose raw materials are now vitally demanded by the industries of the West. They will become increasingly important as time passes – and increasingly threatened. (Pahlavi, 1980: 18)

Due to the increasing political instability in Africa, Alexandre de Marenches,¹⁰⁸ the director of the External Documentation and Counter-Espionage Service (Service de documentation extérieure et de contre-espionnage, SDECE), proposed establishing a transnational intelligence organization called Safari Club by Iran, Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and France in 1976, although some of these states already had previous collaboration in intelligence sharing. Their primary goal was to prevent communist expansion in Africa, which was closely tied to Castro’s support for national liberation movements.¹⁰⁹ The Safari Club operated in secret and had a major role in different scenarios where the Cubans were also present, such as Angola and the Ogaden War (1977–1978), which involved Ethiopia and Somalia.¹¹⁰ In this scenario, and to stop the Somali invasion, Castro managed to send around 18,000 Cuban troops by the end of the conflict (Tareke, 2000: 656), including jets (MiG-17 and MiG-21) and

108 In his memoirs, Marenches describes some interesting operations, but nothing directly related to the Safari Club. See: Marenches & Ockrent (1988).

109 Marenches travelled to the participating countries in late 1974 to discuss the proposal with the different head of States (Glejeses, 2013: 67–68). The existence of the Safari Club was discovered by the Egyptian journalist Mohamed Heikal, who was allowed to see documents confiscated during revolution. More details about the history of Safari Club are available in Mamdani (2005: 84–89).

110 Cuban documents related to the Ogaden War have not yet been declassified but there are a couple testimonies published by Cuban officers that participates in the conflict such Villavicencio (2014) and Trujillo Hernández & Alonso Reina (2010). Two interesting Cuban historical narratives of the Cuba’s military actions in Africa with some information regarding its participation during the Ogaden War, although with clearly glorified rhetoric, are written by Yasells Ferrer (2011) and Pérez Cabrera (2020).

helicopters (MI-8), and self-propelled artillery (T-55). All pilots and crew members had extensive experience with Soviet military equipment (Pérez Cabrera, 2020: 310–311).

Iran, among other states, also became an actor in the fight between Ethiopia and Somalia by supporting Mohammed Siad Barre with military equipment, but as Steele asserts, “[l]ack of archival material from Iran makes it difficult to ascertain with certainty exactly what Iran supplied [...]” (Steele, 2023: 253). According to Saikal (1980: 180), “over then shipments of mortars, heavy artillery ammunition, and ground-to-air missiles, as well as personnel.” Tehran, however, claimed only the shipment of “light arms,” and denied any involvement of Iranian personnel in Somalia. US sources, more reliable than Saikal’s information, mention that only G3 German rifles were supplied by Iran after Carter banned the delivery of US weapons (Mitchell, 2016: 294–295).

When it was evident that Mohammed Siad Barre was not going to receive more military support by the Western powers, the Shah also decided to cancel his cooperation (Heikal, 1982: 130). From the beginning, Fidel Castro was fully aware of Iran’s role in the Ogaden War, as is described in a telegram sent after the official reception that the Cuban leader had in Havana with a delegation of the Democratic Party, led by Henry S. Reuss, in January 1978:

On Ethiopia, Castro said that he had tried to mediate peaceful solution, but despite his effort, Somali attack had occurred. while Castro said that a “basis for peace” exists, success of Somali aggression that would cut off Ethiopian access to sea would be “intolerable”. Castro said that US is sending weapons to Saudi Arabia and Iran which, in turn, provide arms to Somalia. When asked by congressman Reuss whether US action to close off arms leakage from Saudi Arabia and Iran, coupled with effort to secure Somali troop withdrawal from Ogaden, would lead to withdrawal of Cuban military from Ethiopia, Castro replied that, if these conditions achieved, there would be “no purpose” for Cuban forces, though wishes of Ethiopian government would be overriding. (Comment: there was difference of view among congressmen at meeting as to whether Castro was suggesting that he would be forthcoming on Cuban troop withdrawal under circumstances specified by congressman Reuss).¹¹¹

111 Confidential Cable 1978HAVANA00010_d, “Castro meeting with Codel Reuss”, 1978 January 4. Department of State. Wikileaks, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1978HAVANA00010_d.html. More documents from Department of State also show Cuba’s concern about Iran’s weapon supply to Somalia. A similar record, issued by the Foreign Office of Great Britain, conveys the same information, although it presents a discrepancy. In lieu of

The Shah himself took into consideration the possibility of getting involved in the conflict if Ethiopia invaded Somalia (Mitchell, 2016: 365). This situation would have led to a direct armed confrontation between Cuban and Iranian troops. Brzezinski himself gave this possibility full consideration. However, other US officials were concerned that they could be defeated in a humiliating manner by the Cuban troops, among other reasons, and therefore the idea was abandoned (Mitchell, 2016: 390, 412). The cessation of hostilities in the Ogaden War coincided with the initiation of significant mobilizations in Iran against the monarchy, ultimately leading to its overthrow within a span of less than a year. Despite Cuba maintaining a strong presence in other regions of Africa, during the last months, the Shah's attention was primarily focused on developments within his own country. This meant that monitoring Cuban actions in other regions became a lower-priority task.

Furthermore, the end of the Dhofar and Ogaden conflicts, coupled with the lack of meaningful connection between Cuba and the Iranian opposition, seemed to signal the end of the main hostilities between the two countries. However, given the involvement of Cubans in many scenarios, it is likely that the Shah was more concerned with Castro than with any other Third World leader.

When the Shah's monarchy entered a period of crisis, the Cuban government did not fully understand the events occurring in Iran because, at this stage of the revolution, there was no longer any direct communication with the major Iranian left-wing organizations. Most of the information was collected in Paris by journalist Jorge Timossi,¹¹² who established some relations with Iranians living in the city when Ruhollah Khomeini was residing in Neauphle-le-Château. In 1979, Timossi and Andrés Escobar published the only book about Iran edited in Cuba, which included some interviews with Iranian political organizations and religious leaders about the path of the revolution. Timossi also wanted to know their views of the Cuban situation. Regarding this question, the Organization of Iranian People's Fedai Guerrilla responded:

Our movement endorses the policy of the Communist Parties of Vietnam and Cuba. We were greatly influenced by the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. For instance, we offer our full support to the role

any reference to Fidel Castro in the meeting, the individuals who engaged in conversation with the congressmen were Carlos Rafael Rodríguez and Osmani Cienfuegos. See: Political relations between Cuba and Africa, 1978. FCO 99/159. The National Archives.

112 Jorge Timossi was a Cuban-Argentinian journalist. He was one of the main correspondents of the Cuban news agency *Prensa Latina*.

that Cuba played in defending the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). (Timossi & Escobar, 1979: 153)

6.7 Conclusions

The review of previously unexamined diplomatic materials regarding Iran and Cuba, mainly sourced from third countries, along with conducted interviews, helps to understand the key features of the relationship, allowing for an initial assessment analysis. The importance of both countries within the broader Cold War context ensured that Western powers remained highly attentive to all developments. The foreign relations established by Fidel Castro and Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi were crucial, influenced by various factors, including the geographical locations of both nations. As a result, diplomats from the United States, Canada, France, Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Spain, among others – due to their territorial, cultural, political, or commercial ties – also closely observed the actions of both Cuba and Iran. Access to extensive documentation allows tracing key moments in the countries' relations. However, once the Cuban and Iranian archives, including diplomatic and secret service records from that period, are fully opened, new information may become available to historians.

In conclusion, the chapter highlights the inherent complexity of the bilateral relationship during the Cold War; even shared basic needs proved unable to bridge their fundamental differences. Consequently, despite Cuba's demand for oil and Iran's need to import sugar, commercial activities remained non-existent, primarily due to political considerations.

Despite their enmity during the 1970s, there was no connection between the Cuban government and the Iranian revolution. By that time, political interactions with the Iranian opposition had ceased, with these interactions having been short-lived and limited to the mid-1960s. By that time, most of the people who had participated in the guerrilla camps in Cuba had either been imprisoned, exiled or deceased.

A key consideration is the relative size and financial resources of the two countries. It is evident that Cuba's capacity was comparatively inferior, and furthermore, the island's geographical distance from the examined scenario in this study exceeds that of Iran. Nonetheless, the perception of a regional threat in Iran was significant, potentially exacerbated by the remarkable success of the Cuban operation in Angola at the end of 1975 in support of the MPLA in the face of the South African invasion. This event also caused concern among other governments worldwide.

In any case, the Cuban experience was a great inspiration for an important sector of the Iranian left during the 1960s and 1970s. The exploits of Che Guevara, the speeches of Fidel Castro, Latin American revolutionary praxis and the Cuban military's successes in combating colonialism and imperialism in Cuba and several African countries were all attractive aspects that generated interest among the Shah's political opponents. Its direct consequence was an explosion of publications of works published in Farsi, although there were mostly translations from other languages. Nowadays, bookstores in Iran are still full of books on the life and political thought of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, as well as the Cuban revolutionary experience. The appeal of Che Guevara has also prompted Iranian film and theatre directors to produce various plays and documentaries about him, as has been seen in other parts of the world.¹¹³

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113 For example, information about Hamidreza Naeimi play on Che Guevara written in 2008 is available in RM & YAW (2020). The full film made by Pooyan Shahrokhi about Che Guevara's life (2003) is online: <https://www.myfilmworks.com/pooyanshahrokhi>. Other documentaries directed by Iranians are *Chasing Che* (2009) by Alireza Rofougaran (trailer available in: <https://youtu.be/kzY8hAdW65I>), and *Che, The Sweet Dream of the Cane* (2006) by Mahmoud Reza Sani.

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- Archivo General de la Administración (Dominican Republic)
- Centre des Archives diplomatiques de La Courneuve (France)
- Centro de Gestión Documental – Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores (Cuba)
- Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library
- National Archives (US)
- The National Archives (Great Britain)
- Wikileaks (Department of the State)

Interviews

- Domingo Amuchaústegi
- Mohsen Rezvani
- Nancy Nuñez Pérez
- Ramón Pérez Yero

Latin America's Visual Culture and Art in Iran in the Advent of the Islamic Revolution: Lost and Hidden Murals of Iran's 1977–1979 Revolution

Raffaele Mauriello

7.1 Introduction

Iran's 1977–1979 revolution represented a significant event in the long process of decolonization and national liberation movements of the Cold War. The country had been the theatre of the start of the Cold War, and the fall of the Shah and the victory of the revolution heralded the beginning of its end (Milani, 2011: v) and the end to the hostility between the two blocs represented by Soviet Marxism and Western Capitalism as the most significant factor of global politics. In this framework, Iran's "unthinkable" revolution looked like an anomaly or "deviant" case (Kurzman, 2004: vii). It was identified with the "return of religion" as a critical component of global politics (Rouhani, 2010). On the other hand, some scholars have argued that, known today as "Islamic," the 1977–1979 revolution was first and foremost a revolution against a dictatorship (Zibakalam, 1996–97), brought about also by groups inspired by a leftist-Marxist ideology (Rahnema, 2021; Abrahamian, 1993). From this perspective, more than simplistically or solely "Islamic," Iran's revolution was the product of contradictory and, at times, opposed visions of national and world order. Their clash, which followed the victory of the revolutionary movement, led to the Islamist forces' taking over and the "Islamization" of the revolution and its narrative. When it comes to visual culture, Chelkowski and Dabashi (2000) documented this dynamic and described in detail how the art of the revolution and its massive orchestration of public myths and collective symbols was masterfully and successfully "Islamized" by the new authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI).

I discussed elsewhere some general aspects of the trajectory through which the visual culture associated with Mexican muralism made its way to Iran (Mauriello, 2020). I also documented how the study of the artistic production of a group of primarily young Iranian painters who partook in the revolution and whose work is definable as revolutionary art reveals that several murals and canvases painted during 1977–1979 and in the following decade

were significantly inspired by Latin American revolutionary visual culture (Mauriello, 2024). Additionally, I discussed how muralism has become a crucial feature of Iran's urban and political landscape, so much so that it allows for examining the evolution of ideology and politics in Iran from the early days of the Islamic Republic to the present (Mauriello, 2023). In this framework, this contribution takes a step back – historically – and examines the 1970s and the period that closely preceded and led up to the revolution. It argues that the presence and influence of Latin America's visual culture in Iran, during the advent and unfolding of the revolution, dates back at least to the early 1970s, when some figures in Iran's academic, artistic, and cultural scene played a decisive role in its diffusion. To fully understand the argument and content of the chapter, it is strongly advised that the reader also review the two articles I previously wrote on this topic.

To better understand the influence of Latin American revolutionary art in Iran and, more generally, the evolution of art in the country in connection with the 1977–1979 revolution, it is helpful to distinguish between *revolution as movement* and *revolution as outcome*.¹ This latter aspect of the visual culture of the revolution, the *revolution as outcome*, which is represented by the Islam-inspired or “Islamized” murals of the Iran-Iraq war and by war martyrs, has received much attention in academia. However, in the 1960s and 1970s and during the *revolution as movement*, a key role was played by forces under a Leftist-Marxist ideology or inspiration. Among these, important sectors of Iran's opposition to the Western-backed dictatorship of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi were influenced by the revolutionary processes of Latin America.

The influence of Latin American art and muralism was significant in Iran, especially during the *revolution as movement*. However, after the new leadership came into power, they ordered the removal of these murals from the walls as part of their efforts to clean up the cities. As a result, many of the revolutionary murals painted on the streets were lost. Despite this, the impact of Latin American-inspired art and ideas, such as anti-imperialism and international solidarity, continued to inspire younger generations in Iran.

This chapter argues that modern (revolutionary) muralism in Iran was not primarily introduced by Islamic (activist) artists but instead by leftist artists

1 This distinction is based on a personal rereading of the distinction proposed by Bayat (2017). I already argued for the usefulness of this distinction in a previous article in which I reconstructed and analysed the influence of Latin America's revolutionary art on Iran's muralist and studio production during and soon after the revolution (or revolution as outcome) (Mauriello 2024). This contribution goes farther back in time and aims to reconstruct and analyse this influence during the decade leading to its advent.

influenced by Latin American revolutionary visual culture and art. It was chiefly brought to Iran and conveyed by artists who knew or had direct experience with Latin American muralism. Three pivotal figures in this process were the painters and art educators Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel) and Hannibal Alkhas, as well as the translator and artist Mehdi Sahabi.

This development occurred subsequent to the introduction of modernism in Iranian art, representing an entirely new concept in the country's artistic milieu (Keshmirshekan, 2023 and 2017). This transformation occurred during a period of rapid modernization closely associated with the Pahlavi era (1925–1979) and was supported by changes in Iran's socio-political culture (Keshmirshekan, 2023: 49). It built on the introduction of Western academic techniques at the beginning of the 20th century during the late Qajar dynasty (1789–1925) to better represent reality, a development particularly associated with the painter Mohammad Gaffari Kamal ol-Molk (c.1859–1940). After a period spent in Europe, primarily in Florence and Paris (1897–1901), to enhance his technical skills, Kamal ol-Molk returned to Iran and established a school of fine arts in Tehran in 1911 to impart these techniques (Keshmirshekan, 2017). The modernist movement gained significant traction from the 1940s through the 1960s (Bombardier, 2017). It was predicated on adopting and adapting modern European art, its institutions, and its pedagogical framework. The establishment of the Faculty of Fine Arts, initially known as the College of Fine Arts, at the University of Tehran played a pivotal role in this process.

During the 1960s and 1970s, a gradual emergence of art criticism focused on modern art occurred. This development followed earlier efforts in newspapers and magazines to disseminate broader knowledge of the subject to the public from the mid-1940s (Keshmirshekan, 2023). In the context of modern Iranian art, it is critical to note that the first book on the subject was published in 1967 by art historian and artist Akbar Tadjvidi (1927–2017). The book, titled *L'art moderne en Iran* (Modern Art in Iran), was written in French and published by the Ministry of Culture and Arts. Tadjvidi's work begins with Kamal ol-Molk's trip to Paris in 1898. It examines the start of modernism as a period marked by the "imitation" and "adaptation" of European artistic styles like Expressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism. According to Tadjvidi, this process gradually led to the development of an Iranian version of modernism (Keshmirshekan, 2023: 56).

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Pahlavi state provided support for publications, festivals, and commissions in response to both the cultural demands of the economic boom and state ideology. The capital of the country, Tehran, hosted national and international exhibitions. These included the exhibition of *Works by Contemporary Iranian Artists* during the Seventh Asian Games in 1974, the First International Art Fair in 1977 featuring European galleries, and

the avant-garde Shiraz Arts Festival from 1967 to 1977 (Keshmirshekan, 2023: 58). The festival showcased performances and exhibitions by Iranian and Western artists. Moreover, Iranian artists took part in exhibitions in Europe and the US with the support of Iran's authorities, particularly the Secretariat of Empress Farah Pahlavi and the Ministry of Culture and Arts (Keshmirshekan, 2023: 58).

In this process, a pioneering and influential role was also played by Marxist intellectuals and, particularly in the 1940s, Soviet institutions, notably the Iran-Soviet Cultural Society and its periodical *Payām-e Nou* (New Message). In 1946, the Iran-Soviet Cultural Society provided support for Iran's Fine Art Exhibition (*Namāyeshgāh-e Honar-hā-ye Zibā-ye Irān*). This exhibition, held in Tehran, marked the first comprehensive national showcase of the country's fine arts. It laid the groundwork for future art exhibitions and served as a platform for exchanging ideas and discussions (Keshmirshekan, 2023: 53).

The chapter first presents some fundamental aspects of Mexican muralism and describes its relevance to Iran's visual culture in the advent of the 1977–1979 Revolution. It then delineates the introduction of Latin American muralism to Iran. It argues for the primary role played by Sciddel, Alkhas, and Sahabi in this process by reconstructing, presenting, and analysing essential and relevant aspects of their cultural and artistic production, as well as that of other Iranian artists in the 1970s. The study is based on a number of primary sources that have not been previously explored in academia, including those written in Persian. It includes observations and analyses developed and discussed in interviews and conversations with artists, art critics, and curators in Iran. It employs a multidisciplinary approach integrating visual culture, art history, and political science.

7.2 Essential Aspects of Mexican Muralism and Its Role as a Revolutionary Popular Art

Muralism, as a contemporary (revolutionary) phenomenon, was born in Mexico in the 1920s to document, represent, and forge the collective memory of the Mexican people after the revolution (1910–1920) (Coffey, 2012). It celebrated historical events, the political, social, and economic struggles, and the cultural, ethnic, and religious characteristics of the Mexican society and nation (Mandel, 2009). Mexican muralism influenced artists from various countries. They took advantage of this plastic arts technique within the context of social and political struggles in Latin American nations such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, and

Paraguay (Rodríguez Prampolini, 2011). Moreover, muralism extended beyond the American continent, reaching Europe in countries such as Italy, Spain, Ireland, and Germany, as well as Asia, in countries like Japan (Kato, 2010) and Iran (Palangi, 2010).

Mexican muralism was born above all for educational purposes: like frescos in late Medieval and Renaissance Italy's churches, the wall was conceived as a textbook (Garrido, 2009). Its purpose was to convey and instil in the Mexican people the country's history through the use of internal and external walls of public buildings as canvases to transmit these messages. This movement played an essential role in unifying a country recovering from a revolution (Coffey, 2012). Although it is commonly regarded as an artistic movement, Mexican muralism can also be viewed as a political and social movement.

It was in 1922 that the president of Mexico, Álvaro Obregón, and his Secretary of Public Education, José Vasconcelos, initially promoted the movement. In that year, José Vasconcelos commissioned Diego Rivera (1886–1957), David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896–1974), and José Clemente Orozco (1883–1949) – among others – to create murals in public spaces such as the Ministry of Public Education, the Chapingo National School of Agriculture, the National Preparatory School, and the National Palace. These murals aimed to depict revolutionary themes, allowing everyone, especially the illiterate and working masses, to contemplate them. Revolutionary muralism is inherently anti-elitist and seeks to represent the masses. To effectively address and mobilize the masses, mural paintings must be public and monumental.

In Mexico, muralism worked against the risk that popular memories would be lost or undervalued, reactivating processes of reconstructing national identity based on the recovery of the historical past and the traditions of the Mexican people. In this way, and as a form of public art par excellence, Mexican muralism contributed to the construction of the Mexican people's identity and collective memory (Mandel, 2009).

7.3 Latin America's Visual Culture in Iran in the 1970s: Muralism in the Advent of the 1977–1979 Revolution

In 2008, Nasser Palangi (b. 1957), an internationally renowned Iranian artist, was invited to Mexico for an academic residence within a seminar titled "El muralismo, producto de la revolución mexicana, en América" (Muralism, a product of the Mexican Revolution, in America) organised by Ida Rodríguez Prampolini at the Institute of Aesthetic Research of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) (MacMasters, 2008). Thirty years earlier, as a

young student at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Tehran, he had painted a celebrated mural and several paintings during the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988).

In Mexico, Palangi gave a series of conferences titled “El arte de Irán, antes y después de la revolución” (The Art of Iran, Before and After the Revolution) (Universia, 2008) and contributed his direct experience on the role of muralism in Iran in connection with the revolution of 1977–79 in an article published in a special issue of *Crónicas* (Palangi, 2010). There, he pointed out the importance of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Tehran and of a group of young artists who, with the unfolding of the revolution, came together to partake in it by contributing their art and with the will to give visual artistic shape to some of its fundamental elements, such as the quest for justice, equality, and spirituality. In search of antecedents that would help them create revolutionary art, they found inspiration from “certain references” about Siqueiros, Orozco, and Rivera published in the country (Palangi, 2010).

In her Ph.D. thesis dedicated to Iran’s painting in the xx century and a subsequent article devoted to Iran’s muralism, primarily based on her thesis, Bombardier (2012: 350–352; 2013: 218–219) argued that the movement of Iranian mural painting began at the time of the Islamic Revolution and stated that it was initiated soon after an exhibition held on February 11, 1979, – the very day of the abolition of the Pahlavi monarchy – in the basement of the mosque Hoseyniye-ye Ershād in Tehran by an Iranian revolutionary art group known as Salman mainly made by students in painting at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Tehran.² She also points out that today, these artists say that in their work at the time, they considered the Mexican muralists Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros as references. On the one hand, *hoseyniye* is not a mosque but rather a congregational hall or building for religious commemoration ceremonies, specifically designed to serve as a venue for Moharram ceremonies that also acts as a cultural centre. Indeed, although Hoseyniye-ye Ershād also includes a mosque, it was at that time reputed as a religious institute and nowadays mostly as a voting centre during presidential elections and for its library. More importantly, as argued in this chapter, the statement provided by Bombardier may be historically inaccurate and incomplete.

The assertion made by the French art expert scholar does not align with the fact, as documented in this chapter, that the leading artists who introduced muralism to Iran were not members of the Salman group and were not

2 This is the group whose activities are believed to have led to the formation of the Centre of Islamic Thought and Art (*Howze-ye Andishe va Honar-e Eslāmi*), a centre that has since played an essential role within the country in fostering (self-defined) Islamic-revolutionary art.

Islamic activists. In this respect, the key figures of Mohammad Hassan Sciddel and Hannibal Alkhas have been overlooked. Additionally, the University of Decorative Arts (later renamed the University of Arts), where Sciddel taught and some of the students listed by Bombardier were studying at that time, has not been mentioned.

As argued and reconstructed in this contribution, modern muralism in Iran took shape in a process that began at least in the late years of the Pahlavi dynasty, or possibly even earlier, in the early 1970s, rather than in 1979. This was somehow noticed by Grigor (2014: 30). In her work on contemporary Iranian art, she mentions how murals were a part of the late Pahlavi's official visual culture. She also points out how Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's court and government sponsored many pre-revolutionary murals in select governmental buildings to promote the reforms of the so-called White Revolution (1963–1979) by picturing progress towards the Shah's Great Civilization.

The history of muralism in the Pahlavi period is still to be written. We know that among those who executed murals in the late 1960s and 1970s, before the revolution and fall of the Pahlavi dynasty, there were:

- a) Massoud Arabshahi (b. 1935) created a 560-square-meter fresco in the conference room at the Lion and the Sun (Iran's Red Cross) in 1969. A year later, he made a bas-relief sculpture for the entrance of the Ministry of Industries and Mines. Additionally, he designed several large architectural reliefs in conference halls across the country, including a 25 × 4 meter relief in the conference hall of the Behshahr Industrial Group in 1973, and a mural in one of the halls of the Ministry of Agriculture in Tehran (renamed the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad after the revolution) in 1975 (Grigor, 2014: 30–31).
- b) Bahman Borojeni (b. 1942) was commissioned in 1976 to create a large 16×4 m² mural for the lobby of the Ministry of Agriculture in Tehran. He carried out the work as an engraving on clay and then baked it. It depicts the zodiac, the twelve constellations and their symbols, the sun, and the gods at the centre (figure 7.1). Additionally, he also authored a mural titled "Four Seasons" on the twentieth floor of the same building. Borojeni also created murals during the revolutionary turmoil and the Iran-Iraq War, and participated in a major exhibition held in 1982 for the reopening of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMOCA), featuring a large mural-style oil on canvas on the theme of the struggle against the ego (figure 7.2).
- c) Abolghassem Saidi (b. 1925) studied at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris during the 1950s. In 1968, he created a mural on canvas (figure 7.3) for the *Tālār-e Rudaki* (now *Tālār-e Vahdat*) concert hall in Tehran. The colourful

mural features stylized Iranian figures in traditional dress dancing or performing among vibrant trees and floral patterns, with a large golden sun in the background. The scene blends natural and folkloric elements, rendered in rich reds, greens, and oranges. Following the revolution, the female figures represented in the painting were ‘Islamized’ when ‘restoring’ the work by covering their bodies with “native hijab” (Yousefi, 2017). In the 1960s, Saidi also created two murals on canvas for the University of Shiraz. One of them was for the university’s restaurant. He also executed large canvases for private and public buildings in Iran in the 1970s until the Islamic Revolution, including the National Iranian Radio and Television and the Central Bank. His last work of this kind, commissioned and executed in his native country at the height of the revolution, was for Iran Air, the national air carrier (Yousefi, 2017).

- d) Iraj Eskandari (b. 1956) painted a mural in the courtyard of the Faculty of Decorative Arts (*Daneshakade-ye Honar-hā-ye Taz’ini*) in early 1978 during his third year as a student of painting – a subject taught by Sciddel. The mural, titled *Someone is coming* (*Kasi miyāyad*), measured 2 meters by 10 meters and depicted a group of peasants following an older man as he marches towards the onlooker. This mural appeared in the newspaper *Kayhān* in an article published on February 1, 1978, titled “Through 7 female and male painters, from yesterday: Painting and beautification Tehran’s walls has begun” (*Tavassot-e 7 naqqāsh-e zan-o-mard, az diruz: Naqqāshi va zibāsāzi-ye divār-hā-ye Tehrān shuru’ shod*) (figure 7.4).³
- e) Mohammad Ehsaei (b. 1939), a renowned calligrapher and graphic artist, executed a mural in 1356/1977–1978⁴ in the meeting hall of the Faculty of

3 In addition to the mural, Minu Asadi, a teacher and Head of the Faculty at that time, can be seen in the picture’s foreground. The article states that she initiated the work that her students are now completing. However, Iraj Eskandari claims that she was not involved in the execution of the work and that credit should be given solely to him. Furthermore, the painter Hamid Pazuki, shown in the picture holding a brush to paint the mural, was reportedly asked to do so to make the picture appear more natural. Grigor (2014: 31–32) refers to this article, but the year she mentioned, 1976, is incorrect. This is confirmed thanks to a copy of the article I obtained from Iraj Eskandari. Mohamad Eskandari, the promising Iranian artist and Iraj Eskandari’s son, also provided me with additional details about the work and the picture published by the newspaper.

4 Iran has been using a solar calendar dating back to the year 622 CE since 1925. The first day of the year is set as the first day of spring. As a result, the year 1352 in the Iranian calendar corresponds to March 21, 1973–March 20, 1974 in the Gregorian calendar. In this article, when information is based on primary sources in Persian that provide only the year, the corresponding Gregorian calendar years are also mentioned.

Theology of Tehran University. In the form of letters and combinations of words, it is a representation of poetry by Farid al-Din Attar (1142?–c.1220) – one of the major poets of the Persian literary tradition –, taken from his work *Mantiq al-tayr* (*The conference of the birds* or *Speech of the birds*), and the rise and fall of a Simorgh, a fabulous bird of Iran's mythology that occurs in epic, folktales, and mystical Persian literature.

- f) Changiz Shahvagh (1933–1996), Mansur Davalu (1936–2018), and others (Mohajer & Tajeddini 2015–2016: 351).

7.4 Art Theory and the Mexican Revolution in Iran in the Early 1970s: Reading Mario De Micheli via Mehdi Sahabi in Tehran

In the Winter of 1973 (*Zemestun* 1352), Golshā'i Publications in Tehran published a small 49–page book titled *Muralism and the revolution of Mexico* (*Naqqāshi-ye divāri va enqelāb-e Mekzīk*) (figure 7.5). This was a translation by Mehdi Sahabi of a work by the renowned Italian art critic Mario De Micheli. It was the first book translated by Sahabi in his long career (Ali-Nejad, 2007) and may have been one of the earliest publications on Mexican muralism in Iran. It is the oldest example of a book on Latin American muralism published in Iran that I could find.

Born in Qazvin in January 1944 (Afzood, 2021: 13), Mehdi Sahabi was an Iranian translator, painter, sculptor, writer, and photographer (Pakbaz, 2020: 824). He is renowned for his translation work on Marcel Proust's seven-volume *À la recherche du temps perdu* (published in English as *In Search of Lost Time* or *Remembrance of Things Past*). His expertise in Italian, French, and English allowed him to translate works from notable authors such as Italo Calvino, Ignazio Silone, Leonardo Sciascia, Erri De Luca, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Simone de Beauvoir, Gustave Flaubert, Charles Dickens, Daniel Defoe, Jules Verne, Stendhal, Salman Rushdie, and Carlos Fuentes.

After completing high school in Tehran, he studied painting for two years (1963–1965) at the School of Decorative Arts (*Honarkade-ye Honar-hā-ye Taz'ini*) at the University of Tehran (Afzood, 2021: 14). However, he left his studies halfway through (Pakbaz, 2020: 824). In 1967, he travelled to Italy to study cinema but soon abandoned it, instead enrolling in painting at the Rome *Accademia di Belle Arti* (Academy of Fine Arts). Nonetheless, he left his studies at the Accademia also halfway through, and in 1969, he left Italy for France, where he met his French wife, Eveline. Having spent two years in Italy and three in France, Sahabi returned to Iran in 1972. In Tehran, from 1972 to 1979,

he worked as a journalist-translator at the foreign service of *Kayhān*, a newspaper that at that time was considered “leftist” (Tejareh, 2021: 58).⁵ During those years, he also tried his chances as an actor. In March 1979, during the turmoil of the revolution, he was dismissed from *Kayhān* along with nineteen editorial board members (Namakdoost, 2021: 61). He detailed his experience of those events in a book titled *Taskhīr-e Kayhān* (The conquest of *Kayhān*), published under the pen name Younes Javanroudi. Together with other colleagues, he attempted to launch a new newspaper called *Kayhān Azad* (Free *Kayhān*) and then a magazine titled *Pirouzi* (Victory). Both endeavours were short-lived. Consequently, after 1981, Sahabi gave up journalism as a profession and dedicated himself entirely to literary translation, painting, and photography (Ali-Nejad, 2007). He died in Paris on November 18, 2009, while visiting his family. His body was brought back to Iran and buried in the artists’ section of Tehran’s main cemetery, Behesht-e Zahrā.

Mario De Micheli (1914–2004) is considered one of Italy’s most influential art critics of the second half of the 20th century, particularly in the social history of art and the debate on realist art. A professor of Sociology of Art at the Milan Polytechnic, he founded and directed various magazines and published numerous books, including *Realismo e poesia* (Realism and poetry) (1944), *Le Avanguardie artistiche del Novecento* (The artistic avant-garde of the twentieth century) (1959), *Arte contro: 1945–1970, dal realismo alla contestazione* (Art against: From realism to protest) (1970), *Idee e storie di artisti* (Ideas and stories of artists) (1981), *Le circostanze dell’arte* (The circumstances of art) (1987), *La fuga degli Dei* (The flight of the gods) (1989), and *L’arte sotto le dittature* (Art under dictatorships) (2000). Among them, *Le Avanguardie artistiche del Novecento*, now in its forty-first edition, has become a literary case. His late *L’arte sotto le dittature*, which includes some long passages already published in *Muralism and the revolution of Mexico* (different paragraphs between pp. 192–206), has become a reference in the subject. His books have been translated into English and Spanish and published in Europe and the Americas. It is little known that some of them were also translated into Persian.

De Micheli became interested in muralism after visiting Mexico and meeting David Alfaro Siqueiros. He was Italy’s leading expert on Mexican muralism and

5 Together with *Ettelā’āt*, *Kayhān* is Iran’s oldest daily newspaper still active, founded in 1943. During the reign of Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, the newspaper was published in Iran and London and supported the Shah. It had a circulation of over one million and was part of the largest newspaper and magazine publishing house in the Middle East. After the Revolution, it became a state-sponsored publication, with its managing editor appointed by the country’s Leader.

wrote an important book about Siqueiros in 1968.⁶ De Micheli also curated two exhibitions of Mexican muralism and edited their catalogues. The first exhibition, featuring Siqueiros, took place at Orsanmichele and Palazzo Vecchio in Florence from November 10, 1976, to February 15, 1977. It was sponsored by the Tuscany region and the Mexico City Museum of Modern Art (De Micheli, 1976). The second exhibition, focused on José Clemente Orozco, was organized by the National Institute of Fine Arts of Mexico and was showcased in various European venues before arriving at Palazzo Pubblico in Siena in 1981 (De Micheli, 1981).

As a humanist, a militant critic, and an anti-fascist intellectual, De Micheli participated in the movement *Corrente*, which, with his theoretical and exhibition activity, represented a courageous example of counterculture and laid the foundations for the debate on art and the role of the intellectual in the aftermath of the Second World War. A former member of the Italian *Resistenza* against Mussolini's dictatorship (Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia, 2010), De Micheli wrote for various magazines and the newspaper *L'Unità* after the war and his time in prison. *L'Unità* was the official organ of the Italian Communist Party during those years. De Micheli's contributions included art news, translated texts from French, essays, presentations, and organizing exhibitions. Most importantly, he began to reflect on the function and social role of art. He promoted this artistic language through publishing articles in *L'Unità*, writing essays, introducing Italian editions of books on the subject, and curating large exhibitions in Tuscany between the mid-seventies and early eighties featuring Siqueiros, Orozco, and Tamayo. Mario De Micheli's studies and activities played a crucial role in introducing (post)revolutionary Mexican art to Italy in the 1950s (Alberti, 2019).

In his first important text, *Realismo e poesia*, written in 1944, circulated clandestinely, and then published in *Il '45* in 1946, he expresses the need for a "dialectical" realism as opposed to abstractionism and idealism. As described by Chiara Stella Sara Alberti (2019: 34), De Micheli's theoretical work on realism aligns with promoting socially engaged art. This was particularly prominent during the post-war reconstruction period in Italy, where various magazines, posters, and artist groups emerged with the goal of advocating for a new humanism and modern culture. With the support of the Italian Communist Party, artists and intellectuals such as De Micheli sought an approach that embraced the avant-garde's innovative expressions while also emphasizing

6 The monograph was published with changes and additions in the USA in 1970 and in Mexico in 1985. In 1966, the author had already published a short essay dedicated to the Mexican artist in the series "I maestri del colore" by Fratelli Fabbri Editori.

social commitment. They were involved in a battle for a national-popular culture that utilizes content and forms of expression understandable to the masses, while also striving to move away from provincialism and embrace a more cosmopolitan dimension (Alberti, 2019: 34). His paramount dedication is to interpret contemporary art in connection to human events and history, advocating for an “inner” realism, an art of substance and “human presence” (Alberti, 2019: 35). These are all elements that characterise *Muralism and the revolution of Mexico*.

The translation I have does not provide information about the original text. I conducted bibliographic research to find the original work in Italian with the help of the personnel at the Library of Humanities of the University of Bergamo, where the Ada e Mario De Micheli archive is held.⁷ Unfortunately, I could not find any results. Instead of just a translation of one of De Micheli’s works, the small book might be a mix of writings by the Italian art critic made by Sahabi, possibly including some parts added by him. The translation has two sections. The first section (pp. 3–11) describes the history of the Mexican revolution, while the second directly addresses muralism. Some parts of the second section are very close passages found in *L’arte sotto le dittature* (pp. 192–206).

Upon rereading the small book fifty years later, one cannot help but notice the striking similarities between the historical account of events in Mexico as described in the book and the unfolding of events during the revolution in Iran, particularly in the actions of the Faculty of Fine Arts and University of Decorative Arts students (pp. 18–20) and the interconnectedness of art renovation through muralism with the respective revolutions (pp. 17–18).

Developed on the heels of more than two decades of vigorous activity by a small avant-garde, the TMOCA opened in October 1977 with the support of Empress Farah Diba Pahlavi (b. 1938). It was intended to be a centre for fostering the ongoing activity of this avant-garde. However, just one year later, in October 1978, the museum was closed in the midst of the revolutionary process and remained shut throughout the so-called Cultural Revolution (1980–1983). Before its closure, revolutionary artists took over the TMOCA and mounted an exhibition that showcased enlarged photographs of Mexican murals by artists such as David Alfaro Siqueiros and Diego Rivera (Grigor, 2014: 108–109). The exhibition brochure featured a reversed version of the title of Sahabi’s translation of De Micheli’s *Muralism and the Revolution of Mexico* at the top (figure 7.6).

⁷ Unfortunately, the archive of Ada e Mario De Micheli has a troubled history (Associazione Arte a Trezzo, 2021) and is split among two libraries, the library of the University of Bergamo and the library of Cascina Ovi at Segrate.

The start date of the Iranian revolution is a topic of debate among experts. According to Abrahamian (1982: 496–510), the revolution may have begun between May and the summer of 1977. It is believed to have been initiated by the middle class and had a significant turning point on November 19. This turning point occurred after nine days of peaceful reading sessions organized by the Writers' Association at the headquarters of the Iranian-German Cultural Society and Aryamehr University (now Sharif University). The police attempted to disperse the tenth session, which was attended by around 10,000 students. This action led to substantial protests, the death of a student, and injuries to more than seventy others. This means that the TMOCA opened just a month before the *revolution as movement* reached what might be considered its turning point. The museum, being close to the University of Tehran and the centre of student protests, became a target for young artist revolutionaries. Surprisingly, they gave significant importance to De Micheli's *Muralism and the revolution of Mexico* and the visual culture of Mexico and Latin America.

Interestingly, in the early years after the revolution, there was another opportunity to introduce the work of David Alfaro Siqueiros to the Iranian public. This was done through its inclusion in a series of publications called "Art Books," which focused on international art figures and movements and was published by Bahar. Once again, the decision was made to translate directly from Italian, and a work by Mario De Micheli was chosen, translated as *Āshna'ī bā āthār-e Dāvid Ālfārou Si-Ke-Īrous* (Introduction to the Works of David Alfaro Siqueiros) (1363/1984–85).

7.5 In between Iran, Italy, and Mexico: Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel) (1939–2013)

Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel) played a central role in introducing muralism and Latin America's revolutionary visual culture to Iran. Sciddel was an Iranian painter, printer, and teacher. As underlined by his friend Amezcua (Álvarez, 2020), for Sciddel, three places were important: his native land of Iran, with his city of origin, Rasht; Rome, in Italy; and Uruapan, in Mexico.

Sciddel was born in Sohrevard (Álvarez, 2020), in the province of Zanjan, in 1939. In Rasht, in the province of Gilan, he learned the basics of painting from Habib Mohammadi (1902–1971). The latter was an Iranian painter who had studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Moscow and had worked teaching painting for a period in Baku. In 1320/1941–42, Mohammadi returned to Iran, where he settled in Rasht for some years, working as a tableau maker (*tab-lusāzi*) and teaching painting. Later, in the early 1330s/1950s, he would settle

in Tehran. His artistic production was characterised by painting landscapes, portraits, and working scenes, with a realist style (Pakbaz, 2020: 1354–55).

From Rasht, Sciddel moved to Tehran and, between 1335/1956–57 and 1338/1959–60, studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Tehran. He went to Italy on a scholarship between 1341/1962–63 and 1344/1965–66. He attended courses in mural painting and printing in Rome at the *Scuola di Arti Ornamentali* (Academy of Decorative Arts) and the *Accademia di Belle Arti* (Academy of Fine Arts). During a lecture given in the latter by Pier Luigi Nervi, he befriended Mario Amezcua (figure 7.7), a Mexican architecture student who would later become a priest (Álvarez, 2020). With Mario Amezcua, Sciddel visited Vienna, Paris, Munich, and Catania (Sicily). In Munich, he worked on designing advertising posters and exhibited his collections in the Showabink Gallery (1341/1962–63). In Paternò (Catania), where Amezcua had been invited by some friends from Zamora who were staying there, Amezcua proposed to Father Parisi that Sciddel paint a fresco in the baptistery of the local church (Álvarez, 2020).⁸ They reached an agreement, and a year later, the two friends returned to Sicily so that Sciddel could execute the work (Álvarez 2020). In this way, Sciddel had the opportunity to realise his first fresco, the Baptism of Christ (1342/1963–64). In Italy, he also realised his second fresco, the Last Supper (1344/1965–66), in the Church of Santa Rita da Cascia (Pakbaz, 2020: 908).⁹ Following Amezcua's invitation, he also visited Mexico. There, between 1968 and 1969, thanks once again to the intercession of his friend, who at that time was not yet a priest but had begun advising Father José Luis Sahagún de la Parra, Sciddel undertook the painting of four murals on the pendentives of the Parish Church of San Francis in Uruapan, Michoacán (figures 7.8–7.11). The cycle of modernist murals painted by Sciddel reinterprets biblical narratives through an abstract, cosmic visual language. *La creación* (1968) presents a dynamic composition where a larger, muscular figure with flowing hair reaches toward a smaller, partially nude figure. Sweeping red and blue lines, punctuated by circular nodes, weave through the scene like atomic or cosmic orbits, converging toward a spiral vortex at the bottom. In *Melquisedec* (1968), a frontal, robed figure stands with one hand raised in blessing and the other across the chest, where a chain supports a cluster of red grapes flanked by golden ears of wheat. This symbolic image is surrounded by looping orbital paths with blue and red nodes, intersected by yellow beams of light. *La última cena* (1969) reimagines Jesus at the Last Supper, holding a chalice of red wine

⁸ In the documentary the name of the church is not mentioned. Pakbaz (2020: 908) mentions the title of Sciddel's first fresco and the fact that it was painted in Italy.

⁹ Pakbaz mentions the church's name but not its location in Italy.

with bread and a wine carafe before him, the scene energized by intersecting red and blue lines and purple dots forming an atomic-like network. In *La resurrección* (1968), a muscular, long-haired figure ascends with expressive upward motion, the body intersected by red curves and green dots that suggest cosmic or atomic forces, while strokes of yellow, black, and brown convey radiance and momentum. Across the four works, Sciddel fuses sacred iconography with the visual language of modern science and energy, integrating biblical symbolism into a universe of orbits, nodes, and light within the architectural frame of the church's white arches. The church had been demolished in the 1950s (Álvarez, 2020), and by 1968, its reconstruction was nearing completion.

At the same time, Sciddel exhibited his works in other Mexican cities (1347/March 1969–1349/1970) (Álvarez, 2020). In Mexico, he also got engaged to a woman. In this last respect, in the 1970s, when he had left Mexico and resettled in Iran, it is assumed that he must have returned to the country on a short trip to dissolve the civil marriage with that woman (Álvarez, 2020). Having left Mexico, he was again in Rome to gain experience in ceramic work (1349/1970–71) and was back in Iran a year later (1350/1971–72).

In Iran, between 1350/1971–72 and 1359/1980–81, Sciddel worked as a teacher at the Faculty of Decorative Arts (*Dāneshkade-ye Honar-hā-ye Taz'ini*).¹⁰ He held his first solo exhibition at the Zorvan Gallery in Tehran (1353/1974–75). Founded at the end of 1973 by Gholam Reza Moghadam, the gallery was run by a couple of painters and art lovers, equipped with an art education system, and aimed at creating “a different flow of art for the audience in the 70 decay” (Keshavarzi, 2021: 24). More importantly, in 1976, the Ministry of Agriculture commissioned Sciddel three murals to be painted at its premises.

Sciddel was a Faculty of Decorative Arts teacher when the revolution erupted. Around five years after leaving Mexico, he wrote a letter to his old friend in Uruapan, expressing his desire to return to that city. Following the letter, around 1988, Amezcua visited him in Tehran (Álvarez, 2020). In Tehran,

10 Established in 1960 as the College of Decorative Arts (*Honarkade-ye Honar-hā-ye Taz'ini*) under the Ministry of Culture and Art supervision, in 1350/1971–72 it changed its name to Faculty of Decorative Arts (*Dāneshkade-ye Honar-hā-ye Taz'ini*). Following the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in 1362/1983–84, the faculty was integrated with four other formerly independent institutions – the Conservatory of Music (1918), the College of National Music (1949), the College of Dramatic Arts (1964), and Farabi University (1975) – to form the Art Academic Complex. In 1991, The latter was renamed the University of Art. Pakbaz (2020: 908) mentions that Sciddel began teaching at the Academy of Decorative Arts (*Ākāde-mi-ye Honar-hā-ye Taz'ini*) in 1350/1971–72. However, the same source (Pakbaz, 2020: 1660) mentions that the College of Decorative Arts changed its name in the same year.

Amezcuca had the opportunity to meet many friends of Sciddel – among them the renowned poet Ahmad Shamlou (1925–2000) – and to see the mural painted by the Iranian artist at the Ministry of Agriculture. On departing from the airport, Sciddel confessed to his friend that since he had been back in Iran, he had been spending most of his time in his house because of political problems and that while his friend was going back to freedom in Mexico, he, Sciddel, would stay there “in slavery.” Amezcuca told Sciddel that he would do his best to bring him back to Uruapan.

Father Mario Amezcuca invited Sciddel back to Mexico to decorate the walls of the lookout point of the Maria Auxiliadora temple, and in 1996, the painter travelled to the country. Unfortunately, this work was not carried out. However, Sciddel settled in Uruapan, where he continued to paint and established the Mehrgam Fine Arts Workshop to teach printmaking and painting techniques. He died in 2013 in Mexico, and his remains currently rest in the crypt of the parish of San Francisco de Asís, which is located next to the atrium.

Sciddel's sixty-metre mural (figures 7.12–7.15), acrylic on concrete, painted in the main conference hall of the Ministry of Agriculture premises in 1976, depicts a dramatic and emotionally charged composition, with a central glowing white space featuring an abstract face outlined in red dots. This is flanked by dark-toned scenes of human figures in anguish, hooded or bowed, evoking suffering, struggle, and possibly oppression or historical trauma. Zombie-like figures with entirely black eyes, mouths covered with white cloth, bald men, women with long hair – one holding a baby – encircle the abstract, futuristic figure of a woman holding a man in her arms, around which planet-like red spheres orbit. The mural strikingly recalls works by Mexican muralists José Clemente Orozco (for example, *Departure of Quetzalcoatl, from The Epic of American Civilization*, 1932–34, fresco, Baker Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire or *Katharsis*, 1934–35, fresco, Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City) and Diego Rivera (for example, *Abundant Earth*, Chapel of the Chapingo Autonomous University of Agriculture, 1923–1927). At the two ends of the extended image, allegories of lightness and darkness loom large. The allegory of light is represented by the face of one of the most renowned contemporary Iranian poets, writers, journalists, and translators, Ahmad Shamlou (figure 7.16), a friend of Sciddel and a key figure in the leftist-Marxist, Third-Worldist, and internationalist intellectual milieu in Iran, both before and after the revolution. A figure that Sciddel would present to his Mexican friend Amezcuca two decades later. According to what Sciddel told Grigor (2014: 31), Iran's secret police, the *Sāzmān-e Ettelā'āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar* (SAVAK), requested that he alter some details of the mural. Following the revolution, the new authorities decided to “occult” the mural, which has been inaccessible to the public. One of the other two murals painted by Sciddel at the Ministry of

Agriculture premises depicts a stylized female figure emerging from a rocky landscape (figure 7.17), her body partially draped and her face rendered in bold, angular lines. Surrounding her are multiple intersecting orbital paths with red spheres, evoking atomic or planetary structures. The background blends shades of blue, grey, and white, creating a dramatic, textured setting that contrasts with the warm tones of the figure. The image is in the same style as the main mural and again evokes works by Mexican muralists Orozco and Rivera.

According to Pakbaz (2020: 908), Sciddel was an artist who considered himself committed to man and his destiny. Consequently, his imagery encompasses religious themes, mythology, and modern science, with humans as the primary focus in all cases. In conveying the message to the audience, Sciddel used the expressive possibilities of form and colour as much as the role of narration, allegory, and cultural signs. Despite pondering the achievements of old and new masters, he did not accept a specific model for his art. He stated:

The first step to achieve a convincing logic in the field of art is to negate all existing conventions and names and even negate one's existence. Then, with a clear mind and free from the dust of the external world, take a moment to think about recovering yourself and recognising your place as an artist in the universe. (Quoted in Pakbaz, 2020: 908)

7.6 Learning Muralism in Chicago: Hannibal Alkhas (1930–2010)

Hannibal Alkhas was a painter, sculptor, writer, and translator. He was born in the southern city of Kermanshah, on June 6, 1930, in a family of Christian Assyrian intellectuals. Hannibal spent his childhood in Kermanshah, Ahvaz, and Tehran.

He started painting at a young age. In Tehran, he joined the painting classes taught by Jafar Petgar (1921–2005), a well-known classical artist. As a young artist, he began to be recognised as a figurative painter.

In 1951, Alkhas travelled to the United States to pursue his graduate education. At first, he enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine. However, he did not attend any classes and instead dedicated himself to studying philosophy and religion. Hence, he left medicine and studied philosophy for three years at Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois. However, he also left the latter unfinished and eventually enrolled at the Chicago Institute of Art, where he studied plastic arts (*honar-hā-ye tajassomi*) between 1953 and 1959, obtaining a Bachelor's degree in 1956 and an MA in 1958 (Alkhas, 2006–2007: 10).

Following his father's death in 1959, Alkhas went back to Iran, where he held a solo exhibition at the Iran-USA Association (*Anjām-e Irān-Āmrīkā*). The

exhibition received much attention, even from renowned figures in Iran's cultural scene, such as Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923–1969) and Simin Daneshvar (1921–2012). Al-e Ahmad and Daneshvar believed in using art to express social and political aspirations. They were also involved in writing critical texts about the visual arts. Keshmirshakan (2023: 54) suggests that an analysis of their art-critical texts reveals their criticism of Iranian artists' excessive reliance on Western modern art and European judgments. Under the influence of Marxist literary criticism, Al-e Ahmad supported content-based figurative works and opposed abstraction, endorsing figurative modernists such as Alkhas and Bahman Mohasses (1932–2010) (Keshmirshakan 2023: 54).

Later, Alkhas found a teaching job at the School of Arts for Boys (*Honarestān-e Āli-ye Pesarān*), where he worked for five years (1959–1963). Moreover, in 1959, he founded and directed the art gallery Gilgamesh for two years (Alkhas, 2006–2007: 8, 10). The gallery's name was inspired by a legendary figure from Assyrian-Mesopotamian mythology. It was chosen to pay tribute to Hannibal's father, who had directed a magazine with the same name. Some consider this Iran's first modern art gallery, where aspiring young artists were introduced to the public (Keshavarzi, 2021: 20–21).

In 1963, Hannibal returned to the USA. In 1964, a small female college, the Monticello College in Illinois, hired him, and he worked there until 1969. From 1968 to 1969, he was the director of the Department of Plastic Arts (*honar-hā-ye tajassomi*) (Alkhas, 2006–2007: 10).¹¹ In 1969, following an invitation by the University of Tehran's Chancellor, Fazlollah Reza, Alkhas returned to Iran. He began teaching at the Faculty of Fine Arts, where he worked for the following eleven years (1969–1980). In 1978, he became a member of the Association of Iranian Writers. Since its establishment, this association has defended artists' independence and freedom of expression and has mostly operated as an unauthorised and unrecognised institution before and after the revolution. In 1982, the Faculty of Fine Arts was closed down as part of the Cultural Revolution, and the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution (SCCR, established by Khomeini in June 1980) banned several faculty members from teaching. Alkhas was among those banned (Grigor, 2014: 106). In this respect, in his three-volume collection of essays, Alkhas (2006–2007: 10) indicates that he worked at the Faculty of Fine Arts until 1980 and that between 1980 and 1982, he taught privately in Tehran and at the universities of Berkley and UCLA in California. In 1364/1985–1986, Hannibal had to leave his native

11 The college was closed in 1971, and its buildings later became part of the Lewis and Clark Community College.

land once again and return to the USA (Ruzaruz, 2018).¹² This was because of his close ties with numerous members of the (illegal) Tudeh Party (Iran's Communist Party). There, he worked as a fine arts teacher at private colleges, the Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlok (California), and the University of California at Berkeley and Los Angeles. Finally, after ten years away from Iran, Alkhas returned to his homeland in 1992, teaching plastic arts at Azad University until 1999 and contributing art critic articles to local newspapers such as *Hamshahri* (Alkhas, 2006–2007: 10). Alkhas died of cancer in California on September 12, 2010.

In an interview, Hannibal pointed out that a fundamental element in developing his political vision was the fact that, during his early years of living and studying in the USA, he worked in a factory to make a living (Jonbesherahesabz, 2010b). Moreover, according to Alkhas, his father developed socialist tendencies, which he instilled in his son from a young age.

As an influential painter and one of the few seniors and established artists who joined the popular movement when the revolution broke out, Alkhas created several murals and paintings on canvas. During the revolutionary outbreak, and with the collaboration of his disciples Niloofar Ghaderinejad and Masoud Sadedin, he executed several revolutionary murals on the walls of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Tehran, the surrounding streets, and the walls of the US Embassy. These are clearly influenced by Latin American muralism. A figurative, expressionist style, the lack of attention to detail, fluid and easy execution and the use of contrasting and symbolic colours characterize his murals of the revolution. It can be argued that the influence of Latin American muralism on Alkhas is also visible in his later artistic production, where he incorporated the element of a fragile encounter between the formal innovations of the European vanguards and the ancient traditions of indigenous arts, specifically the Assyrian-Mesopotamian tradition.

Among the most prominent painters who can claim to have been disciples of Alkhas are well-known artists such as Ahmad Vakili, Masoud Sadedin, Nosratollah Moslemian, Niloofar Ghaderinejad, Hadi Ziaoddini, Bahram Dabiri, and Mohammad Ali Bani Asadi. In his collection of essays, Alkhas (2006–2007: 9) himself mentions Bahman Borojeni, Manuchehr Safarzadeh (also known as Mash Safar), Masoud Sadedin, Niloofar Ghaderinejad, Hadi Ziaoddini, Nasser Mohammadi, and Faramarz Rahmani.

Drawing from his education at the Chicago Institute of Art (1953–1959) and his work at the Monticello College in Illinois (1964–1969), where he also

12 However, according to a different source, it was in 1980 that Alkhas returned to the USA (Iran Chamber Society n.d.).

served as director of its Department of Art for two years, as well as his teaching position at the Faculty of Fine Arts (1969–1980) and his muralist production during the revolution, along with the muralist and canvas production of his students (Mauriello 2024), it is evident that Alkhas played a significant role in transmitting Latin America's visual revolutionary culture to Iran. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that in his collection of essays, Alkhas (2006–2007: 14) specifically mentions the translation of a biography of David Alfaro Siqueiros among his written works in Persian listed as “Compilation (*ta'lif*), translation, and poetry illustration and reading (*navvār-e she'r*).” However, he does not provide the year of publication or any additional information. Despite my efforts, I was unable to find this work in library catalogues in Iran or elsewhere.

His experience with Latin America's revolutionary and visual culture in the Midwestern USA was likely enhanced by the fact that Mexican muralism in the region began to develop in the 1930s, with Diego Rivera's direct participation in Detroit. More importantly, in the 1970s, Chicago had a large population of Latin Americans (Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Colombians, Ecuadorians, and Peruvians), and the region experienced an outburst of the so-called *Movimiento Latino*, with its noticeable reference to Mexican muralism (Zimmerman, 2014).

7.6.1 *Taking Over the Walls of the US Embassy in Tehran: the Murals of the Dean of Spies*

In addition to the TMoCA, the revolutionaries were to take over another meaningful building of Iran's capital, the US Embassy in Tehran. On November 4, 1979, hundreds of students stormed the Embassy compound. They kidnapped 52 US diplomats and officials for 444 days. Six of them managed to escape and hide in the residence of the Canadian ambassador, as depicted in the film *Argo*. Alongside an Oscar-winning film, the events of the embassy takeover have been the focus of academic enquiry, which more recently has acknowledged the ideological and political struggle between Marxist and Islamist forces (Ayatollahi Tabaar, 2017). Missing from the frame have been muralism and the revolutionary artists who appropriated the canvas offered by the external walls of the Embassy.

The original murals painted during the *revolution as movement* have received little attention, and researchers and the media have instead addressed and mentioned the later murals painted on the walls of the Embassy, disregarding or not knowing the existence of the murals of the early revolution. In this ahistorical perspective, the “original” and “iconic” murals from the revolutionary period (figures 7.18 and 7.19), often used by foreign media in articles or reports on Iran, were removed from the Embassy walls in 2019 amid some local and

international disapproval. They were replaced with new (figures 7.20 and 7.21) or revisited versions of the previous murals (AFP, 2019).

However, the “original” murals had replaced the little-known early murals of the revolution themselves (figures 7.22 to 7.24). The first image (figure 7.22) of a section of the mural on the external wall of the former US Embassy in Tehran, with the embassy’s brick wall incorporated into the composition, features at the centre Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, leader of the 1977–1979 Iranian Revolution, pointing forward. To the left, armed men in green uniforms advance alongside figures raising clenched fists, with a crowd filling a rural backdrop. To the right, women in black chadors and other figures in blue garments move towards the centre. The scene probably depicts the protests and takeover of the embassy by the revolutionary students of the so-called “Line of the Imam,” referring to Khomeini. The second image (figure 7.23) portrays scenes related to the 1979 hostage crisis. On the left side of the mural, blindfolded men in military uniform are depicted, while in the foreground of the photograph, an actual artist is painting the mural. At the centre of the mural, behind a group of figures – men and women – there is the image of a priest or cleric in dark robes with hands raised in prayer. Based on the dark robe, the tall headgear, and the long beard, the attire in the mural could plausibly be intended to represent an Assyrian (or more broadly Eastern Christian) priest. On the right, a large mass of people are protesting, and figures work at desks with maps, documents, and electronic equipment, suggesting intelligence or surveillance operations. The composition features vivid blues and reds, with symbolic elements such as a globe and communication devices. In the third image (figure 7.24), a large group of men and women in blue and green tones, some wearing headscarves, are marching forward with raised fists. In the foreground, a woman in a blue headscarf holds a rifle. To the right, a line of men dressed in white walk along a red path, while two men in green and light blue shirts gesture forward. The background shows stylized landscapes with fields, hills, and buildings under a deep blue sky.

These early murals of the revolution were painted by Alkhas and his disciples – among them Sadedin – and have all the imprints of the Chicago-educated, Assyrian Iranian artist. They are characterized by a figurative, expressionist style, a lack of attention to detail, fluid and easy execution, and the use of contrasting and symbolic colours. The expressionist and figurative style, with the clarity of drawing and brightness of colours, clearly recalls the Latin American expressionism represented by Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Also, the attention that is given to the machinery of modernity and the technological and industrial civilization as a symbol of the oppression of men under the capitalist/imperialist society led by the US,

represented, for example, by the encoding machines painted in the mural on the external walls of the Embassy, is an unmistakable hallmark of Mexican muralism. Furthermore, the presence of a priest recalls a time when the revolution involved a broader segment of the population.

Related to the broader topic discussed in this chapter – that is, the presence and significance of Latin America as a key element of South–South connections in Iran’s revolutionary muralism and social culture in the 1970s, as well as the emergence of the Islamic revolution – is also an image on the far right of the third image of the mural on the external wall of the former US Embassy in Tehran (figure 7.24), depicting a man in a green jacket aiming a handgun at the head of a young boy dressed in a light blue shirt. The boy appears to be looking forward, while the man stands close behind him with his arm extended, holding the weapon. The background in this section is dominated by a red surface, creating a stark and dramatic contrast with the figures. We also find it in its original form on the cover of the Persian edition of Oriana Fallaci’s *Niente e così sia*¹³ (figure 7.25), published in 1969 by Rizzoli in Italy and awarded the Premio Bancarella in 1970. This image recalls a famous photograph of the Vietnam War taken by Eddie Adams in Saigon on February 1, 1968, depicting the execution of a Viet Cong officer that shocked the world. The image also circulated in Iran. Interestingly enough, in the case of Iran, the publisher Amir Kabir used it for the cover of the Persian publication of the renowned Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci’s testimony about her year spent in Saigon between 1967 and 1968. Additionally, it is also interesting to note that in the Persian version of the book, which appeared in 1350/1971–1972, the Iranian publisher decided to add a section to the volume that includes Fallaci’s experience in Mexico. Indeed, the work was published with a different title: *Zendegi, jang va digar hich: Gāzāreshi az Vietnam va Mekzīk* (*Life, war and nothing else: A report from Vietnam and Mexico*). It had enormous success in Iran. What is relevant for this chapter is Mexico’s presence in the volume’s content and title, as well as its association with an iconic image that would later be reproduced on the walls of the occupied US Embassy in Tehran by artists influenced by Latin American muralism.

7.6.2 *In and around Revolution Street: the University of Tehran and Its Surroundings*

The documentary *The Factory of Martyrs* (Cuomo & Voza, 2008) identifies a mural titled *Revolution* (*Enqelāb*), 300 × 700 cm (figure 7.26), painted in

13 Translated and published in the US as *Nothing, And so be it: A personal search for meaning in war* and the UK as *Nothing and amen*.

1979/1980 by Niloofar Ghaderinejad, Masoud Sadedin, and Hannibal Alkhas on the walls of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Tehran as the first mural of Iran's revolution.¹⁴ In the upper section, the prominent presence of the revolutionary protesting masses is notable. On the left, muscular workers hold pickaxes and shovels, with fields and industrial buildings in the background. In the centre, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, wearing a black cloak and turban, stands with arms outstretched, seemingly addressing or leading the crowds. To the right, a large throng of emaciated figures and women in veils surge forward, some reaching out, others being carried or supported, symbolising themes of struggle, oppression, and liberation. The backdrop shifts from cultivated land to barren, reddish hills and distant architecture, creating a visual narrative of transformation and resistance. The mural depicts Iran's revolutionary epic from its beginning to its ideal future (moving from right to left from the observer's perspective). As discussed in this chapter, the classification of this mural as the first painted during the revolution should be questioned: the revolution (as process) and its artistic output had commenced much earlier.

Relevant to this chapter is that this mural once again reveals the preponderant role played by Hannibal Alkhas in fostering the art of modern muralism in Iran as a revolutionary art form. A revolutionary social-realist style, iconography, and populist subject matter characterised the murals of the *revolution as movement*. This mural reveals how the influence of Latin American visual culture is, in several cases, blended with the influence of Soviet social realism. In some cases, such as the mural painted solely by Niloofar Ghaderinejad on the external walls of the trade union office in Tehran (figure 7.27), near Republic (Jomhuri) Avenue, the latter's influence is preponderant.

Other pictures taken at the end of the 1970s, during the apex of the revolutionary process, from the newly named Enqelab (Revolution) Street, which is deeply connected to the University of Tehran and its surroundings, reveal the extent of the presence and role of muralism in Iran as a leading art form of the country's revolution.

7.7 Conclusions: Latin America's Visual Culture and Iran's Evolving Cultural Polysystem

To fully understand the relevance of muralism and elements of the visual culture of the Latin American revolutionary processes in Iran's revolution, it is

14 According to Grigor (2014: 109) the mural was painted in c.1981.

worth recalling what was argued by the French comparatist and expert of contemporary Persian literature Christophe Balaÿ. In his history of modern Persian prose, Balaÿ (2017: 5) argues that in the case of Iran, any phenomenon calls for its representation and that only a limited number of civilizations go so far when it comes to this *mise en forme* to the point that the form seems to precede thought, to submerge it and, sometimes, ends up letting it be forgotten. In this framework, the Persian literary system stands out as the ultimate cultural reference, where form becomes the essential quest, art dominates thought, and aesthetics represents the ideal way to develop ethics. Balaÿ's considerations are grounded in literature, which has long been at the centre of Iran's polysystem and, in this respect, is strictly linked to its political, social, and ideological systems. While I agree with the interpretive perspective put forward by the French scholar, we should consider that also visuality and visual representations have played a significant role in Iran's culture throughout history, contributing to a unique material culture (Curtis et al., 2020).

Moreover, over the past two centuries, the significance of visual culture – also influenced by European arts and culture and within the context of the country's modernization process initiated during the Qajar dynasty¹⁵ – has grown substantially and surged in connection with the 1977–1979 revolution and the Iran-Iraq war. In this respect, it can be argued that, in contemporary Iran, the *mise en scène* is as crucial as the *mise en forme*, or at least an integral part of it. Therefore, any change to or injection into the *mise en scène* has (or reflects) significant changes in (or efforts at changing) the polysystem as a whole.

In Iran, once the sand settled and the *revolution as movement* gave place to the *revolution as outcome*, Latin American-inspired muralism had failed to become the official art of the revolution. Most of its artists found themselves at odds with the new political establishment, and most of the murals produced by these artists were lost and disappeared from the streets and walls of Iran's cities. However, as I detailed in a previous article, Latin America's visual culture continued to influence the studio production of these artists and even attracted new admirers (Mauriello, 2024). Moreover, Latin America's visual (and political) culture had brought significant changes to Iran's polysystem. Among its consequences, muralism was to take centre stage in the country's public visual culture and landscape.

15 Arguably, this process is still ongoing, although with a change in perspective from European-defined modernity to the search for Iranian-Islamic modernity and modernism within a plurality of modernities.

In February–March 2022, many decades after the events addressed in this chapter, the TMOCA organized its first exhibition of Iran's revolutionary art titled "Mirrored Reflections," curated by Kianoosh Mottahedi. The exhibition showcased numerous works by Iranian artists inspired by Latin America's visual culture, which had long remained outside the public eye and memory. Some canvases had not been seen by their creators since the revolution, as they believed they had been lost. It also included a dedicated room displaying a few works by Mexican muralists from the museum's collection, as well as publications in Persian on the subject, including Mehdi Sahabi's translation of Mario De Micheli's *Muralism and the Revolution of Mexico* (*Naqqāshi-ye dīvāri va enqelāb-e Mekzīk*). Regrettably, despite a visit from Iran's President at the time, Ibrahim Raisi, the exhibition lacked a catalogue, highlighting the Islamic Republic of Iran's cultural authorities' neglect of essential elements of the 1977–1979 revolution.



FIGURE 7.1 Bahman Borojeni, mural, engraving on clay and then baked, lobby of the Ministry of Agriculture in Tehran, 16 × 4 m2

PHOTO COURTESY OF BAHMAN BOROJENI



FIGURE 7.2 Bahman Borojeni, 1982, oil on canvas, TMOCA
PHOTO COURTESY OF BAHMAN BOROJENI



FIGURE 7.3 Abolghassem Saidi, 1968, mural on canvas, *Tālār-e Rudaki* (now *Tālār-e Vahdat*) concert hall in Tehran
PHOTO: RAFFAELE MAURIELLO

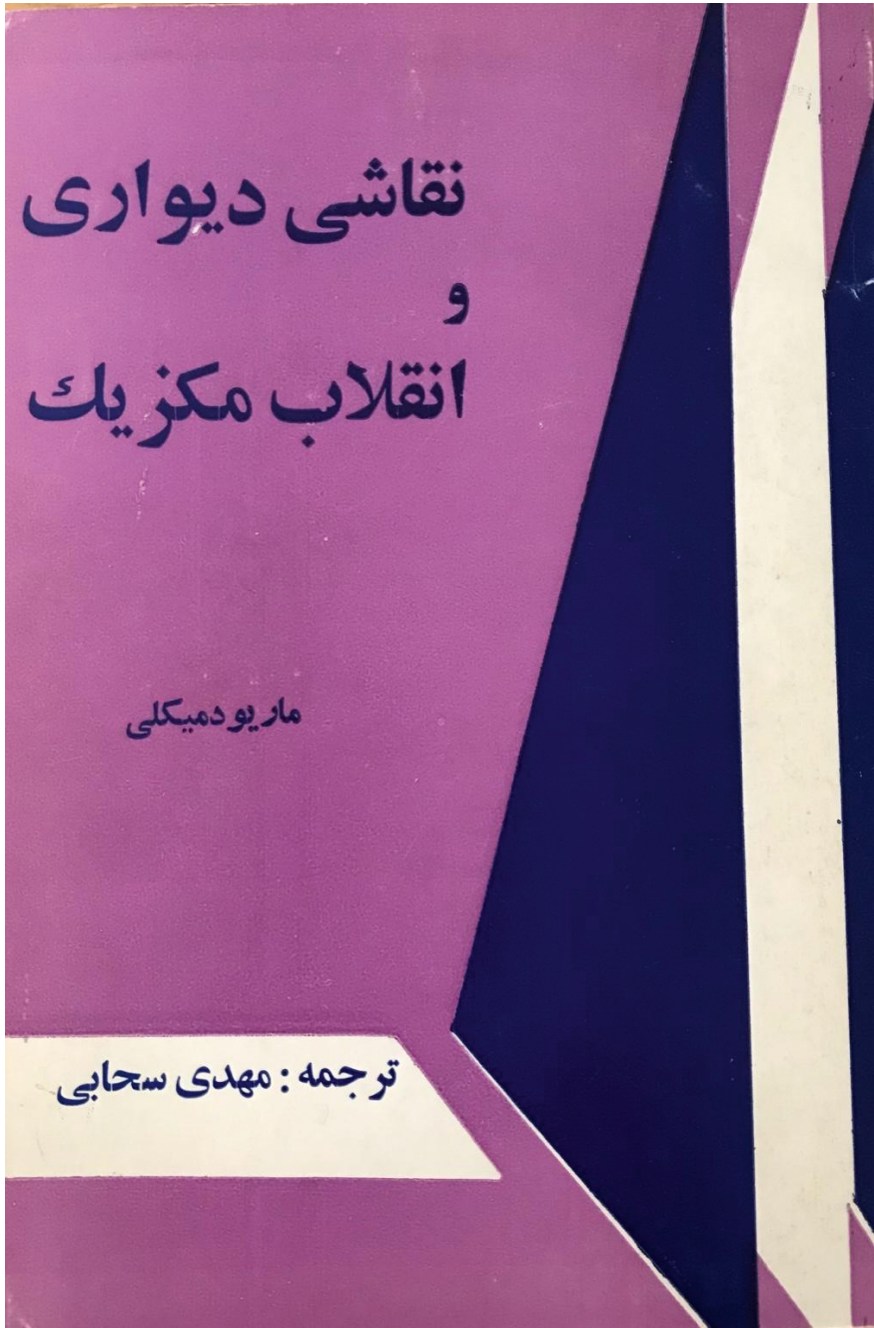


FIGURE 7.5 Cover of *Muralism and the Revolution of Mexico* (*Naqqāshi-ye divāri va enqelāb-e Mekzīk*), Golshā'i Publications, Winter of 1973 (*Zemestun* 1352)

PHOTO: RAFFAELE MAURIELLO

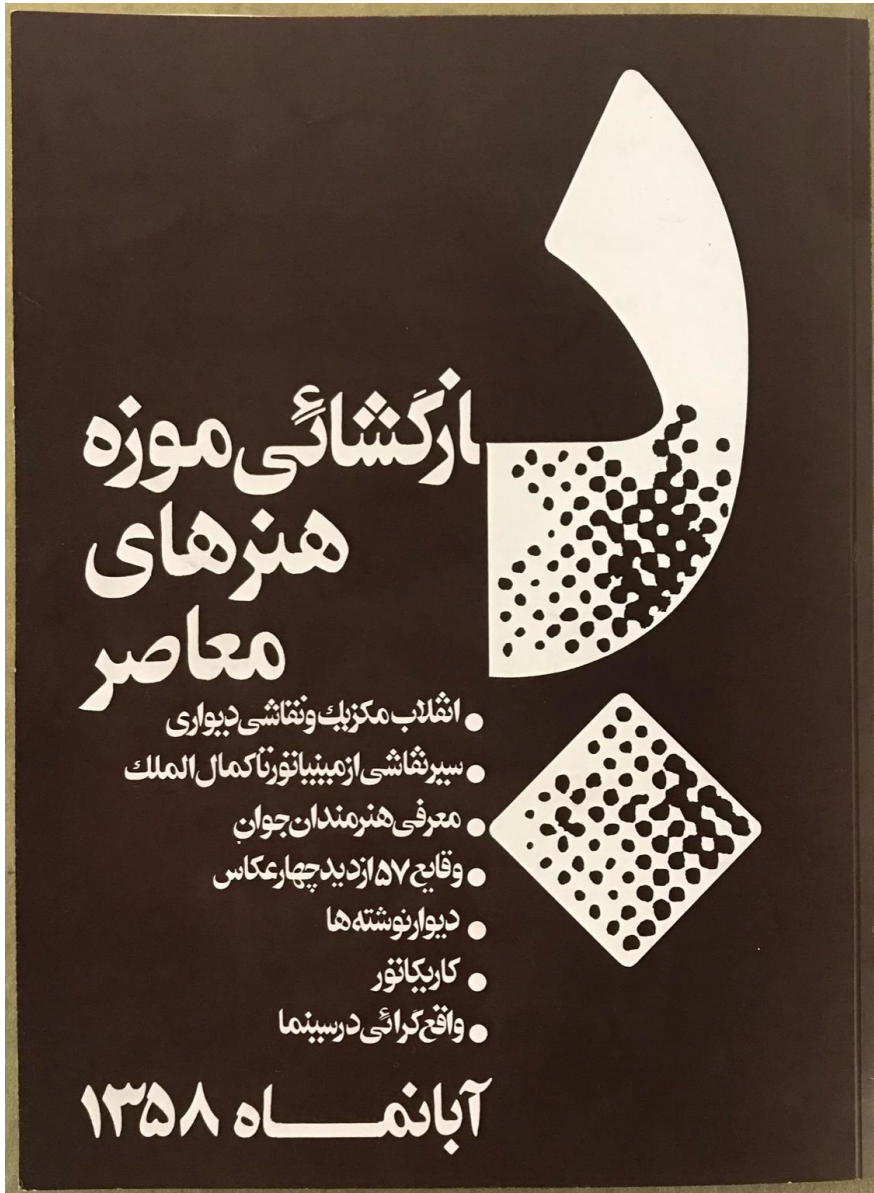


FIGURE 7.6 Cover of the brochure of the 1979 exhibition at TMoCA organized by revolutionary artists. The white Persian text on the left side reads: “Reopening of the Museum of Contemporary Arts. The Revolution of Mexico and Muralism. The Evolution of Painting from Miniature to Kamal-ol-Molk. Introduction of Young Artists. 1979 Events Through the Eyes of Four Photographers. Wall Writings. Caricature. Realism in Cinema”

PHOTO: RAFFAELE MAURIELLO

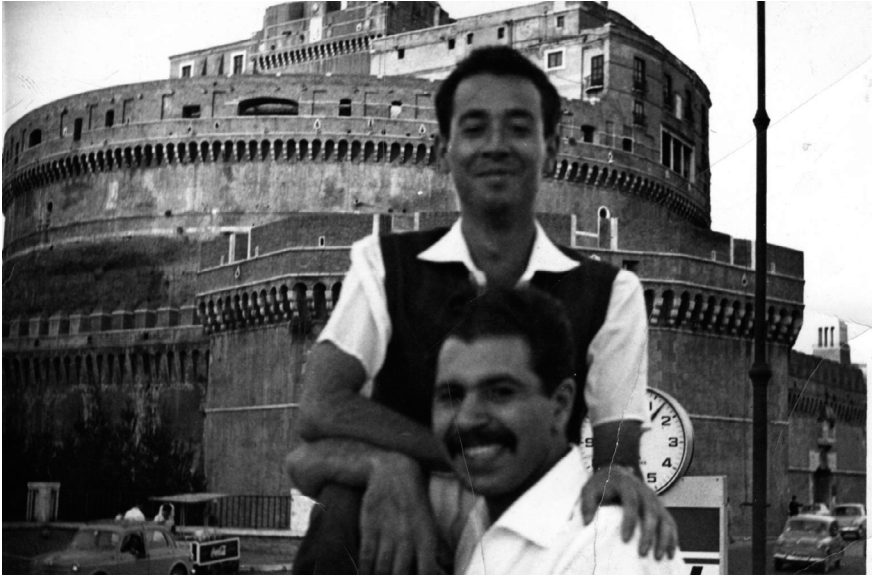


FIGURE 7.7 Photo of Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel) and Mario Amezcua posing together in front of Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome
PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTURO ÁVILA VAL



FIGURE 7.8 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), *La creación* (The Creation), mural painting on the pendentives of the Parish Church of San Francisco in Uruapan, Mexico, 1968
PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTURO ÁVILA VAL



FIGURE 7.9 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), *Melquisedec*, mural painting on the pendentives of the Parish Church of San Francisco in Uruapan, Mexico, 1968
 PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTURO ÁVILA VAL



FIGURE 7.10 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), *La última cena* (The Last Supper), mural painting on the pendentives of the Parish Church of San Francisco in Uruapan, Mexico, 1969
 PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTURO ÁVILA VAL



FIGURE 7.11 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), *La resurrección* (Resurrection), mural painting on the pendentives of the Parish Church of San Francisco in Uruapan, Mexico, 1968

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTURO ÁVILA VAL



FIGURE 7.12 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), 60-metre mural, acrylic on concrete, main conference hall of the Ministry of Agriculture premises, 1976

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTURO ÁVILA VAL



FIGURE 7.13 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), a 60-metre mural, acrylic on concrete, main conference hall of the Ministry of Agriculture premises, 1976
PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTURO ÁVILA VAL



FIGURE 7.14 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), section of 60-metre mural, acrylic on concrete, main conference hall of the Ministry of Agriculture premises, 1976
PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTURO ÁVILA VAL



FIGURE 7.15 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), section of the 60-metre mural, acrylic on concrete, main conference hall of the Ministry of Agriculture premises, 1976

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTURO ÁVILA VAL



FIGURE 7.16 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), with Ahmad Shamlou

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTURO ÁVILA VAL



FIGURE 7.17 Mohammad Hassan Sciddel (or Shiddel), mural, acrylic on concrete, premises of the Ministry of Agriculture
 PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTURO ÁVILA VAL



FIGURE 7.18 Mural painted on the external walls of the former US Embassy in Tehran. It depicts the Statue of Liberty with a skull face on the left, set against a background resembling the US flag with green stripes. On the right, a white silhouette map of Iran is overlaid with barbed wire lines
 PHOTO: RAFFAELE MAURIELLO



FIGURE 7.19 Mural painted on the external walls of the former US Embassy in Tehran. The artwork features a large Persian inscription in black text on a turquoise background, alongside an image of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in a black robe and turban, standing before the Iranian flag. Additional panels display abstract or symbolic designs.

PHOTO: RAFFAELE MAURIELLO



FIGURE 7.20 Mural on the external walls of the former US Embassy in Tehran. On the left, a grid of repeated geometric floral motifs in red, green, and black. On the right, a stylized revolver in red, white, and blue, with its barrel bent downward like a faucet, releasing a single red bullet. The revolver's grip is decorated with white stars on a blue background, evoking the US flag.

PHOTO: RAFFAELE MAURIELLO



FIGURE 7.21 Mural painted on the external walls of the former US Embassy in Tehran, depicting a dark blue military drone with the US Air Force insignia, emitting white beams downward. Silhouettes of black bats emerge from the drone against a solid red background, with stylized white lines on both sides.
PHOTO: RAFFAELE MAURIELLO



FIGURE 7.22 Hannibal Alkhas, Kazem Chalipa, and Adham Zargham, mural, external walls of the US Embassy in Tehran, early 1980s
PHOTO COURTESY OF IRAJ ESKANDARI



FIGURE 7.23 Hannibal Alkhas, Kazem Chalipa, and Adham Zargham, mural, external walls of the US Embassy in Tehran, early 1980s
PHOTO COURTESY OF IRAJ ESKANDARI



FIGURE 7.24 Hannibal Alkhas, Kazem Chalipa, and Adham Zargham, mural, external walls of the US Embassy in Tehran, early 1980s
PHOTO COURTESY OF IRAJ ESKANDARI

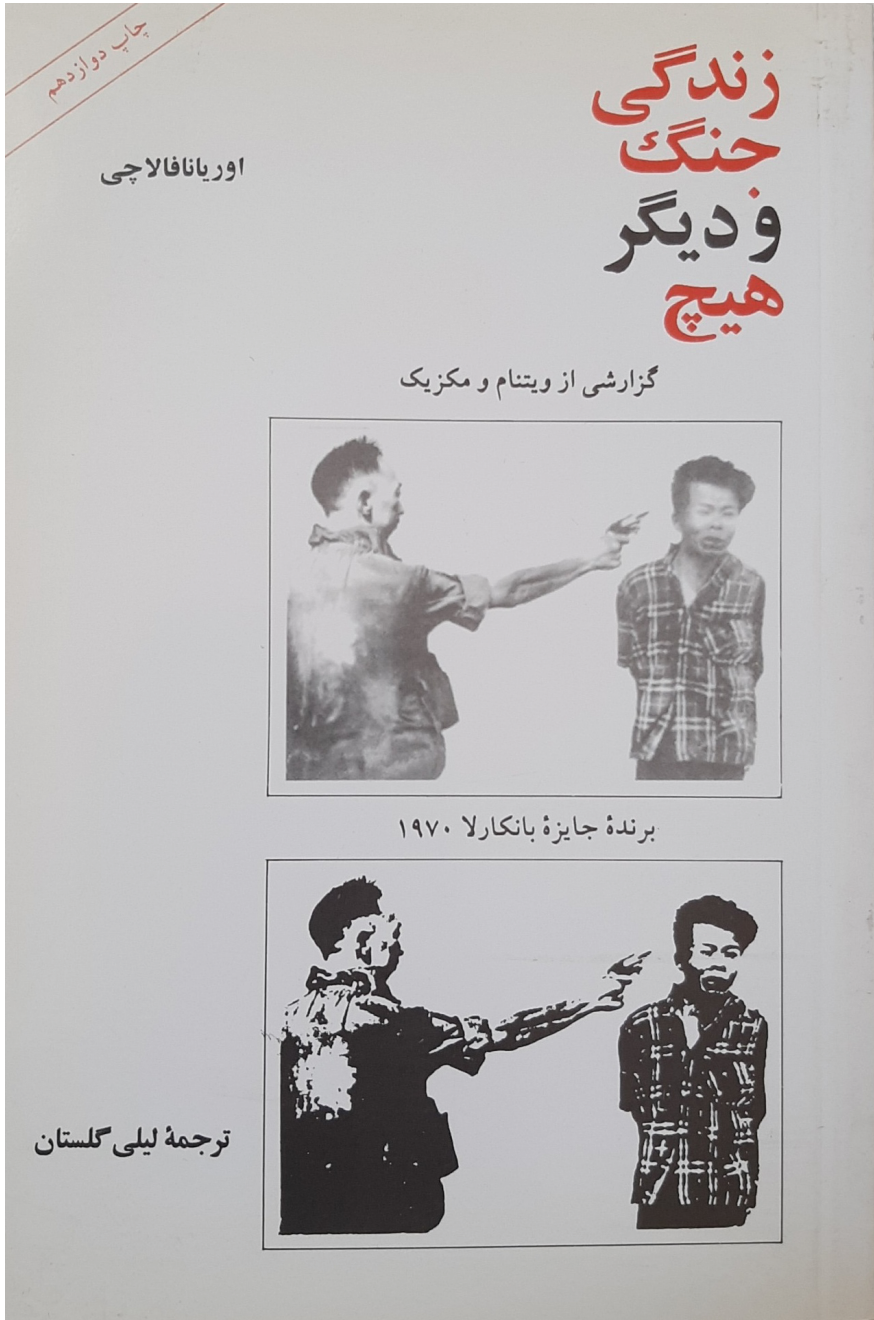


FIGURE 7.25 Cover of the Persian edition of Oriana Fallaci's *Niente e così sia*, published by Amir Kabir
PHOTO: RAFFAELE MAURIELLO



FIGURE 7.26 Niloofar Ghaderinejad, Masoud Sadedin, and Hannibal Alkhas. *Revolution*, mural, 300 × 700 cm, walls of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Tehran, 1979/1980
PHOTO COURTESY OF MOHAMAD ESKANDARI



FIGURE 7.27 Niloofar Ghaderinejad painting a mural on the walls of the Trade Union office in Tehran, near Jomhuri (Republic) Avenue, Tehran, 1979
PHOTO COURTESY OF MOHAMAD ESKANDARI

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A Joint Struggle against Imperialism: the Internationalization of the *Montoneros* in Africa, Asia and the Middle East

Eudald Cortina Orero

8.1 Introduction¹

At the beginning of 1980, a year after the ousting of the shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Vencer*, the international magazine of the Movimiento Peronista Montonero (Montonero Peronist Movement, hereinafter MPM),² reported that a Montonero delegation, formed by Adriana Gauna, the then head of the Departamento África y Medio Oriente (Africa and Middle East Department) of the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (Foreign Affairs Secretariat, hereinafter SRE) of the MPM, and Roberto Vendrell, the permanent delegate of this organization in Tanzania, had travelled to Iran. The representatives of the Montoneros formed part of a large group that, between January 1 and 6,

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 - 2 The Montoneros was an Argentine political-military organization that officially came into being – as part of the Peronist revolutionary movement – in 1970 with the kidnapping and murder of the ex-dictator Pedro Eugenio Aramburu (1955–1958). It was regarded as one of the most developed urban guerrilla organizations in Latin America. Montoneros was also one of the most successful guerrillas in terms of organizing a related mass movement: the Juventud Peronista (JP). Following the victory of Peronism in the elections of 1973, the Montoneros suspended its armed actions and initiated a process of institutionalization. However, the sectoral clashes within the Peronist movement, the shift in the balance of power and the emergence of semi-official organizations like the Triple A (Anti-Communist Argentine Alliance, AAA) forced the Montoneros to go underground and to take up arms again. With the coup d'état on March 24, 1976, the organization was severely impacted. Despite managing to maintain its operational structures in Argentina during the years of the dictatorship, its leaders and most of its activists were forced into exile.

participated in an international meeting of national liberation movements in Tehran (*Vencer*, 1980).³

As an isolated event, the journey of these Montonero activists to revolutionary Iran might seem merely anecdotal. On the contrary, it is argued here that these links reflect the complex network of transnational contacts that the MPM has woven since its establishment in 1977. Following this approach, I first trace the links established with organizations, liberation movements and revolutionary states in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Secondly, I analyse the impact of the Iranian Revolution on the Montoneros and the organization's interpretations of this process in the context of the mobilization against the Argentine military dictatorship (1976–1983).

The present study posits that the transnational mobilization of the organization's activists, resulting from the establishment of a military dictatorship that deposed the Peronist government of María Estela Martínez de Perón, precipitated their approach to other contemporary revolutions. It is evident that the aforementioned bonds, despite their initial tactical intent – whether to procure material support or achieve international recognition – ultimately facilitated the conceptualization of the anti-dictatorial struggle – and, in particular, its Strategic Counteroffensive⁴ – in the new revolutionary cycle. The transnational activism towards which the Argentine organization was driven led to a redefinition of its strategy, discourse and identity, attaching greater importance to the anti-imperialist Third World movement.⁵

The sources analysed here include the internal documents of the Montonero Party and the MPM, press sources, most notably the aforementioned magazine *Vencer*, and interviews conducted with militants of the Montoneros and other Latin American revolutionary organizations.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first addresses the transnational mobilization of the Montoneros that resulted from the coup in March 1976

3 Mauriello (forthcoming) identifies this event as the First Encounter of Liberation Movements in the Islamic Republic of Iran, held in Tehran from January 3 to 9, 1980, and promoted by the “Muslim students following the line of the imam,” the current responsible for occupying the US Embassy in Iran in November 1979.

4 As of the end of 1978, the Montoneros brought the resistance phase (active defence) to an end and began to implement a new strategy for confronting the dictatorship, viz. the Strategic Counteroffensive. This was developed in two stages, between 1979 and 1980, and involved the return of militants living abroad to carry out propaganda actions, sabotage and direct attacks against prominent members of the dictatorship. For further information on the Strategic Counteroffensive, see Confino (2021).

5 The Third World concept is employed, instead of other more recent designations like ‘Global South’, owing to the fact that it was the term used by the actors analysed here. For an approach to the origins of the term, see Palieraki (2023).

and the establishment of the Military Junta. The second section enquires into the creation of its Foreign Affairs Secretariat and the activities of its Africa and Middle East Department. The third section delves into its relationship with the Palestine Liberation Organization (hereinafter PLO) and its role in the internationalization of the Montoneros. Lastly, the fourth and fifth sections gauge the impact that the transnational movement and direct contact with other Third World revolutionary movements had on the transformations the Montoneros underwent concerning its strategy, discourse and identity.

Badan Ribeiro and Ayala (2022) reconstructed how, during the period spanning the 1970s and 1980s and in response to escalating repression in the Southern Cone region, a significant number of militants from these countries established transnational political networks. These networks were established through collaborative efforts with other exiles and organizations present in their respective host countries. Although these transnational networks were primarily focused on promoting universal principles such as human rights and denouncing military dictatorships, they also provided a platform for revolutionary militants to continue their activities abroad. In this regard, they resisted dictatorial regimes in their home countries. Additionally, these networks cultivated relationships of solidarity, enabling militants from the Southern Cone to engage in various revolutionary and national liberation initiatives, either as part of an institutional framework or as individual actors.

The internationalist participation and relations of solidarity established during this period have been comprehensively studied in the case of the Central American revolutions, especially in Nicaragua.⁶ In contrast, the ties between Latin American organizations and their African and Near Eastern counterparts, as well as the involvement of Latin American activists in the liberation movements and emerging revolutionary states in these regions, constitute a relatively novel subject of study. In this respect, the research on the Brazilian diaspora in Algeria (Da Cruz, 2006; Kreuz, 2020, 2020b, 2021) and Mozambique (Prestes Massena, 2009) is particularly noteworthy. Palieraki (2018) has focused on Algeria as a peripheral destination for Latin American exiles, probing into the establishment of Chilean activists in the country following the coup d'état against the Popular Unity government in September 1973. In light of the growing academic interest in the Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAAL), authors such as

6 On the participation of different Montonero structures in the Nicaraguan Revolution and the impact of these experiences in organizational and militant terms, see Cortina Orero (2017, 2020, 2021).

Losier, Camacho Padilla, and Stites Mor (2024) have examined the anti-colonial relationships of solidarity with Dhofar, the Western Sahara, and Palestine.

In the case of Argentina, the connection between the Montoneros and the PLO has been thoroughly examined by Robledo (2018) and Confino (2021). Robledo delves into the historical interconnection between Peronism and the Arab world, highlighting the progressive establishment of relations between Peronismo Revolucionario (Revolutionary Peronism, hereinafter PR) and the PLO during the 1970s. In contrast, Confino focuses on the training of Montonero militants in PLO camps in Lebanon, before their return to Argentina as part of the Strategic Counteroffensive. From a broader perspective, Stites Mor (2014) has examined the transnational solidarity of the Argentine left with the Palestinian cause.

With regard to the exiles, Aguilar and Marcela Suppicich's documentary *Exilio en África* (2019) has broadened the analysis to call attention to the ways in which Argentine and Chilean exiles became involved in the decolonization of Portuguese colonies like Mozambique (Ayala & Pérez Haristoy, 2023; Cristiá & Ayala, 2023).

Finally, it is important to mention the research conducted by Badan Ribeiro (2016) and Martín Álvarez (2022) on the *Solidarité* network. This research allows us to trace the relationships of solidarity between the French anti-colonial left, African liberation movements and revolutionary governments – particularly the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) – and the Latin American New Left from the beginning of the 1960s.

8.2 The Transnational Mobilization of the Montoneros

The escalation of repression that followed the establishment of the military dictatorship in Argentina in 1976 led to the exile of the National Leadership of Montoneros. Also, of those militants who had managed to avoid the repression and, by party decisions or by personal initiative, went into exile. They had to adjust to a new stage marked by the predominance of transnational political activity, promoting solidarity organizations wherever they settled. Against this backdrop, the Comité de Solidaridad con el Pueblo Argentino (Committee of Solidarity with the Argentine People, hereinafter COSPA) was created at the end of 1975 (Cortina Orero, 2021; Yankelevich, 2010).⁷ As a result of the rift in

⁷ Although Yankelevich (2010) establishes this rift in 1976, the COSPA seems to have been created beforehand, since in December 1975 its steering committee sent an endorsement to the second Jornada de Solidaridad con el Pueblo de Nicaragua (Second Colloquium for Solidarity

the Comisión Argentina de Solidaridad (Argentine Solidarity Commission, CAS), the COSPA was reinforced by the massive influx of Argentinians following the coup. Although it initially included other sectors of the Argentine armed left, the committee was swiftly co-opted by the Montoneros, which used it as a platform for developing its international relations (Rojas Mira, 2014; Yankelevich, 2010).

In response to the evolving demands of transnational mobilization, the Montoneros adopted a revised organizational structure, with the MPM being publicly launched in Rome in April 1977. This initiative served a dual purpose: first, it facilitated the regrouping of individuals who, while no longer active militants, still identified as adherents; second, it was established as a broad public organization with the capacity to establish connections with international institutions, governments, and political organizations of various types (Cortina Orero, 2020).

The MPM promoted different sectoral bodies, including the SRE, which was tasked with developing solidarity activities, representing the organization in international forums and establishing links with other revolutionary movements. In this connection, the work of the MPM was completed with the appointment of international representatives and delegates, while also promoting media outlets, such as Radio Noticias del Continente (RNC) in Costa Rica and *Vencer*, the MPM's international mouthpiece.

In 1978, the SRE underwent a restructuring that resulted in the formation of four distinct departments, overseen by Fernando Vaca Narvaja. These departments were Socialist Countries, America, Europe, and Asia-Africa, which was subsequently renamed Africa and the Middle East. An internal report of the Montonero Party published that same year identified the Asia-Africa Department as the most consolidated regarding development and institutional links. Conversely, the America Department was recognized as the least developed (Partido Montonero, 1978), a circumstance that can be attributed to the repression prevalent in most Latin American countries. This observation also reflects the distinctiveness of the Montoneros' internationalization compared to other Latin American revolutionary organizations of that era, whose relations were confined mainly to Latin America and Europe (Marchesi, 2019).

The Montoneros' organizational structure resulted in three international delegations being recognized by official governments or national liberation movements in Cuba, Lebanon, and Tanzania. In addition, between 1977

with the Nicaraguan People), held in Mexico. The document was signed by Carlos Suárez, as press secretary, and Rodolfo Puiggrós, as foreign affairs secretary, both subsequently forming part of the Higher Council of the MPM.

and 1979, the MPM's SRE successfully established delegations with varying degrees of recognition in countries such as Algeria, Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau (*Resistir es Vencer*, 1978a).

8.3 The Africa and Middle East Department of the SRE

Initially overseen by Adolfo González (*Resistir es Vencer*, 1978a), the Africa and Middle East Department's primary objective was to establish ties with newly independent countries, revolutionary organizations, and national liberation movements. In an interview with the magazine *Cuadernos del Tercer Mundo*, coinciding with the visit of a Montonero delegation to Mozambique, González outlined the strategy for internationalization in the region.

For us, it has a double meaning. In the field of the global anti-imperialist struggle, of which we believe we form part, as well as the main actors of the liberation processes that the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America are developing, there is a strategic component of an ideological character. That unites us with the struggles of other peoples. As far as Africa is concerned, this link to its revolutionary movements also has to do with the immediate interest in the need to further the struggles in Latin America and Southern Africa. (Hipólito, 1978)

The MPM's SRE brought together the efforts previously developed and accelerated the internationalization of Montoneros in Africa and the Middle East. In this respect, in September 1977, a Montonero delegation visited Tanzania for the first time, establishing formal relations with the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Party of the Revolution), which allowed the MPM to open a permanent delegation in Dar es Salaam, under the leadership of Vendrell (*Resistir es Vencer*, 1978a).⁸ Vendrell asserts that the institution functioned in a dual capacity, serving as an information office and disseminating accurate information regarding the prevailing circumstances in Argentina and Latin America within the region. Additionally, it served as a nexus for establishing connections with other 'Frontline States' and Southern African liberation movements (Hipólito 1978).

In this connection, during 1978, contact was made with the revolutionary authorities of Mozambique. In March, Adolfo González, the head of the SRE

⁸ Regarding the building and performance of Tanzania as a revolutionary state, see George Roberts (2021).

in the region, visited the country where he met with Joaquim Chissano,⁹ the foreign affairs secretary of the Mozambique Liberation Front (hereinafter FRELIMO) (*Resistir es Vencer*, 1978a).¹⁰ In October, Vendrell would strengthen these ties. During his week-long visit, he got to know first-hand the activities of the sectoral bodies and the production committees developed by the FRELIMO, while also meeting with Sharfudine Khan, the head of the America and Asia Department at the Mozambican Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE, 1978).

At the time, Mozambique was another of the nodes that contributed to the expansion of the Montoneros' international relations efforts. At the beginning of 1979, the head of the SRE, Fernando Vaca Narvaja, began a tour of the region in the framework of the meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Countries, held in Maputo between January and February of that year (*Vencer*, 1979a; SRE, 1979).¹¹ At this encounter, the Montonero representatives met again with Chissano and broadened their network of contacts in the region in meetings with Sam Nujoma,¹² president of the South West Africa People's Organization (hereinafter SWAPO), and Simon Muzenda,¹³ vice-president of the Zimbabwe African National Union (hereinafter ZANU) (*Vencer*, 1979c, 1979d). Continuing his tour of the region, Vaca Narvaja was invited by the revolutionary government of Ethiopia to visit the country, where he met with officials of the Liberation Movements Department of the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE, 1979).

The office of the Montoneros in Tanzania seems to have been particularly active in developing this transnational network. Between 1979 and 1980, according to Montonero documents, Vendrell was in permanent contact with the SWAPO through the aforementioned Nujoma and the foreign affairs secretary, Peter Mueshichange (*Vencer*, 1979c, 1980b). Similarly, as of 1978 Vendrell strengthened ties with the ZANU, through its delegation in Mozambique, while

9 In 1986, Chissano became the second president of Mozambique, an office he would occupy until 2005.

10 According to Fernando Vaca Narvaja (Vaca Narvaja & Frugoni, 2002: 195–197), Chissano was an old acquaintance of the organization, who was first approached in 1973, when a delegation from FRELIMO visited Argentina to garner support for their movement. However, it was not until the military coup of 1976 that this initial contact was formalised, as a result of the Argentine organization's transnational mobilization.

11 The Montonero delegation also included Vendrell and Adriana Gauna (*Vencer*, 1979c, 1979d).

12 Nujoma was the first president of Namibia, occupying the office from 1990 to 2005.

13 Under the shadow of Robert Mugabe, Muzenda acted as vice-prime minister between 1980 and 1987 and as vice-president of Zimbabwe between 1987 and 2003.

also establishing relations with George Silundika, the foreign affairs secretary of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), (*Vencer*, 1979c; SRE, 1978).¹⁴

The maintenance of these contacts continued at least until the middle of 1980, despite the fragmentation of the Montonero leadership following the failure of the Strategic Counteroffensive (see below) and the subsequent rifts that occurred during the period of exile.¹⁵ In this regard, in April 1980, the ZANU invited an MPM delegation to participate in the celebrations for Zimbabwe's independence. During the visit, Juan Carlos Carullo, the SRE representative in Cuba, and Vendrell held private meetings with Prime Minister Robert Mugabe and Minister of Foreign Affairs Simon Mzenda (Hipólito, 1980).¹⁶

If Tanzania and, subsequently, Mozambique were the nodes from which the MPM forged ties in Southern Africa, Algeria was the centre of its mobilization in North Africa. Despite Vaca Narvaja's memoirs suggesting a close relationship with the Algerian state and its president, Houari Boumédiène (Vaca Narvaja & Frugoni, 2002: 201 and 206), Algerian support appears to have been less enthusiastic than that of its Mozambican and Tanzanian counterparts. An example is that the Montonero delegation in the country, run by Jorge Reynoso since 1977 (*Resistir es Vencer*, 1978a), was not given the same official status as other international delegations.

Even so, the SRE went out of its way to consolidate those ties. Between February 20 and March 5, 1978, for instance, a Montonero delegation visited Algeria. The group members evince the importance of the visit and the ties with the country. The delegation comprised Vaca Narvaja, Adolfo González, the head of the Africa and Middle East Department, and Oscar Bidegain, the secretary of the Political Branch of the MPM. In addition, it included José Dámaso López of the Union Branch and Ernesto Cipión, who represented the Branch of Intellectuals and Professionals. Also included were Fernando Valdón, representing the Youth Branch, and Susana Sanz, the secretary of

14 Ties with the African National Congress (ANC) appear to have been more limited in scope, although they were undoubtedly significant in terms of propaganda and discourse. Vendrell entered into contact with the ANC in Tanzania through its Secretary General, Alfred Nzo. (*Vencer*, 1979c).

15 By June 1979, the Peronismo Montonero Auténtico (Authentic Montonero Peronism, PMA) had been created, which was followed by another schism in April 1980, with the creation of the Montoneros 17 de Octubre (hereinafter M-17). On the development of these schisms, see Slipak (2023).

16 Despite the Montoneros' delicate situation, Vendrell managed to establish the last link in the region with the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGCV), during an official visit to Guinea Bissau in 1980 (*Vencer*, 1980c).

the Women's Branch of the MPM, who participated as a guest of the National Union of Algerian Women (Hipólito, 1978; *Resistir es Vencer*, 1978a; SRE, 1978).

In Algeria, formal ties were also established with the Polisario Front through the participation of Montonero delegates in the events commemorating the second anniversary of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) (Hipólito, 1978).¹⁷ According to Robledo (2018: 386–387), a large group of Montonero combatants received military training at bases belonging to the Polisario, under an agreement with the Algerian government.

8.4 From Lebanon to the Iranian Revolution: the PLO in the Montonero Transnational Network

Contacts with the PLO, as with FRELIMO, were established as early as 1972, before the forced exile of the Montoneros. In this connection, Robledo (2018) identifies three key moments.¹⁸ The first occurred when, during 1972, Rodolfo Galimberti, the leader of the Juventud Argentina por la Emancipación Nacional (Argentine Youth for National Emancipation, hereinafter JAEN) and future member of the Montonero leadership, travelled to a PLO training camp in southern Lebanon, accompanied by Roberto Ahumada, Mario Herrera, and Rodolfo Urtubey, all members of the JAEN. The group had the personal endorsement and recommendation of Juan Domingo Perón, who was living in exile in Spain. In this country, the young Argentine militants established contact with Abu Lez, a member of the network of Palestinian students in Europe and the unofficial delegate of the PLO in Spain (Robledo, 2018: 79–98).

The second key moment occurred in 1974, coinciding with the progressive estrangement between the Montoneros and Juan Domingo Perón, and the deepening contradictions between the different sectors forming part of the Justicialist Movement.¹⁹ At the time, a Montonero delegation formed by

17 A reading of the private correspondence of Rodolfo Puiggrós, secretary of the Branch of Professionals and Intellectuals of the MPM, allows us to identify the existence of links with the representatives of the Polisario Front at least since 1976.

18 For an approach to the historical ties between Peronism, the Near East and Arab nationalism, see Balloffet (2020). Bergel (2015) reverted to the beginning of the twentieth century in order to observe the reformation of the concept of the East. This had a positive influence on a wide range of Argentine intellectuals, thereby facilitating the emergence of a nascent Third World discourse.

19 The Peronist or Justicialist Movement emerged in Argentina around the figure of Juan Domingo Perón in the 1940s. As a multiclass movement, it included different currents of thought, in some cases openly at loggerheads. The term 'justicialist' has to do with one

Horacio Mendizábal – the subsequent leader of the Montonero Army – and journalist Rodolfo Walsh, among others, embarked on a journey that would take them to Egypt, Algeria, Syria, and Lebanon. The main objective was to establish institutional ties with Algeria and, with the help of the Algerian authorities, to reinforce contacts with other revolutionary organizations in the region, such as Fatah, the hegemonic organization within the PLO (Robledo, 2018: 110–114).

The third key moment occurred at the end of 1976, just months after the military dictatorship was established in Argentina. As previously mentioned, the transnational mobilization of the Montoneros at that time assumed a more significant role. In this context, ties became more formal and institutional (Vaca Narvaja & Frugoni, 2002: 201), expressed in promoting a series of political and military collaboration agreements. In the political field, those agreements led to a meeting between the Montonero leadership and that of the PLO in Lebanon in May 1977, in which both organizations expressed their mutual recognition in the framework of solidarity with the Third World and the anti-imperialist movement.²⁰ In the military field, the cooperation had two strands: the loan of the PLO's bases for training Argentine combatants and the Montoneros' support for a C2 explosive factory in Lebanon established by technicians belonging to the Argentine revolutionary organization (Robledo, 2018: 165–175).

Consolidating institutional links with the PLO had an unquestionable propaganda value for the Montoneros. Appearing with Yasser Arafat and receiving recognition from the Palestinian leaders were central to developing the apparatus and international relations of the MPM. It gave it legitimacy in the eyes of the African and the Near Eastern revolutionary movements. It enabled it to forge other ties, even outside these regions, in terms of the relations established by the PLO itself:

In Europe, despite this press campaign, there was a certain degree of recognition of the Palestinians, to the point that by 1976 they almost had a state structure, their delegations being real embassies. In Europe, these Palestine delegations really helped us to establish relations fundamentally with the social democrats, while also opening doors to the

of the three basic principles of Peronist doctrine: economic independence, social justice and political sovereignty.

20 Mario Eduardo Firmenich, secretary general of the Higher Council, and Fernando Vaca Narvaja participated in the encounter in representation of the MPM, while the Palestinian delegation was formed by Yasser Arafat and Abu Lotuf, political secretary of the PLO.

African liberation movements. When companions of ours travelled, the Palestinians offered them support, integrated them and briefed them to a certain extent. (Vaca Narvaja & Frugoni, 2002: 202)

As a result of the 1977 agreements with the PLO, the MPM established a delegation in Lebanon that the Palestinian organization officially recognised. This delegation, led by Adriana Gauna, became one of the nodes from which the Montoneros wove their transnational network. From Lebanon, under the auspices of Fatah and the PLO, the Argentine organization expanded to Iraq, Syria, Libya and, ultimately, Iran.

In December 1977, a Montonero delegation visited Iraq for the first time, once again thanks to the PLO (Hipólito, 1978). Adolfo González and Adriana Gauna met with the secretary of foreign affairs of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party. According to the magazine *Vencer* (1979c), those ties were strengthened through the good offices of the Iraqi ambassador in Lebanon, Kasem Samawi. The Iraqi authorities subsequently invited Gauna on two further occasions: the first during the presidency of General Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr and the second when Saddam Hussein came to power (Robledo, 2018: 376–384). As Robledo claims, more than yielding specific results, these trips served to place the Montoneros “in the showcase of international diplomacy.” Albeit more low-key, the trips to the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) and strengthening links with the Libyan government seem to have had the same objective (Hipólito, 1978).²¹ Contrastingly, the Montoneros’ activities in Syria apparently had a logistical purpose.

Regarding Iran, the relationship with the revolutionary movement was not established until after the overthrow of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. In February 1979, the MPM sent a letter to Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iranian people, expressing its support for the nascent Islamic Republic while emphasising its contributions to the struggles of the Arab countries²² and the Third World

21 With respect to South Yemen, in a cable, dated June 15, 1978, the Argentine military authorities recorded the presence of a Montonero delegation in this country and the publication of a joint press release of the Montoneros and the Yemeni Council for Peace and Solidarity (Cable no. 161, Archivo Histórico de Cancillería – Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Comercio Internacional y Culto. Retrieved December 27, 2024 from <https://desclasificacion.cancilleria.gob.ar/documentacion/retransmite-cable-de-la-embajada-argentina-en-yemen-referente-la-visita-de-la-o>).

22 It is important to note that Iran is not an Arab country; however, there is a tendency among those who are unaware of the distinction between the Arab world and the Middle East to utilise both concepts as if they are synonymous. This appears to be the case in the present instance with the Montoneros.

as a whole (MPM, 1979). A year later, in January 1980, and as before, thanks to its ties with the PLO, the MPM was invited to participate in an international gathering of liberation movements and revolutionary organizations in Tehran. The main leaders of the MPM in the region – Adriana Gauna, who had replaced Adolfo González as the head of the Africa and Middle East Department, and Roberto Vendrell – attended the event (*Vencer*, 1980).²³

During their stay in Iran, the Montonero delegation travelled to the city of Qom, to the southwest of Tehran, to attend a collective encounter with Khomeini, while also meeting with the other two revolutionary leaders of the period, namely, Ayatollah Ali Montazeri, a member of the Council of the Islamic Revolution, and Massoud Rajavi, the leader of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (hereinafter PMOI/MEK).²⁴ Both the Montoneros and the Mojahedin published photos of this encounter in their party publications (*Vencer*, 1980; Union of Moslem Iranian Students Societies Outside Iran, 198?). Despite the efforts to initiate collaboration between the Montoneros and the PMOI/MEK, this attempt was not subsequently developed. On the contrary, both organizations entered into a process of crisis. The Montoneros encountered difficulties due to the collapse of their Strategic Counteroffensive and the emergence of the dissident group M-17. The PMOI/MEK, meanwhile, found itself in open conflict with the new Iranian authorities since 1981.

8.5 Strategic Adaptation in the Framework of the Transnational Mobilization

By the end of 1978, the Montoneros had initiated the “Strategic Counteroffensive” campaign within the Argentine diaspora, recognising the necessity to transition from a phase of passive resistance to a proactive campaign aimed at overthrowing the Military Junta. In this context, the organization launched a recruitment campaign among militants expected to return to the country to

23 Following his return to the country for the Strategic Counteroffensive the Montoneros launched during that same year, Adolfo González disappeared without trace after being kidnapped by the Argentine police force on September 13, 1979.

24 The PMOI/MEK took up arms against the Pahlavi regime. Following the Islamic Revolution, and amidst the ongoing factional struggles within the newly established Islamic Republic of Iran, the PMOI/MEK organised a protest against the dismissal of President Abolhassan Banisadr in June 1981. The authorities' repression of these protests led to the resurgence of the armed struggle against the new regime (Mauriello, forthcoming). As regards the PMOI/MEK, see the now classic works by Abrahamian (1989) and Behrooz (1999), plus the more recent one by Cohen (2018).

carry out propaganda, sabotage, and direct attacks against personalities linked to the military government.

Those Montonero militants, who returned in two waves, the first during 1979 and the second as of February 1980, were organized in two formations: the Tropas Especiales de Infantería (Special Infantry Troops, hereinafter TEI) and the Tropas Especiales de Agitación (Special Agitation Troops, hereinafter TEA). The mission of the former was to target senior officials of the Ministry of Economy, who for the Montoneros had a high symbolic value in that they were responsible for the economic policies implemented by the dictatorship. In contrast, the latter were tasked with carrying out propaganda actions, like interfering with the country's TV signals in support of trade union conflicts to undermine the regime (Campos, 2013; Confino, 2021).

As expected, the transnational mobilization strategy the Montoneros had previously implemented was central to their operations. This transnational dimension manifested itself at various levels, ranging from the recruitment of militants abroad, predominantly from their places of exile in Spain and Mexico, to the military training of combatants scheduled to return to the country, particularly those belonging to the TEI. Additionally, the organization engaged in learning from the study of and direct contact with other contemporary experiences, such as the Nicaraguan and Iranian Revolutions, which influenced the operational rationales and mobilization strategies employed by the Montoneros.

In the framework of the agreements with the PLO, the Montonero militants recruited in Spain, who had initially gathered on the outskirts of Madrid, travelled to the Middle East for training in the three bases that Fatah had in Lebanon and Syria. Confino (2021: 142) establishes these training camps in the Lebanese cities of Damour and Sidon, as well as in the vicinity of the Syrian capital, Damascus. These groups returned to Argentina in mid-1979, while other militants continued training (Confino, 2021: 133).

By then, two Montonero contingents had been created in Mexico to support the insurrection of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (hereinafter FSLN): the Brigada Sanitaria Adriana Haidar (Adriana Haidar Medical Brigade) and the Grupo de Combate General San Martín (General San Martín Combat Group). The swift outcome of the Sandinista insurrection influenced the evolution of the Montonero structures in Nicaragua. Whereas the medical brigade established itself in Diriamba, where it participated in the development of the incipient health system of this locality, the combat group joined the nascent Sandinista Popular Army (hereinafter EPS) (Cortina Orero, 2017, 2020).

Despite the failure of the Strategic Counteroffensive, which resulted in the annihilation of the majority of those who had returned home, the Montonero

leadership launched a second wave in 1980. According to the accounts of those who formed part of the combat group, the participation of Montonero militants in the Nicaraguan Revolution had a dual purpose. On the one hand, it constituted a contribution to internationalist solidarity with the FSLN; on the other hand, it enabled the combatants to acquire military training on site, a skill set in which most of them were deficient (Celedonio Carrizo, personal communication, August 31, 2016; 'José', personal communication, November 1, 2016; Rosario Galo Moya, personal communication, March 23 and April 16, 2018).²⁵

Despite the Strategic Counteroffensive being initiated after the revolutionary triumphs in Iran and Nicaragua, for the Montoneros, these events signified the conclusion of a decade characterized by the advancement of reactionary regimes in Latin America and the commencement of a new cycle of revolutionary movements on an international level. In this context, the Montonero leadership regarded the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua as substantiating evidence that the launch of the Strategic Counteroffensive had been an adequate decision, while also imparting fundamental lessons for the overthrow of the dictatorship (*Vencer*, 1979e). The Iranian experience was interpreted in similar terms:

The recent Iranian insurrection must have offered the Argentine military food for thought: in a strategic country for imperialism, with an army three to four times greater than that of our country, a seemingly eternal regime has collapsed before the irrepressible momentum of the masses. [...] Today, as in Iran, Nicaragua and Bolivia – to offer just a few recent examples – in Argentina the time of the people has come. (Vaca Narvaja, 1979)

A comparison of the economic development and sociopolitical characteristics of the Nicaraguan and Iranian cases revealed two key aspects for the Montoneros. Firstly, it indicated that the weakness of US imperialism was evident in its inability to intervene militarily on behalf of the "native oligarchies." Secondly, it demonstrated that the armed struggle must be combined with "the insurrectional mobilization of the working masses" to incite the population to rebel (Firmenich, 1979a; Vaca Narvaja, 1979).²⁶

25 An example of the participation of members of the General San Martín Combat Group in the Montoneros' return efforts is the capture of Hector Amilcar Archetti, who disappeared without trace after being kidnapped in Mendoza in September 1980.

26 On the development of the Montoneros insurrectional strategy, see the recent article by Confino (2023), in which he traces connections between the impact of international

The strategy of the TEI and TEA should be approached from this insurrectionary perspective, targeting the high officials responsible for the dictatorship's unpopular economic policies and encouraging trade union conflict (Cortina Orero, 2021). Villalba, head of Radio Noticias del Continente – MPM's shortwave radio station in Costa Rica –, emphasises the impact of the insurrectional experiences in Nicaragua and Iran on the Montoneros' strategy:

It so happened that the people were heading down the path of insurrection, which we, coming from an urban, absolutely urban process, had been studying. One of our hypotheses was that if the dictatorship continued to create the conditions for economic disaster, which led to more repression, popular pre-insurrectional and insurrectional uprisings could occur. This was the case in Nicaragua [...]. At the time – if one day a European citizen reads this, he will also find it odd – we studied, for example, the Iranian Revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini which, besides its characteristics and faith issues, also involved insurrectional processes. Namely, the practically unarmed people started to rebel, and the power of the people was greater than that of the shah's army, which was one of the most powerful in the world. However, they managed to smash it. That was what we studied. (Carlos Villalba, personal communication, September 21, 2016)

The interpretations of the Iranian Revolution did not only impact the Montoneros, who were ideologically rooted in revolutionary nationalism and, as already seen, pursued a broad policy of alliances with other Third World actors. As Álvarez (2013) observes, the mass insurrection model of the Iranian revolutionaries was also followed by the Chilean communists to promote active resistance against the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. The interpretation of this experience, as well as that of the Nicaraguan Revolution, made the Communist Party of Chile reformulate its strategies, which led to the development of a policy of armed confrontation with the dictatorship – the popular rebellion of the masses – and the creation of the Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez (Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front, FPMR).²⁷

experiences and the internal dynamics themselves to explain the strategic change of tack in this organization. In addition, see Cortina Orero (2023), who studies the adaptation of the insurrectional approach of the Montoneros and PR during the final years of the military dictatorship and the democratic transition in Argentina.

27 The interest was mutual in both processes. As Mauriello (forthcoming) notes, between 1978 and 1989 a total of 17 publications dealing with the Chilean political process were published, with special attention being paid to the figure of Salvador Allende and the

8.6 Conclusions: from Active Solidarity to the Third World Identity

The links established by MPM with other revolutionary organizations on the international stage were undoubtedly of a propagandistic nature. The links with the PLO and the Sandinista Front were fuelled by the organization both in its international dissemination and its internal consolidation. At the international level, establishing relations with the PLO led to significant progress in international diplomacy, particularly in Africa and the Middle East. Nevertheless, the dictatorship also exploited these connections. For instance, images of Arafat alongside Firmenich and Vaca Narvaja and Montonero activities in Nicaragua were disseminated in the pro-Junta press to substantiate the external threat to the country's security. Concurrently, the Argentine revolutionary organization came under the scrutiny of international intelligence services, including those of Israel.

At an internal level, these ties reflected an active organization that had not only survived the repression of the dictatorship but also built a transnational network of solidarity with organizations such as Fatah and the PLO, the torchbearers of global revolution, and with organizations such as the FSLN, which had defeated the Somoza dictatorship by force of arms.²⁸ The practice of internationalist solidarity tended to break the dynamics of survival and impasse experienced in exile, serving as a stimulus for breathing new life into militant activity and lifting morale (Cortina Orero, 2020). By the same token, in the context of launching and developing the Strategic Counteroffensive, which subsequently led to ongoing internal rifts within the Montoneros, interpretations of effective contemporary processes and their associated factors exhibited a tendency to favour internal consolidation and reinforce the strategic return of militants promoted by the organization.

In contrast to interpretations that dismiss these ties as having only a propaganda objective, this chapter considers that the transnational relations established by the Montoneros at the time had a significant impact on both their mobilization and discourse.

Regarding mobilization, as noted in the previous section, these links were deemed crucial for organising the Strategic Counteroffensive and for training combatants destined to return to Argentina. This importance was evident in

Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Left Movement, MIR). After Cuba, Chile was the Latin American country with the largest number of political publications in Iran.

28 The link between the FSLN, and subsequently the Sandinista state, and the PLO was just as stable. For more on this relationship, see López de la Torre (2015) and Yurow (2019).

two distinct stages: first, in the training received in Lebanon and Syria, and second, in the creation of a Montonero contingent in the EPS. With this specific support, in terms of connections and the study of other contemporary revolutionary experiences, the Argentine organization underwent strategic transformations, leading to a shift towards an insurreccional approach:

Experience shows that no dictatorship, however powerful it may seem, is capable of coping with the explosive combination of the insurreccional mobilisation of the working masses, the revolt of the people as a whole, with the guerrilla warfare of a revolutionary vanguard emerging from and fuelled by national history itself, by the historical experience of the popular struggles of their country. We know that there are no two revolutions alike, that the history, culture, economic growth and the internal and external political conditions of Iran and Nicaragua are very different from those of our country. But these same circumstances also serve to differentiate between the situation in Iran from that in Nicaragua, and yet both revolutions had the same combination of mass insurrection and armed struggle waged by organisations which were not copied from any foreign model but were shaped by their own national history. Under these same principles, we are now initiating our own popular counteroffensive. (Firmenich, 1979a)

Rather than models to follow, triumphant revolutions such as Iran and Nicaragua made it possible to frame Montoneros' anti-dictatorial struggle – and, in particular, its Counter-Offensive project –, in a new cycle of revolutionary mobilization. The marked transnational character of the political mobilization of the Montoneros as of 1976 also resulted in discursive and identity-related redefinitions. In this sense, it is important to emphasise the attention paid to other contemporary processes outside Latin America. This consideration becomes particularly crucial when reflecting on the revolutionary struggles of the Third World, which, regardless of their internal causes, were necessarily interrelated in a common fight against imperialism. Depending on the interrelation of these processes and the institutional ties forged by the Montoneros, the organization expressed the need for active solidarity among revolutionary movements. This was not unique to Latin America; it was also essential to practise this solidarity with African and Middle Eastern liberation movements.

In establishing this framework of solidarity, the Montoneros' discourse emphasised the military, technical, and economic support provided by the Argentine military dictatorship to the Somoza regime in Nicaragua and the

Shah's regime in Iran.²⁹ It also highlighted the sympathy expressed by the Military Junta for the Israeli government and the racist regimes of Rhodesia and South Africa (Firmenich, 1979b; Puiggrós, 1979; *Vencer*, 1979c). In opposition to these alliances, the Montoneros understood how essential it was to strengthen ties with the revolutionary movements of these countries. Based on a position that emphasized more unity of purpose than ideological definitions, the Argentine organization defended a "policy of non-alignment and full integration into and support for all national liberation movements." With a strong anti-imperialist foundation, this alliance aimed to unify newly independent countries, the African and Middle Eastern liberation movements, and the democratic and revolutionary forces of Latin America (Firmenich, 1979b).

In this respect, it is evident how the Montoneros' political identity evolved over time. They began as revolutionary nationalists associated with the Peronist left, drawing from the ideals of the Latin American New Left, but eventually they progressively reinforced a Third World identity. Even though this character did not emerge during that period,³⁰ its formation was finally consolidated as of 1976 in a context of transnational mobilization and direct exchanges with revolutionary organizations in Africa and the Near East.

This greater identification with the Third World revolutionary movement was reflected in the changes that the organization's discourse underwent, with the organization embracing problems that had little to do with the political processes in Argentina and Latin America. Those transformations were summarised by the maximum leader of the Montoneros, Mario Eduardo Firmenich (1979b), in the following terms: "In this process, in this international experience that we have acquired, we have become fully aware of the need for mutual support between national liberation movements; of the need for jointly combating Zionism, racism, apartheid and neocolonialism."

29 The Argentine Military Junta attempted to strengthen diplomatic and commercial relations with Iran in an international context in which both countries were criticised for their repressive practices. In 1977, an Argentine delegation led by the minister of trade visited Iran to further cooperation between both countries (Camacho Padilla, 2019: 86). On the diplomatic and cultural relations between Iran and Latin America, see Camacho Padilla (2020) and Camacho Padilla and Escribano Martín (2020).

30 This identity formation can be traced back to the organization's beginnings. In the document "Línea político militar" (Military Political Line), the MPM identifies Argentina as a dependent country subject to neo-colonial oppression in a Third World context, while at the same time, based on the doctrine of the 'Third Position' of Peronism, it defends active solidarity with the Latin American, Asian, and African peoples, those of the so-called 'Third World' exploited by colonialism and imperialism (Montoneros, 1971a, 1971b).

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Interviews

Celedonio Carrizo, member of the Grupo de Combate General San Martín. Buenos Aires, August 31, 2016.

'José', member of the Grupo de Combate General San Martín. Buenos Aires, November 1, 2016.

Rosario Galo Moya, member of the Grupo de Combate General San Martín. Ciudad de México, March 23 and April 16, 2018.

Carlos Villalba, director of Radio Noticias del Continente. Buenos Aires, September 21, 2016.

“We Have Mountains Too, Che Guevara”: Latin American Influence on the Radicalization of the 1968 Generation in Turkey

Bariş Ahmet Yörümez

9.1 Introduction¹

In the fall of 1967, the rural Elmalı region in southern Turkey witnessed a remarkable peasant uprising against the landowners. Because the progressive 1961 constitution had granted the lake and river beds to the state treasury, the landless peasants regarded the fertile agricultural area that emerged after the partial drying up of the local Avlan lake as communal land and planted their crops there. On the opposite side, the landlords claimed that the Ottoman and Republican-era land registry offices had recognized these areas as their property and argued that the peasants were illegally occupying their land. Following a period of confrontation, the landlords' men, along with the gendarmerie, destroyed some of the resisting peasants' crops just before harvest time. This led to the intensification of the conflict; leftist students and opposition politicians came to the region in support of the peasants, bringing the issue to the attention of the national media (Yavuz, 2010).

As the rebellion was going on, the news about the death of Che Guevara in the mountains of faraway Bolivia reached the country. Soon, a young poet from the Elmalı region, Metin Demirtaş, wrote a poem summarizing his feelings about the revolutionary Argentine and linking his struggle with the one that was slowly emerging in his own country:

We have mountains too, Che Guevara
never mind that they are calm now, looking like a hawk
they are tired, they have seen their wars
they have sheltered their bandits
so, they are not sold off just because rifles are not going off right now
(waiting) to lay down with a gun under the spruce and purple oak trees
we have mountains, too, Che Guevara. (“CHE için,” 1967)

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Regardless of geographical distance and cultural as well as linguistic differences, for the young poet and many others, there was no doubt about what Che Guevara represented and whose side he would take in the local conflict in this obscure corner of Anatolia.

This chapter studies the impact of the Latin American guerrilla movements on the Turkish left between Che Guevara's death in 1967 and the martial law of 1971 (April 26) in Turkey. As many scholars have noted, this period was crucial for the radicalization of Turkish socialist youth, transitioning from legal student activism to revolutionary militancy (Şener, 2015: 193; Yanık & Bora, 2021: 284–287). The chapter discusses the role played by the positive perception of Latin American guerrilla movements in such transformation. In particular, it analyses how the death of Che Guevara coincided with the growing tensions between the socialist youth and state forces, leading to increased interest and admiration for armed movements in Latin America, from the Cuban Revolution to the urban guerrilla movements in Brazil. I argue that the Latin American revolutionary movements made a dual impression on the emerging socialist youth in Turkey: one ideological, the other related to communal emotions. First, revolutionary violence and its perceived success in Latin America convinced many in Turkey that an armed uprising was the only way to counter state violence and fascist threats in the country. Second, the very image of charismatic guerrilla commanders, like Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, fighting against their local comprador classes backed by the United States, tremendously impacted the leftist youth in Turkey. The figure of the heroic Latin American revolutionary guerrilla defying “Yankee” imperialism in its backyard inspired aspiring Turkish leftists to take up arms and bring about a revolution in their country. In this episode of radicalization and growing convictions for the necessity of armed struggle, Salvador Allende's peaceful road to socialism (*via Chilena*) briefly provided ideological ammunition to those who still argued that socialism through parliamentary means was attainable. However, the 1973 military coup, which forcefully ended the socialist experiment in Chile, crushed such hopes and further strengthened the conviction among young Turkish revolutionaries that an armed struggle was mandatory to attain socialism. Tragically, such widespread conviction would soon lead to near-civil war conditions, resulting in brutal martial law in 1971 and eventually a coup d'état in 1980.

This chapter contributes to the growing literature on transnational interactions, solidarity networks, and the agency of social and political forces in the Global South during the Cold War. Whereas earlier scholarship predominantly focused on the global power play and ideological struggle between the capitalist and socialist blocs during the Cold War, after the 2000s, historians such as Odd Arne Westad, Van E. Gosse, Sarah Pugach, and Konstantin Katsakioris

began to challenge “the dichotomized global perspective” and focus on the multitude of actors and experiences at grassroots levels (Katsakioris, 2017; Pugach, 2022; Van Gosse, 2005; Westad, 2005). Thanks to their contributions, the new scholarship ceased to regard people from the Third World, or Global South, as mere side stories in the global competition between superpowers and instead began to see them as agents of social change and transformation within a broader Cold War framework.

By examining how Turkish leftists of the 1960s followed, interpreted, and were influenced by the revolutionary struggles in Latin America, the chapter contributes to the scholarly discussion on transnational/transcontinental solidarity networks, as well as the political ideologies and emotions they generated from a South–South perspective. While a substantial body of literature exists on the cultural influence of the West on countries in the Eastern Bloc or the Global South, research on South–South interactions, particularly from a transcontinental perspective, has only recently been adequately addressed (Hatzky, 2014; Marchesi, 2017; Stites-Mor, 2022; Vélez, 2016). Similarly, the historians of socialism in Turkey offer merely cursory references to the influence of South-to-South solidarity stemming from fateful events like the Vietnam War, the Cuban revolution, and the Palestinian liberation movement on the transformation of the Turkish left during the 1960s and 1970s.² Emphasizing the global reach of the Latin American influence in the hearts and minds of the 1968 generation in Turkey, the chapter not only testifies to the multi-centred nature of the Cold War but also highlights the importance of the ideas and feelings with regard to South–South solidarity in the making of the anti-imperialist and counter-hegemonic movements across the Global South.

The chapter first provides a brief history of the Turkish left during the 1960s and why the youth were particularly susceptible to Latin American influence by the decade’s end. Afterwards, it focuses on how Che Guevara’s death came upon existing tensions and a sense of helplessness among the youth. As the Marxist left became disenchanted by the legal parliamentary politics for bringing meaningful change, many came to regard armed rebellion as a viable option for revolutionising the country. As I argue in this chapter, Latin America provided significant inspiration for this shift in tactics. Lastly, I discuss how

2 As İlker Aytürk observes, a more general problem with Cold War studies in Turkey is that they “have so far been the exclusive preserve of international scholars, who, of course, approached the subject from a security perspective. The impact of the Cold War on wholesale transformation of Turkish society, economy, military and bureaucracy, not to speak of the redrawing of the ideological map in post-1945 Turkey, largely escaped the attention of scholars. We must admit that the Cold War factor in modern Turkish studies is an extremely understudied topic” (Aytürk, 2017: para. 4).

Allende's coming to power made a brief counterpoint to the overall message of the guerrilla movements in Latin America and Turkey.

9.2 From Peace to War: the Short Story of Leftism in Turkey in the 1960s

Leftism as a social movement emerged in Turkey during the 1960s. Until the liberal constitution of 1961, which was accepted after the military coup d'état of May 27, 1960, the state constantly repressed the intellectual groups suspected of harbouring leftist ideas, and there was no legal leftist party within the political spectrum. The Constitution of 1961 expanded the limits of freedom of expression and opened up a political space for forming a left-wing political party. In this relatively liberal political atmosphere, a group of trade unionists founded the Workers' Party of Turkey and invited independent socialist law professor Mehmet Ali Aybar to lead it (Varel, 2021: 402). The Workers' Party gained support from the progressive intelligentsia and part of the urban working class, receiving 2.97 per cent of the votes at its first election in 1961 (Varel, 2021: 409). This allowed the Party to send fifteen representatives to the parliament. Despite such a relatively modest electoral success, previously repressed ideas on workers' rights, wealth redistribution, and land reform became more visible in the mainstream political scene, and youth activism in the late 1960s rose significantly.³ As the representatives of the Workers' Party were actively involved in political debates in parliament and the media, left and leftist principles became mainstream. Not surprisingly, these ideas soon attracted the attention of the growing number of young readers in the country.

As leftist principles were gaining currency, in 1965, İsmet İnönü, one of the heroes of the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1922) and the ruling prime minister, surprisingly declared that his Republican People's Party, "in terms of its understanding of the economy, could be considered at the left of the centre" (Uçkan, 2021: 454). Even such a mild acceptance of leftist principles by İnönü gave the small circle of left-wing members within the Party a means of manoeuvre, and the Party gradually adopted social democracy as one of its ideological principles. The left turn of the Republican People's Party, which had been founded by Atatürk and brought modernist reforms to the country throughout the 1920s and 1930s, was instrumental in further legitimizing

3 The earliest and one of the most remarkable manifestations of the rising working-class activism took place at Istanbul's Saraçhane Square on December 31, 1961. Around a hundred thousand workers participated in a meeting organized by the recently founded trade unions to demand better payment and respect for workers' rights (Çelik, 2021: 660).

leftism in mainstream politics. Whereas, only two decades earlier, a vague association with the left was enough to be labelled as “Bolshevik,” “Muscovite,” or “traitor to the homeland,” in the 1960s, the Turkish parliament suddenly had socialist and centre-left parties openly promoting leftist values and ideas.

Meanwhile, parallel to these developments in high politics, socialism was gaining popularity on the streets, particularly in universities. Between 1960 and 1972, the number of faculties and institutes for higher education in the country increased from 55 to 155, and the number of students admitted to universities rose from 55,000 to 167,000 (Kılınç & Kalaycı, 2020: 204; Sargın, 2007: 138–139). As elsewhere in Europe and the Middle East throughout the 1960s, a large number of these students engaged in political activism to push for a socialist turn in the country. Despite differing visions for the precise form of socialism in Turkey, there was a consensus among various socialist groups regarding the need for land reform, wealth redistribution, and Turkey’s withdrawal from NATO.

Throughout the late 1960s, a pivotal battle that the socialist youth fought was against the naval presence of the United States in the country. As part of their strategy to contain the Soviet Union and bolster NATO’s navy presence in the Mediterranean Sea, the United States grouped several of its battleships under the Sixth Fleet, which regularly made a show of force in the Eastern Mediterranean (Bryson, 1980: 92–97). As part of this strategy, throughout the 1960s, US ships regularly visited Turkish port cities, such as Izmir and Istanbul. Towards the end of the decade, as the Vietnam War fuelled anti-American sentiments and anti-imperialist ideas gained traction, these visits sparked mass demonstrations among the progressive youth. In one fateful confrontation in July 1968, students assaulted the visiting US sailors, even throwing some of them into the sea. Although none of the Americans were seriously injured in the confrontations, the Turkish police responded aggressively, making a series of raids in student dormitories and viciously beating the suspected organizers of the protests. As a result, one student, Vedat Demircioğlu, was killed and dozens were seriously injured (Atılğan, 2021: 333). Six months after this incident, students and trade unions organized a massive rally in Istanbul’s Beyazıt Square against the Sixth Fleet, which was about to make another visit to the city. Against the protestors, right-wing mobs organized by the US-sponsored “Association for the Struggle against Communism” (“Komünizmle Mücadele Derneği”) brutally attacked the protestors with knives and clubs, killing two and injuring more than two hundred (“İşte ‘cihad,’” *Cumhuriyet*, 1969: 1).

The brutal violence against the protestors by the police and the right-wing mobs proved a watershed moment in the history of the socialist movement in Turkey. Up until that point, despite their revolutionary rhetoric, Turkish socialists largely remained within the legal boundaries. The leadership of the

Workers' Party constantly emphasized that they were aiming to bring socialism to the country through legal, parliamentary means, not through armed revolution. However, the attacks by the police and right-wing anti-communist forces convinced many that the peaceful path to socialism was unrealistic and unattainable. A week after the attack on the protestors in Beyazıt Square, the poet and translator Can Yücel wrote a short feuilleton titled "The Dove Has Fallen" ("Güvercin Düşüverdi") in the socialist periodical *Ant* ("Oath") and renounced his earlier conviction about the peaceful path to socialism:

We, those who did not get it before, understand it now. Peace is a good thing; the dove is a nice animal, a pleasant animal, but dovishness against the American eagle, and pacifism against the experts of pacification do not stand a chance. Peace is not an olive branch in a dove's mouth; unfortunately, in today's world, it is down the barrel of a gun. (Yücel, 1969: 4)

Remarkably, once the young socialists came to the conclusion that peaceful political activism was futile and that there was indeed a need for armed resistance, they made a nearly spontaneous decision to arm themselves, not simply to protect themselves from the attacks of right-wing groups, but to wage a guerrilla war to bring the revolution. By the beginning of the 1970s, some of the student activists were training in the Fatah guerrilla camps in Jordan and Lebanon, and upon their return, conducting kidnappings, bank raids, and assassinations in the name of the revolutionary struggle (Bulut, 2020).

Amid these conditions, the revolutionary struggles in Latin America emerged as both an inspiration and a model for the radicalizing youth in Turkey. As I discuss in detail in the following pages, the developments in countries like Cuba, Venezuela, and Brazil were closely followed by the left-wing journals and newspapers in Turkey. From the news about building socialism in Cuba to the profile of guerrilla leader Douglas Bravo in Venezuela, the leftist press in the country extensively reported on experiences in Latin America, offering unequivocal support for the revolutionaries. The armed revolutionary struggles of the Latin American guerrillas provided ideological justification, hope, and inspiration for the young Turkish revolutionaries to take up arms.

9.3 The Violent Allure of Latin America

Despite the geographical distance and evident cultural differences, Latin American revolutionary movements and struggles, particularly the Cuban Revolution, made a lasting impression in Turkey due to the perceived

similarities between the two regions in terms of political and socio-emotional conditions. Unlike in Vietnam and Algeria, where revolutionaries waged an anti-colonial war mostly against foreign armies, Turkey, aside from the small NATO installations, did not have a sizable foreign force in the country. Similar to Latin American revolutionaries, the Turkish Marxists had long regarded their country as a “half-colony of American imperialism,” with its dominant “comprador classes” serving the global interests of the US empire in return for financial benefits (Erdost, 1970; “Türkiye’nin Bir Numaralı,” 1969: 9).

Perhaps the most famous declaration of Turkey as a US half-colony came from Nazim Hikmet, undoubtedly the most influential and revered poet of the Turkish left in the twentieth century. In his poem titled “Traitor to the Homeland,” Hikmet wrote:

“We are a half-colony of American imperialism,’ said Hikmet
 Nazim Hikmet is still continuing to be a traitor.”
 This came out in one of the Ankara newspapers,
 Over three columns, in a pitch-black screaming streamer
 [...]

 if your allocations and your salaries are patriotism,
 if patriotism is American bases, American bombs, and American missiles
 [...]

 then I am a traitor.
 Write it over three columns, in a pitch-black screaming streamer
 Nazim Hikmet is continuing to be a traitor, STILL! (Hikmet, 2010)

Especially after the late 1950s, similar to Latin America, as the dependency theory gained popularity among the Turkish leftist intelligentsia, many began to view the pervasive poverty they observed in the country as a reflection of the unequal and exploitative economic relationship between the “imperialist” West and the underdeveloped “Third World” (Avcıoğlu, 1968). In this understanding, the local bourgeoisie and political elites came to be regarded as allies, if not puppets, of Western imperialism. Thus, when the Turkish socialists read and thought about the Cuban experience – from the overthrow of the Batista regime to the defeat of the US-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 – they regarded it as an example of a similar, peasant-majority country under the indirect domination of US imperialism successfully bringing down the yokes of imperialism. In other words, starting from the late 1960s, the struggles on the American continent, in countries south of the US, were not merely regarded as news stories from faraway lands; instead, they were study material to emulate.

One of the turning points in the emergence of Latin America as a role model for the Turkish revolutionaries was the death of Che Guevara in Bolivia in 1967. While there had already been considerable interest and coverage of Che Guevara's exploits and revolutionary developments in Latin America prior to his execution, it had a tremendous emotional impact on socialists in Turkey. The journals repeatedly published famous photographs of his corpse, bearded and lacerated yet somehow radiating a dignified aura, together with highly sentimental articles and requiem poems. In November 1967, a month after the death of the Argentine revolutionary, a socialist periodical, *Türk Solu* ("Turkish Left"), published three poems written in honour of Che, one of which was "We have mountains too, Che Guevara" by Metin Elitaş quoted at the beginning of the chapter. Another poet, Arif Damar, defined Che as "a voice that was different from all the others / a voice that says 'Walk' / a voice that says 'Struggle' / a voice that says 'Join.'" Muzaffer Arabul called Che "the most beautiful son of Earth" and "the greatest doctor of the world," hinting through various allegories that his life and death would contribute to the healing of the world's injustices ("Che için," 1967). In *Ant*, another highly sentimental article titled "Che the Guerrilla of the Century" described how he met his end valiantly: "They hit Che in Bolivia, treacherously, in a small village school, they tied his hands, and put bullets to his lungs and legs. But they could not kill the CHE" (Gönenç, 1968: 8). The periodical also ran a long series of articles informing the readers about the life and ideals of Che Guevara. The legend and the myth of Che, which to a degree are still alive in Turkey, were born.

Arguably, the main reason why Che's life and early death made an emotional impression was that it provided a heroic and clear answer to the question of the meaning of being revolutionary in the age of US imperialism. For young revolutionaries, who viewed imperialism and its CIA-sponsored local allies as the principal culprits behind the poverty and repression in the country, Che Guevara provided a model for how to live and struggle against the world's miseries. In this respect, the images of his corpse did not merely inspire a cautionary tale, but represented a life meaningfully lived. The charismatic appearance of Che as a role model was also strengthened by the fact that his execution coincided with the violent attacks directed against the socialist students protesting the US Sixth Fleet. Soon, discussions about him, the Cuban revolution, and overall armed struggles in Latin America became intertwined with discussions about the necessity of a revolutionary war to bring socialism to Turkey.

In 1968, as protests against the Sixth Fleet gained momentum and Turkish socialists began to face their first casualties in confrontations with the police and right-wing elements, leftist journals commenced publishing a series of translations of Latin American guerrilla writings, explaining the craft of

guerrilla warfare.⁴ *Türk Solu* translated Guevara's obituary by Guatemalan guerrilla Julio Roberto Cáceres with the title "El Patojo," which serves not only as a eulogy for a deceased comrade but also outlines the essential rules for surviving as a guerrilla in the countryside, including speed, astuteness, and a sense of distrust (Guevara, 1968: 5). Similarly, *Ant* ran a series of articles titled "Teacher of Castro and Che Writes," summarizing the instructions of the Cuban military expert Alberto Bayo on how to conduct guerrilla warfare in the countryside. The series informed readers about subjects such as the importance of intelligence and propaganda for guerrillas, as well as how to conduct sabotage against the enemies of socialism.

Meanwhile, books on guerrilla warfare in Latin America were being translated into Turkish. Régis Debray's *Revolution in the Revolution?* (*Devrimde Devrim?*) was translated and published in 1967, the same year as the original. *Ant*, which had its own publishing house, published Bayo's book *150 Questions with the title What is Guerrilla? (Gerilla Nedir?)* as well. Between 1967 and 1971, aside from Bayo's book, it published *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War (Savaş Anıları)* and *Diary of a Combatant (Gerilla Günlüğü)* by Che Guevara; *National Liberation Front (Milli Kurtuluş Cephesi)* by Douglas Bravo; and, perhaps the most consequential, Carlos Marighella's *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla*. Marighella's book was arguably the most elaborate guide on tactics of guerrilla warfare published in Turkish, and it made a significant impact on the radicalization of the socialist youth in Turkey (Şener, 2015: 204–5). Its cover, designed by a young woman, İnci Özgüden-Tuğsavul, depicted three bullet holes on a cross-section of a tree trunk with an inscription below in Spanish containing an incomplete sentence: "Viva la Rev ..." (Marighella, 1970). The state authorities soon banned the book, collected copies from the bookstores, and the publishers faced criminal charges ("Ant'a yeni mahkumiyet," 1971). Nevertheless, by that time, *Minimanual* had already been widely distributed among leftist circles in the country.

Surely, reading revolutionary books about the resistance in Latin America does not automatically make one a guerrilla or a sympathizer of the armed conflict. Nonetheless, among a large number of young socialist readers, these publications created a heroic image of the Latin guerrilla, selflessly and fearlessly sacrificing himself for the greater good of humanity. Before long, the popularity of the Latin guerrilla leaders grew to such an extent that the youth

4 Presumably, because there were no direct links to Latin American publishers and no Spanish or Portuguese translators among the revolutionary ranks at the time, all of these publications had to be translated from English or French shortly after they were published in those languages.

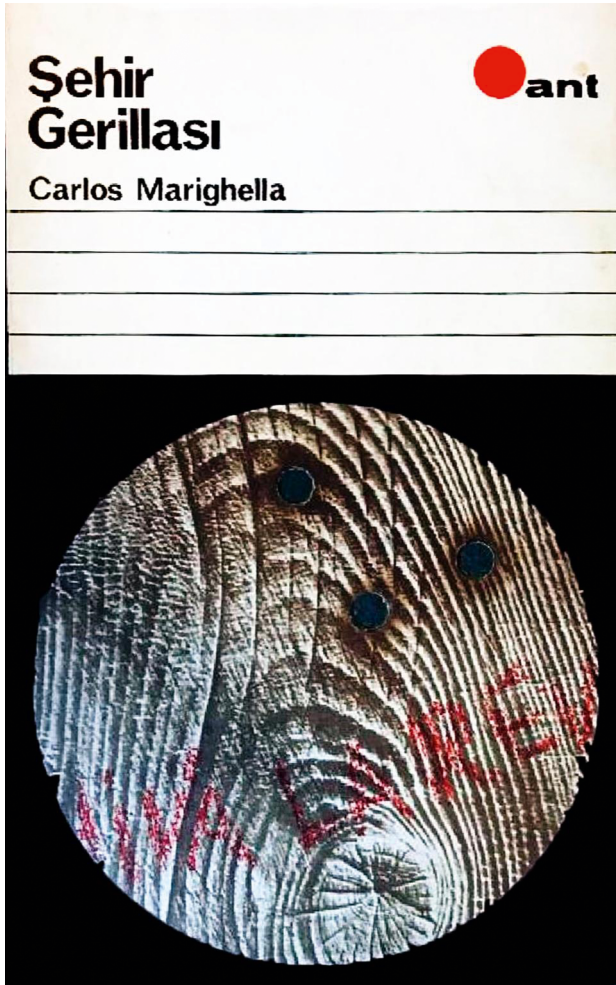


FIGURE 9.1 Cover of Turkish edition of Carlos Marighella's *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla*

activists began giving one another Latin America-inspired nicknames and aliases. For example, Nuri Yazıcı, a student leader from Istanbul University Law School, was called “Kastro Nuri,” Şaban İba from Ankara Business School was “Zapata,” his friend Nail Karaçam was “Pancho,” and Mustafa Yalçiner from Middle East Technical University was “Endi” (inspired by Bolivian guerrilla leader Inti Peredo) (Feyizoğlu, 2005).⁵ One of these men, Mustafa “Endi”

⁵ Nail Karaçam was killed by right-wing paramilitaries in 1970 in Ankara. Sinan Cemgil died in a clash with the army in the Nurhak mountains in 1971.

Yalçın, who would join the guerrilla movement and spend fifteen years in prison, later recalled a strong Latin American influence in their thinking:

So we turned to Cuba, to Che Guevara. Che's approach seemed right to us, we were reading his military and political writings, his diaries, and the books written by revolutionaries from Venezuela and Colombia. So much so that these books caught our attention more than the works of Lenin and Marx. Because somehow, we thought that their method of armed struggle should be incorporated into our new struggle in Turkey. (Çelebi, 2009)

Similarly, Yaşar Ayaşlı, another young activist from the era, wrote that he and his friends read Latin American literature, from Guevara to Marighella, with great interest and could not resist its radical allure:

Like everyone else, my subconscious was guided by the "longing" for [being] a guerrilla. Parka, military boots, velvet pants, stubble, and a passion for guns were all expressions of this. Our minds were on the classical theory [of Leninism], but our hearts were pulling us towards the *Zeitgeist* of the era. (Ayaşlı, 2020)

Here, it is important to re-emphasize that the allure of Latin America did not take place in a vacuum. The news about the Latin American struggles and translations of the books and articles written by the Latin American guerrillas were appearing alongside the news about the increasing number of leftist students and activists losing their lives in the attacks of right-wing paramilitary groups in Turkey. The increasingly difficult and dangerous conditions that the leftist groups found themselves in Turkey amplified the influence and inspiration of the Latin American guerrilla movements to take up arms. In these conditions, some young activists decided it was time for action.

9.4 Fighting to the End

Among the Turkish 1968ers, who transitioned from youth activists to armed guerrillas, Deniz Gezmiş was arguably the most renowned and iconic figure. The son of schoolteachers, he enrolled in the Law School at Istanbul University and first distinguished himself as a student leader during the demonstrations against the US Sixth Fleet in 1968. He clearly saw the connection between their struggle in Turkey and those in other Third World countries. In a brief 1968 article, he wrote:

Our age is the one when the revolutionaries across the globe chase American imperialism step by step ... Our age is the one when people with our age, in Vietnam, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic, are fighting and dying against American imperialism. (Gezmiş, 1968: 13)

Gezmiş asserted that while the struggle was taking place globally, Turkish youth could not remain aloof from it. He branded those who continued to advocate for legal and pacifist methods as “petit bourgeois,” urging for “fighting to the end against American imperialism.”

Although Gezmiş did not specify what “fighting to the end” entailed, he and many of his generation eventually became convinced that it required obtaining military training and weapons to wage war against US imperialism in the country. Initially, Gezmiş and his friends debated whether to go to Vietnam or Latin America for military training, but once this proved impossible due to the distance, they travelled to the guerrilla camps of Fatah in Lebanon and Jordan (“ТНКО militanı,” 2018). Upon their return, they established the People’s Liberation Army (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu*, ТНКО) and began their armed resistance against what they considered the representatives of imperialism and oligarchy in the country.

Just as Deniz Gezmiş and his friends were launching their campaign, another group, led by Mahir Çayan, a young Marxist theorist, founded the People’s Liberation Party–Front of Turkey (*Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi Cephesi*, ТНKP-С). Similar to Marighella, Çayan heavily criticized the traditional communist left for constantly waiting for the ripening of the conditions for a revolution. He regarded the Cuban revolution as a major turning point in the history of revolutions, for showing that revolutionaries, acting as people’s liberation armies, could successfully overthrow the oligarchy and establish a revolutionary regime (Çayan, 2015: 117–122). Accordingly, he argued that every country has its own unique history and socio-political conditions, and the duty of revolutionaries is to adapt and fight effectively against the oligarchy. Paraphrasing Fidel Castro’s dictum, well known at the time in Turkey, “el deber de todo revolucionario es hacer la revolución” (the duty of every revolutionary is to make revolution), Çayan (2015: 194) stated that “those who do not fight for revolution cannot be considered socialists.”

For Çayan (2015: 299), “the conditions in Turkey are not different than in the Latin American countries,” and, like Latin American guerrillas, they had to wage a military campaign to defeat first imperialism and then the oligarchy. In arguing for the necessity of armed struggle, Çayan often made references to the Latin American guerrillas, idealizing their successes and, more importantly, their willingness to sacrifice themselves for the greater good. Against

the social democrats and democratic socialists, who claim that socialism could be achieved through winning elections, he gave an example of Bravo waging war in Venezuela, “Why does Douglas Bravo in Venezuela, a country with a parliament and laws that would allow revolutionaries to fight legally, wage an armed struggle in Falcón? They could also fight for socialism through legal means” (Çayan, 2015: 55). Accordingly, the very fact that there was a struggle in Latin American countries should have inspired Turkish socialists to implement similar tactics in their country.

Thus, it would be hardly an exaggeration to claim that Latin America’s influence on their decision to take up arms was immediate and direct. Years after Çayan’s death, his former comrades remembered that his ideas were influenced by the writings of Joao Quartim (particularly his essay “Regis Debray and the Brazilian revolution”), Che Guevara and Carlos Marighella (Yurtsever, 2016: 140). Ertuğrul Kürkçü, who was Çayan’s close friend and a fellow THKP-C militant, recalled that most of the concepts they used and the fighting methods they adopted

came from an international revolutionary stream that was led by the Cuban Communist Party and the international organizations established under its leadership, namely OLAS (Latin American Solidarity Organization) and OSPAAAL (Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America). (Kürkçü, 2002: 29–30)

Soon, the glorification of violence in the name of anti-imperialism and revolution by young theorists like Çayan and overall radicalization among the socialist youth – in which the Latin American experience played a considerable part – had real consequences. Starting from the mid-1970s, the militants of THKO and THKP-C, including Deniz Gezmiş and Mahir Çayan, began to conduct bank robberies and kidnappings of US soldiers and technicians stationed in Turkey. Their theory of revolution was about to meet with practice in a Turkish setting.

9.5 From Reading about Guerrilla Warfare to Conducting It

One of the first sensational guerrilla operations was the kidnapping of four US soldiers by Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades of the THKO in March 1971. When the kidnapping of American soldiers became public, both critics and supporters of the action saw a Latin American influence on the emergence of the phenomenon of revolutionary guerrilla in Turkey. Criticizing the militants,

Abdi İpekçi, a well-known journalist and political commentator and the editor-in-chief of the mainstream newspaper *Milliyet* (Nation), regarded it as an example of foreign influence on the Turkish youth and urged young militants to reconsider their beliefs in armed warfare:

Those young people, who read some books on the theory of guerrilla warfare and attempt to apply the same methods in Turkey, should know some facts: There have been a number of cases that these methods proved to be counter-productive ... The guerrillas, who sought the support of the people, workers, and peasants, met instead with their hatred. Because behaviours such as kidnapping and killing innocent people, detonating bombs here and there, and committing robberies created a general reaction; the people evaluated the actions of guerrillas not based on the ideas, but with the deeds and thus turned against them. (İpekçi, 1971: 1)⁶

In response to such criticism, one of their final issues before being banned by a court order featured an editorial in *Ant* that defended the national liberation front's strategy as a viable answer to American imperialism and denounced İpekçi for having "touristic Latin American impressions" ("Halkın Kurtuluşu," 1971). Interestingly, however, nowhere in his article İpekçi mentions Latin America. However, the writers at *Ant* immediately understood that his observation about reading books on the theory of guerrilla warfare was, in fact, an invitation to read works by Latin American writers on their experiences.

Another, perhaps more surprising criticism of the guerrilla activity came from the emerging Maoist circles. Their journal, *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlık* (Proletarian Revolutionary Light), devoted an issue to the feasibility of guerrilla warfare in Turkey, contending that the THKO's military campaign represented a form of adventurism ("Marighella'nın 'Şehir,'" 1971). Turkish Maoists, echoing the position of the Chinese Communist Party at the time, argued that the revolutionary war should begin from below, *en masse*, rather than with a small number of individuals attempting to act as a vanguard.⁷ One of the articles in that issue was the criticism of Marighella's theory of "urban guerrilla," which, according to the article, was propagated by the "revisionist circles that

6 Tragically, Abdi İpekçi was assassinated by a right-wing paramilitary, Mehmet Ali Ağca, in February 1979 in Istanbul. Ağca later escaped from prison in Turkey and fled to Europe. He attempted the assassination of Pope John Paul II in May 1981 in Vatican City.

7 Since the mid-1960s, the Chinese Communist Party had distanced itself from the Cuban Communist Party and characterized the Guevarist formulas to the road to power as forms of "adventurism" and "petty-bourgeois romanticism" (Ratliff, 1972: 855). Here, *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlık* was repeating the same criticism against Carlos Marighella.

try to put a wedge between the revolutionary movement in our country and Marxist Leninism" ("Marighella'nın 'Şehir,'" 1971: 3). Defining Marighella's theory as the "terrorism of petit-bourgeoisie," the article urged the "true Marxist Leninists" to stay away from its influence. Like İpekçi, the Maoist commentator linked the emergence of the guerrilla movement in Turkey to the influence of Latin America.

After kidnapping the US soldiers, Deniz Gezmiş and the THKO militants demanded 400,000 dollars for their release (İnan, 2020). The government categorically refused to negotiate and ordered a manhunt to find and rescue the hostages. The search attempts of the police and army encountered resistance at the Middle East Technical University campus, which was one of the hotbeds of the radical left. In the ensuing gunfight, one soldier and two civilians were killed, while twenty-three were injured ("40 Yıl Sonra," 2011). A few days after the incident, THKO released the Americans, and eventually, the police apprehended Gezmiş and his comrades.

The capture of Gezmiş and other THKO militants and the subsequent announcement that they would receive a death sentence further galvanized the guerrilla activities. The remaining THKO militants and Çayan's THKP-C launched a series of actions to force the government to release Gezmiş and other militants. Most prominently, Çayan's group kidnapped Efraim Elron, the consul of Israel in Istanbul, and demanded the release of the jailed revolutionaries (Krahenbuhl, 1976: 48–50). When the state officials flatly rejected the militants' demands, they executed Elron. Under these conditions, the court issued a death warrant against Gezmiş and two other THKO members, Hüseyin İnan and Yusuf Aslan. To halt their execution, Çayan and a group of guerrillas raided the radar installation near the small Black Sea town of Ünye and abducted three British technicians, demanding an end to the executions. Again, the government refused to negotiate, and state forces were able to locate the whereabouts of the militants in a house in a village called Kızıldere. As the militants refused to surrender, the army attacked the house, killing all but one militant as well as the British technicians (Yurtsever, 2016: 180–181). Eight days after the incident, on May 6, 1972, Gezmiş and his friends were executed by hanging in Ankara.

The killings of the guerrilla leaders did not end the militarization of Turkish socialists during the 1970s. As the "martyrs" of the socialist movement, Gezmiş and Çayan obtained legendary status in the eyes of the revolutionaries, and, following in their footsteps, a great number of revolutionaries joined illegal armed organizations. Meanwhile, on the opposite side, right-wing paramilitary groups stepped up their attacks and assassinations against those they considered agents of communism in the country. Soon, towns and villages

were divided as control zones of either left or right-wing militants, and armed clashes and retaliatory attacks between armed groups became a daily occurrence. Although there is no official figure for the total death toll, one investigation conducted after the 1980 coup suggested that 5669 individuals, including 281 security personnel, lost their lives in the politically motivated violence that occurred between 1974 and 1980 (“60 bin,” 2010). The violence gradually subsided following the military coup d’état of 1980, after which the military regime dismantled all democratic institutions and made mass arrests and tortured all suspected militants and agitators in the country.

Throughout the 1970s, Latin America continued to hold an allure for revolutionary violence among socialist youth in Turkey. In a recent oral history interview, Bülent Uluer, one of the leaders of the armed revolutionary groups of the late 1970s, commented that just as Dostoyevsky observed that his generation of Russian writers all came from Gogol’s *Overcoat*, his generation of revolutionary fighters (the so-called 1978ers) came from the revolutionary theories of Mahir Çayan, “who came from the beret of Che Guevara, and who in turn came from the sword of Simon Bolivar” (Medyascope, 2017: 58:50). In other words, as of the 1970s, there existed a lineage connecting Bolivar’s sword and the Kalashnikovs and revolvers of Turkish urban and rural guerrillas.

In the early 1970s, however, one distinct Latin American experience worked against the influence of Bolivar’s sword. The election of Salvador Allende as president of Chile in 1970 and the launching of the “Chilean road” to socialism worked against the general trend and provided ammunition to those who advocated that a democratic road to socialism was indeed possible.

9.6 The *Vía Chilena* and the Turkish Left

On September 8, 1970, only three days after the election of communist Salvador Allende in the presidential election of Chile, Abdi İpekçi wrote an editorial titled “When One Prejudice is Crumbling” (İpekçi, 1970: 1). For İpekçi, the election of Marxists through the ballot box was going to be immensely consequential as it proved that “the assumption that suggests that the only way for Marxists to obtain power is through revolution is no longer valid” (İpekçi, 1970:1). Accordingly, the left needed to analyze the Chilean experience very closely and develop democratic tactics, instead of armed ones, to obtain power through peaceful mechanisms. Similarly, in 1971, the famous socialist writer Yaşar Kemal celebrated the victory of Allende for showing that socialism could be achieved in a multitude of ways:

Allende is the ideal for me. And it filled the hearts of all the socialists across the world. Because there was a claim, which is against Marxism, saying, "Marxism cannot be achieved by voting." Now, in this [Chilean] experience, Allende has done a great job in showing, and this would still be valid even if he is defeated in the end, that the assertion that states that the [Marxists] cannot come to power by voting is wrong. What do you mean by that they cannot come to power by voting? They came. They can come to power by dancing the belly dance ["göbek ata ata gelir"].⁸ They can come with votes; they can also come with violence; they can come in various ways that we do not know. As long as there is accumulation, as long as there is an accumulation of consciousness, as long as there is an accumulation of organization. (İpekçi, 1971: 9)

As Allende's electoral success sent waves of optimism, especially among the socialist and social democrat intelligentsia, it led to a mix of confusion, hesitation, and outright denial within a growing section of the left that was suspicious of parliamentary ways as a viable option for achieving socialism in Turkey. Doğan Avcıoğlu, who was a highly influential public intellectual with a strong sway on left-leaning army officers and the left-Kemalist intelligentsia, disparagingly called the Chilean experiment "ballot-box socialism" and criticized the "pretty-democracy revolutionaries" for taking the wrong lessons from what was going on in Chile. In his view, Chile and Turkey were completely different countries. The former had a 150-year history of multiparty democracy, and it was not the first time the Chilean left had won the elections. Avcıoğlu predicted that the Popular Front would fail to change the established order as it would be a prisoner of the ballot-box system (Şener, 2015: 155).

The younger socialists, who had a stronger connection to the Latin American left, regarded the Chilean experience with greater nuance and reserved sympathy. In October 1970, only a month after Allende came to power, a young commentator in *Ant* summarized the socio-political conditions in Chile in a lengthy article and rejected the idea that it was an example of a peaceful revolution. "The duty of the communists," the writer claimed, was to transform the current situation into "the process of revolution, then it would be impossible to talk about peaceful revolution anyways" (Aközer, 1970: 80). In other words, while the author regarded Allende's election in a positive light, he dismissed the idea that it was a revolution in itself and predicted that there needed to be

8 "Dancing the belly dance" is an expression in Turkish to highlight the cheerfulness of the occasion.

more forceful mechanisms to be implemented by the communists to achieve socialism in the future.

In the same month, the journal *İleri* ("Forward") reminded its readers that when the revolutionaries in Cuba embraced Marxism and began implementing revolutionary policies, they could rely on the armed revolutionaries to defend themselves against US imperialism and the enemies of socialism inside the country. The article prophetically questioned how Allende's government would defend itself if he attempted to implement socialist policies, such as land reform, and protect the mines from American imperialism ("Şili'de Halk," 1970). Similarly, in February 1971, *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlik* ("Proletarian Revolutionary Light"), another journal that regularly commented on Latin American affairs, applauded the Allende government's nationalization policies and their anti-imperialistic vision ("Şili Halkının," 1971). Nevertheless, the article criticized those in Turkey who had drawn the wrong lessons from the Chilean experience and declared the bankruptcy of Leninism. It firmly dismissed the notion that Allende's policies amounted to a revolution; at most, they could be regarded as progressive reforms. "Despite everything," the article finished with a slightly emotional tone, "the international proletariat is an ally of Chile under the leadership of Allende in its fight against American imperialism, which is the main enemy of the nations of the world" ("Şili Halkının," 1971).

Ultimately, Allende's election to power largely failed to convince the radical revolutionaries of the viability of a parliamentary road to power. Although they showed sympathy for the struggle in Chile, they regarded the approach of Che Guevara and Carlos Marighella as more realistic for bringing socialism to Turkey. By the time the Chilean armed forces under Augusto Pinochet staged a coup d'état and overthrew Allende's government on September 11, 1973, all the radical leftist magazines in Turkey had already been banned, and many leftist theoreticians and activists had either been killed or jailed. When martial law was lifted and revolutionary magazines began to appear, Chile was no longer posed as a viable role model but was rather seen as another victim of US imperialism needing solidarity ("Şili halkına selam," 1976; "Şili halkının faşizme direnişi," 1977).

Moreover, the forceful end of Chilean socialism reinforced the overall conviction that revolution through parliamentary mechanisms was an impossible proposition, and it became one of the discursive tools for radical revolutionaries to criticize social democrats and democratic socialists for still seeking a peaceful path to the egalitarian order. In October 1976, *Kurtuluş* ("Liberation"), one of the prominent revolutionary magazines of the late 1970s, published sections of an interview Allende gave shortly before the military coup, in

which he suggested that there was no need for the dictatorship of the proletariat in his country; the Chilean army was the “army of the nation” and, unlike in Indonesia and Brazil, there was no real risk of a military coup d’état in his country (“S. Allende-1972,” 1976). Then, on the following page, the magazine published the speech of Chilean revolutionary leader Miguel Enríquez, the General Secretary of the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (MiR, Revolutionary Left Movement), summarizing the terror and repression that followed Pinochet’s coup in 1973 (“MIR Genel Sekreteri,” 1976). The accompanying short editorial note suggested that “there was no need to add anything,” as the apparent hint was the naivety of Allende in trying to bring the revolution peacefully.

Throughout the late 1970s, as violence and bloodshed between nationalist paramilitary groups and revolutionary movements increased across the country, the legacy of Allende’s government became a point of contention between supporters of the legalist political parties and the revolutionary movements. During the 1977 Congress of the Workers Party of Turkey (TİP), General Secretary Nihat Sargin lamented that the “[Chilean] revolution has been strangled in blood and fire by the reactionary forces of Chile with the planning and financing of American imperialism” (“Türkiye İşçi Partisi,” 1977: 34). Yet, he suggested that what happened in Chile did not mean that the peaceful path to revolution was impossible. One of the first lessons of the Chilean experience was “to isolate the ultra-left adventurism that distances the masses from the revolution” and to make every effort to “win over the larger social base and middle classes” to the cause. In response, the revolutionary *Kurtuluş* asserted that the key issue was not “adventurism” or “winning over the masses,” but rather establishing the “proletariat of the dictatorship,” which is, by definition, against the liberal conceptualization of democracy (“Sol içinde TİP’in,” 1979). Consequently, the establishment of a proletariat dictatorship was, after all, what defined the success of the Cuban and October revolutions, as well as the failure of the Chilean experiment. The failure was inevitable since the “reformism” (it was not a revolution) lacked a defence mechanism against reactionary forces and imperialism.

9.7 Conclusion

In hindsight, from a leftist perspective, it is hard not to romanticize the sense of solidarity and camaraderie that Turkish Marxists felt towards the struggles and sacrifices of Latin American revolutionaries. Figures such as Castro, Che Guevara, Marighella, and Bravo embodied an aura of optimism, camaraderie,

and solidarity in the fight against imperialism. The 1968ers in Turkey idealized them, applauded their credo, and some of them emulated their deeds and tactics in their country. Unlike Leninism or Maoism, Latin America did not offer an ideological model; terms like Guevarism failed to enter the mainstream Turkish political lexicon. Instead, Latin American guerrillas effortlessly conveyed their bravery and willingness to self-sacrifice for the greater good. Meanwhile, the election of Allende and his project to establish socialism through parliamentary means in Chile were met with enthusiasm from the democratic socialists, alongside a mixture of respect and suspicion from the young revolutionaries. The violent end of the Chilean experiment confirmed the sceptics' suspicions and presented a cautionary tale regarding the dangers of attempting to revolutionize the system from within.

There is also a tremendously tragic side to the Latin American influence. The perception of Latin American guerrillas challenging Yankee imperialism left a strong impression on Turkish leftists, significantly convincing the majority of the 1968 and 1978 generations of the necessity of armed struggle to achieve revolution. True to their words, the admirers soon formed their armed organizations and waged a revolutionary war in Turkey. Within a few years, many lost their lives and became symbols of resistance like their Latin American idols. Throughout the mid and late 1970s, as more young people joined armed groups in the name of the anti-fascist struggle, the death count of the clashes increased. In this regard, the Latin American experience and how it was reported in the country significantly contributed to the bloodshed and the vicious cycle of violence in Turkey. Violent dreams had violent ends.

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Between the AK and the *Shatwa*: the Representation of Arab Women in the Graphic Production of the OSPAAAL (1967–2019)

Alberto García Molinero

10.1 Traces of Arab Femininity in the Graphics of OSPAAAL

The present chapter delves into the representative models of femininity in the Arab world based on the graphics produced by the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, better known as OSPAAAL (1967–2019). The starting point is placed in the study of the role and diverse degree of involvement that different scenarios of the Arab world had in the birth of the Tricontinental Conference (1966), the OSPAAAL, the *Tricontinental* magazine and the ‘Ospaaalist’ graphic design as a whole. A second section deals with the complex conceptual framework surrounding the representation of Third World women in general, paying special attention to the female presence in the configuration of the Tricontinental framework as a starting point. Subsequently, the main thematic axes of the Arab world addressed in *Tricontinental* are examined in depth through a chronological journey divided into three fundamental stages, including the study of the image of Arab women in the OSPAAAL’s posters using a specific Saharawi case with particularly representative genealogies. Finally, a last section gathers a historical analysis on the implications of the Ospaaalist representational models of femininity in the Arab world and their influence on the collective imaginaries of women as revolutionary subjects and guardians of the national identity in different scenarios of the Arab sphere such as Palestine, Yemen, Libya or Algeria over time.

The main sources used in this research are those directly related to *Tricontinental* magazine and OSPAAAL’s graphics. Numerous studies on the relations of revolutionary Cuba with the Arab world during the second half of the 20th century have been consulted, as well as essential works on the OSPAAAL graphic art, recognizing it as a unique case of vast influence in the contemporary imaginary at different levels. Together with these elements, much of the remarkable feminist literature produced on the presence and representation of women in the Third World, and the Arab spectrum in particular, has also been examined. In this regard, in addition to considering the multiple

differences and particularities prevailing within the heterogeneous Arab context in continuous transformation, an interdisciplinary analysis has also been conceptualized from which to historically situate the particular object of study selected. In this line, despite the underlying biases of subalternity, Eurocentrism and masculinity that run through the images examined, historical research on the unexplored particularities of these models with global projection introduces new keys to knowledge about the image of Arab women in the world over time.

10.2 The Arab World and the Birth of the Tricontinental Spirit

The return of the Tricontinental question to the contemporary historical debate has opened up unexplored avenues in studies on South-South cooperation from a transnational perspective. The experience that emerged in Havana and materialized through the political-cultural production of the OSPAAAL constitutes a unique chapter in the history of international relations between the Arab world and the Ibero-American spectrum that began with the 1966 Tricontinental Conference.

The first steps in the organization of the Tricontinental space were taken in the very heart of the Arab sphere during the meetings held by the Executive Committee of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) held in Gaza in December 1961 (Friedman, 2022). This organization, formed in 1957 under the auspices of the Egyptian government of Gamal Abdel Nasser, represents the last great attempt to build a platform of Afro-Asian international solidarity following the model set by the Bandung meeting (1955). Despite being the direct precedent of the Tricontinental Conference, the AAPSO, under Egyptian control through its Secretary General Youssef El-Sebai (Adelman et al., 2023; Popescu, 2020), was cautious in facing one of the significant challenges of the 20th century: the integration of Latin America into the Afro-Asian solidarity movement in a scenario marked by Sino-Soviet tensions over the leadership of the Third World in the framework of the Cold War.¹

1 The initial lack of initiative shown by Gamal Abdel Nasser's government towards Ibero-American integration into the Afro-Asian sphere was marked by a shared misgiving with China about the possibility of losing control and direct influence over the AAPSO in the event that Latin Americans entered the equation. Despite Cuban pressure, the Egyptian government would refuse to hold a Second Tricontinental Conference in Cairo in 1968, being, in the words of the US ambassador, "embarrassed" by the eventual possibility (Gettig, 2022).

However, even though they were received with reticence and suspicion by the great superpowers of the Socialist Bloc, the most radical positions of the Cuban revolutionaries regarding the Third World political project and Latin American integration in an intercontinental sphere found numerous allies in the Arab world imbued by their example (Gleijeses, 2002; De la Urra 2019). The triumph of the Cuban Revolution (1959) had deeply inspired guerrillas worldwide on a level that would transcend the political and even penetrate the symbolic. In the heart of the Arab world, anecdotal stories such as the fact that Algerian officers of the National Liberation Front (FLN) smoked cigars to resemble the Cubans during the liberation war or that Fatah fighters in Palestine began to call themselves Castro and let their beards “grow reminiscent of the fighters of the Sierra Maestra” (Estrada et al., 2006: 72) evidenced this influence. Taking into consideration the broad mosaic of the Arab world as a whole, however, the scenario that would play a key role in the emergence of Tricontinentalism far above the rest at first would be Algeria.

The triumph of Algerian independence in 1962 consecrated the country as “the Mecca of national liberation movements” (Cabral, 1969: 22), “The Cuba of the Maghreb” (Byrne, 2016: 73), and the epicentre of Third Worldism at the time (Connelly, 2002). The Arab nationalist anti-imperialist project defined by Messali El-Hadj during the war of national liberation laid the foundation for a highly influential thought in the framework of Cuban-Algerian relations between 1960 and 1965. The links established between the revolutionary governments of Fidel Castro and Ahmed Ben Bella opened an unexplored avenue between the Arab-Islamic and Ibero-American worlds, serving as a direct precursor to the Tricontinental moment.²

Within the broad framework of influences and personalities involved in the emergence of Tricontinentalism, Mehdi Ben Barka, a Moroccan revolutionary and close collaborator of the Algerian FLN, was appointed secretary of the Organizing Committee of the Havana meeting in 1966 (Faligot, 2013). This iconic leader, assassinated on October 19, 1965 by Moroccan police agents with involvement of Mossad and members of the French secret services (Estrada et al., 2006), would be the real mastermind behind the Havana event. The initial details of the event would be discussed behind closed doors during

2 Diplomatic relations between Cuba and Algeria, and the early initiative of the Tricontinental moment itself, suffered a hard blow with the coup d'état launched by Houari Boumédiène in June 1965 against the Ben Bella government. Despite slowing down the process, this symbolic fall of the first Algerian government after independence would not slow down the Havana Conference, nor would it be enough to sever the deep ties that would bind the Arab country to the Cubans throughout the Cold War.

secret meetings held in Algiers by Che Guevara, Ahmed Ben Bella, and Ben Barka, accompanied by other experienced revolutionaries such as the Greek Trotskyist Michel Raptis, also known as “Pablo” (Grenat, 2024).

Considered by the US Congress Subcommittee (1966: 2) as “the most powerful gathering of pro-Communist, anti-American forces in the history of the Western Hemisphere,” the Havana meeting was recognized by the CIA as one of the most explicit calls for armed revolution made by Fidel Castro since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution (Gettig, 2022). The Tricontinental Conference thus emerged as the last link in the long chain of anti-imperialist meetings dating back to the Baku Congress (1920), passing through the Anti-Imperialist League of the Americas (1925), the League Against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression of Brussels (1927), to the well-known events of Bandung (1955), Belgrade (1961) and Cairo (1964), which are direct precedents of the Tricontinental moment.³

The search for the construction of alliances and ties of solidarity among the peoples of the Third World in the face of Imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism in all its forms would dominate the debates at the Tricontinental Conference, held between January 2 and 14 at the Chaplin Theatre in Havana. At the end of the Conference, with the express wish that the commitments reached would not fall on deaf ears, the OSPAAAL would be founded. Formally shaped as the international non-governmental agency charged with materializing the new forms of solidarity gathered through the nascent “Tricontinental spirit” (Camacho et al., 2019), the OSPAAAL (1967–2019) is considered the largest counter-propaganda body that has ever existed within the framework of the Global South (Frick, 2003). In this sense, some of the most widely recognized elements of the “spirit of Bandung” are actually “Tricontinental,” with historians such as Young (2001: 213) arguing that the Tricontinental provided “the political and ideological foundations of postcolonialism.” Apart from its limited political role, the OSPAAAL contributed decisively to constructing and disseminating an ideology and cultural imaginary of considerable influence worldwide. The channels used by the organization to disseminate the Tricontinental message throughout its long history of more than half a century were various, with the *Tricontinental* magazine being the most critical mechanism and official organ of the OSPAAAL.⁴

3 Some of these spaces had state representation, while others were organized under the umbrella of revolutionary-progressive organizations. In the Tricontinental Conference, state delegates as well as militants and non-governmental organizations converged.

4 In addition to the magazine there are also other channels through which the organization will spread its message: the *Tricontinental Bulletin* (1966–1988, 1995–2019), posters,

Tricontinental (1967–1990, 1995–2019) was born as a bimonthly publication in Spanish, English, French, Italian and occasionally in Arabic, presenting itself to the world with an initial print run of 50,000 copies distributed from a multitude of re-dispatch centres located in Paris (Maspero), Milan (Feltrinelli), Stockholm, Tokyo, Cairo or Prague, among others (García Molinero, 2024). Conceived as the theoretical space for exchange and discussion among the peoples of the Third World par excellence, *Tricontinental* had an immediate impact, being banned in France in November 1968 for representing, in the words of the French Minister of the Interior Raymond Marcellin (1969: 45) a “centre of impulse, unification and coordination of different anti-imperialist movements,” besides being qualified as a subversive tool by numerous Latin American governments united to the Nixon administration.⁵

The structure of the publication would change and evolve over time, shifting from an initial model divided into ten sections to a simplified structure comprising three continental thematic-geographical axes: Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In this framework, the Arab-Islamic world would alternately be associated with either Africa or Asia, under the generic term of the Middle East. The main axes of the Arab-Islamic issues dealt with by the organization would vary and change over time, but at all times, the organization’s priority interest in this scenario would prevail. In its final stage, following the temporary disappearance of the magazine between 1990 and 1995, *Tricontinental* would be reborn on a radically different model based on a succession of articles without large regular sections.

Throughout the evolution of the magazine *Tricontinental*, themes related to the Arab peoples consistently held prominent positions as key protagonists of the publication. In this sense, it is worth mentioning the presence of nine front covers and twenty-five back covers dedicated to the Arab world, with a clear predominance of the Palestinian and Saharawi causes. When comparing the number of front and back covers devoted to the cause of the Arab peoples with the total from the organization (368), the Arab-Islamic world appears as a prominent area in approximately 9% of the instances in the *Tricontinental*

alternative art-graphic exhibitions, radio programs, press releases, and materials produced in collaboration with the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC) such as the *Noticiero Latinoamericano* (Latin American Newsreel). In this chapter, I will focus on the posters and graphic materials of the *Tricontinental* magazine.

5 The magazine would continue to circulate in France despite the fines imposed against the publisher François Maspero, which amounted by 1971 to more than 80,000 francs (Bouamama, 2019).

magazine, a significant percentage compared to other causes represented in this space.⁶

Along with the *Tricontinental*, OSPAAAL's artwork has become one of the most iconic and representative elements of the organization's political and cultural production. Constituted as a mass media *avant la lettre*, the Ospaaalist graphics emerge as one of the first and most successful attempts to create its communicative language of universal scope within the framework of the Global South (Villaverde, 2010; Bermúdez, 2000; Campos, 2014). From Japanese *origami* to the German *Sachplakat* style, passing through French *art nouveau*, the avant-garde codes of North American pop & op art and Soviet socialist realism, a multitude of artistic trends and currents from different parts of the world converge in the graphic production of the OSPAAAL (García Molinero, 2023b). The Ospaaalist design was mostly conceived by Cuban artists and designers who had to undergo a deep cultural learning process to approach scenarios as distant from the Ibero-American sphere as the Arab world. This reality will be expressed, for example, by the famous designer Mirta Muñiz when referring to the challenge of graphically approaching the Palestinian scenario:

What could we know about the struggle of the Palestinian people? Almost nothing before delving into the conflict and discovering that from the Genesis of the Bible appeared the Palestinian nationality and Arab destiny sung by its poet when he states: "Inscribe me, Arab, and I love above all olive oil and thyme." (Muñiz, 2003: 50)

Within the framework of Ospaaalist graphics, the most recognized examples of the *Tricontinental* organization were its famous posters that travelled around the world. Having become an icon of the organization, the OSPAAAL posters were initially created as a complement to the *Tricontinental* magazine, folded within the publication itself. The initial print run of the OSPAAAL posters was 5,000 copies per piece, marked by anonymity in their first years of diffusion. The visual impact of these images, built from simple communicative codes, but at the same time enormously striking in the eyes of the viewer, led

6 The main themes of *Tricontinental* changed over time, but the most significant and historically prevalent in the publication was the image and figure of Ernesto Che Guevara, who appeared on fourteen covers between 1967 and 1990 (Calvo, 2021). Other themes included solidarity with the people of Vietnam, support for African liberation movements and struggles, Latin American guerrilla movements, as well as the denunciation of racism, the Apartheid regime, Latin American dictatorships, and US imperialism in its political-military, economic, and cultural dimension across the globe.

to an undeniable success that would soon give them a prominent role. In the words of Stites Mor (2022: 56): “OSPAAAL’s poster art was the most enduring and effective international poster distribution system in the world.” Published in four languages (Spanish, English, French and Arabic; the Arabic writing was drawn and mounted due to the lack of typographic means and graphic resources) (Bermúdez, 2000), the posters proved to be the best way to reach the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, where the complex theoretical apparatus collected in the *Tricontinental* was often beyond the reach of a large part of the illiterate masses located on the margins of conventional communication models (García Molinero, 2022a).

In this scenario, it is essential to note that, despite its immense impact on a global level and a multitude of different motifs, Tricontinental’s graphic production lacked broadly representative models in the field of poster design where women regularly emerged as true protagonists. Of the nearly four hundred posters produced by the organization throughout its history, only 18 designs featured women in a central position (García Molinero, 2022b). In this regard, the gender gap reflected in the limited visibility of women within Tricontinental posters connects, in turn, with the dual role of women as both artists and subjects of visual representation. Within this framework, it should be noted that eight women designers were recognized as authors of 22 posters (several posters per designer) throughout the immense graphic production of the OSPAAAL (Cushing, 2003).

In this line, it is important to consider the prevalence of models of female representation where women from the Global South appear in subaltern positions in the OSPAAAL’s posters, such as the constant image of caregivers associated with the ideal of motherhood (Hanna, 2015) and a femininity linked to nature under a paradigm of fertility related to national rebirth and the Promethean dominance of men over it (Merchant, 1980). Within a broad thematic framework, the causes in which women are most commonly represented in the OSPAAAL’s graphics are those linked to African national liberation movements, Latin American guerrillas and national reconstruction processes in Southeast Asia. Besides the characteristics and levels of women’s participation in the revolutionary armed struggle, the representative models promoted by OSPAAAL are shaped by varying socio-cultural motifs regarding the portrayal of femininity in different global contexts.

In this sense, the representative dominance of African women as mothers and guerrilla fighters, compared to the female images in other contexts, connects not only with the degree of female participation in national liberation struggles but also with a representative trend where femininity, motherhood,

and armed struggle are particularly linked to certain scenarios, adversely affecting others in the Third World.⁷ This is why scholars such as Garland Mahler (2018: 5) have noted a “tendency to address itself to a heteronormative, masculinist subject” concerning the designs produced by the organization.

The graphic production of the OSPAAAL, however, extends far beyond the posters attributed to the organization. In addition to the posters disseminated and exhibited in some of the most prestigious art galleries in the world, there exists an immense range of artistic-visual communicative forms within the *Tricontinental* magazine where women occupy a leading role that has yet to be studied or recognized. In this sense, the representational models of Arab women within Ospaaalist graphics form a unique trend in which the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of Tricontinentalism connects with various Arab female personalities involved in the birth of OSPAAAL, alongside some of the initial gender approaches and perspectives of Arab feminism within the framework of the Global-South.⁸

7 The representation models of Vietnamese women, for example, who actively participated in their country's revolutionary armed struggle, do not follow the same representative patterns as African, Arab or Latin American motifs over time. The socio-cultural factors of gender, *negritude*, imaginaries and conceptualization of femininity within the Cuban graphic design studios themselves will influence the tendency to differentiate some scenarios from others and generate different representative models that make it difficult to establish generalizations in this field. Throughout this chapter we will delve into the specificity of the image of Arab women within the OSPAAAL, which although they never came to constitute a homogeneous or monolithic group, they will share a number of notable features of great historical value to understand how the Ibero-American world and the Arab sphere were reflected and dialogued during the second half of the twentieth century.

8 The posters of solidarity with the Arab world produced by organizations belonging to other countries during the same period as the OSPAAAL do not find comparison with the volume, periodicity, scope and depth of the Ospaaalist graphic production. They are commonly productions focused on solidarity with specific scenarios (Palestine, Lebanon or later Western Sahara), associated with revolutionary leftist organizations in Europe and the United States. In this sense, a good part of the designs would be constructed from photomontages and photographs, such as those taken by activist Jeff Blankfort in the refugee camps in Jordan in 1970, which would be widely used by different American and European communist groups during the 1970s. The absence of representative models in which Arab women appear to occupy a leading role as armed combatants in these areas would mark a notable point of differentiation in relation to the graphic productions disseminated by the OSPAAAL. In the latter, in spite of the persistence of a position of subalternity regarding women presented previously, novel elements would also be introduced to give great singularity to the selected object of study.

10.3 From Palestine to the Maghreb: the Representation of Arab Women in the Graphic Production of the OSPAAAL (1967–1995)

The study of the feminine presence in Ospaaalist graphics is situated within a much broader problematic that connects directly with the visibility and representation of women across the vast field of the Third World. As the prominent feminist thinker Audre Lorde (1984) once argued, the predominant academic trends in the West have historically tended to the configuration of a monolithic and homogenizing image of Third World women. This patent reality, with profound implications in the framework of visual representation, has been expressly denounced within the Arab orbit by authors framed within decolonial feminism, such as Sirin Adlbi Sibai (2016), who have contributed to revitalizing this long and complex debate through new contributions revealing the survival that these issues still maintain today.

In this regard, it is important to note that research on the biases and historical particularities surrounding the very concept of representativeness and visual image over time has undergone extensive development in recent decades. With specific attention to the field of Arab women, scholars such as Carolina Bracco (2024) have recently pointed out the profound orientalist implications that still surround female images from the Arab world in the twenty-first century. In this line, distinguished feminists such as the Moroccan author Fatima Mernissi already established decades ago some of the central theoretical axes on which to approach this complex object of study in works such as *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* (1975), where numerous aspects of the patriarchal system within the Arab world were analyzed and remain notoriously relevant today.

In this context, before conducting a detailed analysis of the image of Arab women within OSPAAAL's graphics, it is essential to note that numerous prominent Arab women were involved in the formation of the Tricontinental movement from its inception. Widely recognized Arab feminists such as the Egyptians Aminah al-Sa'īd or Bahiyya Karam were part of the Tricontinental Conference in Havana, where, along with their voices, many others, such as those of the journalist Hoda Tawfik or Nadia Zulficar Sabri (US Congress Subcommittee, 1966), also resounded. The prominent role that some of these women had played in the organization of the Afro-Asian Women's Federation, formed under the umbrella of AAPSO years earlier, reveals the deep bond connecting this pioneering mosaic and the emerging Tricontinental world. Within this complex scenario, however, examining the representative models of Arab femininity in the OSPAAAL chart reveals several ruptures and continuities with the Afro-Asian past, which hold remarkable historical interest for studying the

diverse realities shared between the Ibero-American sphere and the Arab orbit during much of the Cold War.⁹

From a global perspective, it is possible to affirm that the Tricontinental graphic had an immense impact on various spheres of the Arab world as a whole. According to Santiago Rony Feliú, the last director of *Tricontinental* magazine, a good part of the youth of the Arab world, including men and women, was deeply influenced by the materials produced by OSPAAAL over time (Camacho et al., 2019). This reality has led specialists such as Stites Mor (2022: 65) to state: that “the increasing and constant visibility of Cuba’s Tricontinental’s coverage of the Middle East over these years contributed to shaping perspectives on the Arab world.”

In the statistical framework, it is important to note that throughout the history of OSPAAAL, 39 posters featuring Arab-Islamic motifs were produced, making up about 10% of the organization’s total. The central cause addressed by Tricontinental Graphics in this field was always the Palestinian cause (17 posters), closely followed by the Saharawi, Syrian, and Lebanese causes, as well as solidarity with the Arab peoples as a whole. Although much celebrated by the magazine in its early years, areas like Yemen and Libya were rarely represented in the OSPAAAL posters, just as other locations, such as Algeria and Oman,¹⁰ which never became central motifs of the Tricontinental poster.¹¹

In this line, it should be noted that some of the most representative figures and political movements in the Arab world during the second half of the 20th century, including prominent women, were profoundly influenced by the graphic-visual production of the organization, particularly within the Palestinian sphere. An illustrative example of this reality was how the iconic Fatah organization turned a Tricontinental poster with Arab motifs into the cover of its official organ of publications, as its own author, Olivio Martínez, recalls:

I dare to cite for its relevance the case of my 1972 poster of solidarity with the Palestinians. This image was so deeply felt by them that they turned a version of it into the cover of the Fatah publication, and a much-reduced version in high contrast (black and white without halftones) was used

9 On the presence of women within the Afro-Asian sphere prior to the Tricontinental, see E.B. Armstrong (2023).

10 OSPAAAL’s attention to Oman revolved around the development of the Dhofar rebellion (1962–1975), for more on this see Losier et al. (2024).

11 The figure of Mehdi Ben Barka, main organizer of the Tricontinental Conference, would be presented in three designs with a founding martyr of the OSPAAAL.

as a logo identifying the editorials of the movement within the publication. The Palestinians were so fond of the poster that Fidel, during a visit of Yasser Arafat to Cuba, gave him the original (art-work) of the poster. (Martinez, 2003: 64)¹²

Apart from this well-known experience of cultural connections, other multiple evidence of graphic exchange between the OSPAAAL and the Arab world manifested through the shared use in the magazine and the Tricontinental Bulletin of designs produced by artists and organizations belonging to the Arab world over time. Such was the case, for example, of the designs of artists such as Borhan Karakotli and Abdel Rahman Al Muzain, regularly used inside the *Tricontinental* magazine until they became its cover (see Figure 10.1). In this line, multiple photographs such as those taken by Hani Jawharied in the mountains of Lebanon in the early 1970s, would in turn be used as the cover of the Tricontinental Bulletin by the organization,¹³ highlighting the existence of deep channels of continuous exchange between the Arab sphere and the Ospaaalist framework.

Along with this wide range of cultural exchanges, characters such as Leila Khaled or Ghassan Kanafani, symbols of the Palestinian resistance within the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), were also personally marked by the political-cultural action of the OSPAAAL.¹⁴ In this field, the

12 According to the author's testimony, the poster used by Fatah in its publications was produced in 1972. The only known posters designed by Olivio Martinez in that same year around the Arab world, however, do not deal specifically with the Palestinian question, but revolve around "Unity of the Arab peoples: nationalization of oil" and "March 8: International Day of Solidarity with the Arab People of Syria." The original Fatah publication where this supposed 1972 design is used has not been located, although I did find ospaaalist posters by Olivio Martinez himself, "May 15 World Solidarity Day with the Struggle of the Palestinian People" (1975), and of Andrés Hernández with the same title (1974) used as cover of the magazine *Filastin al-Thawra*, official organ of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that would begin to be published for the first time on June 28, 1972, in Beirut in Arabic language with weekly character by Kamal Nasser (Periodicals, 1972). The existence of this Palestinian poster used by Fatah is also corroborated, however, by the OSPAAAL designer Rafael Enriquez in Villaverde (2010: 221): "his Palestine poster – the one by Olivio Martinez – was widely used in Fatah covers."

13 Other Ospaaalist designs, such as Enriquez, R. (1980). *Palestine*. OSPAAAL, would become icons of the Palestinian struggle, and would also be used by numerous organizations in their posters and publications.

14 Leila Khaled maintained close ties with OSPAAAL until the very end of the organization in 2019, as evidenced by the photographs provided by Camacho et al. (2019). On the other hand, a good part of the PFLP posters were designed by Ghassan Kanafani before his assassination, presenting iconic elements of the ospaaalist graphics such as the use of



FIGURE 10.1

Read from top to bottom and from left to right: Olivio Martinez, May 15 World Solidarity Day with the Struggle of the People of Palestine, OSPAAAL (1975); cover of *Filastin al-Thawra* (1975); Andrés Hernández, May 15 World Solidarity Day with the Struggle of the People of Palestine, OSPAAAL (1974); cover of *Filastin al-Thawra* (1975); photograph of a Palestinian fedayeen in Jordan, by Hani Jawharied (1970); cover of *Tricontinental* bulletin No. 57 (1970); design of a Palestinian woman by Borhan Karakotli (1978); cover of *Tricontinental* magazine No. 93 (May–June 1984). The images of the OSPAAAL have been consulted in the official web portal of the organization (<http://www.ospaaal.com/>) and the magazine *Tricontinental* (personal collection). Images from the Arab world have been consulted on the web portal: The Palestine Poster Project Archives, Liberation Graphics, (<https://www.palestineposterproject.org/>) accessed on January 25, 2023

influential propagandistic apparatus of the Palestinian organization would draw heavily on tricontinental elements, with countless samples attesting to these intercontinental ties. A hitherto unknown anecdotal fact, but especially illustrative of this reality, is that in the photographs and videos of Kanafani's office during the famous interview conducted in Beirut by Richard Carleton in 1970 are recognizable posters of the OSPAAAL: *Day of Solidarity with the Arab Peoples*, Berta Abelenda Fernández (1969) and *The Victory will be of the Peoples who Fight for their Liberation*, anonymous (1969) (Carleton, 2017).

symbols, flat and intense colors and the representative predominance of the revolutionary armed struggle.



FIGURE 10.2 Ghassan Kanafani in his Beirut office during the interview conducted by Richard Carleton in 1970. In the circle some of the OSPAAAL posters visible on its walls have been highlighted. Image consulted on the Web Portal: The Palestine Poster Project Archives, Liberation Graphics, (<https://www.palestineposterproject.org/>) accessed on December 10, 2023

Within this complex scenario of multiple connections and exchanges over time, it is worth asking what role Arab women played in the graphics produced by the Tricontinental organization. Among all the designs dedicated to the Arab world by the OSPAAAL (but not in the graphics as a whole, as we will see below), there is only one poster in which women are represented as protagonists. Despite being an isolated sample, this design harbours a deep, hidden history that uncovers unknown details of remarkable interest for the investigation of female visibility in the Arab world as a whole. In a similar vein, while it represents just a specific case, this poster produced by the OSPAAAL with the Arab woman as the protagonist will continue to have a significant impact even in recent times, which in turn demonstrates the remarkable scope and influence of this shared universe between the Ibero-American world and the Arab sphere.

The poster in question is entitled *Western Sahara: Independence or Genocide*, and was designed from a hand-drawn drawing by Cuban Rafael Enriquez Vega (1978) based on a famous photograph of a Sahrawi fighter of the POLISARIO

Front (see Figure 10.3).¹⁵ The role of women in the armed struggle of Western Sahara has been addressed by several authors who have emphasized the remarkable prominence women combatants achieved here compared to other scenarios of the contemporary Arab world (Lippert, 1992; Strzelecka, 2023). Women's presence and degree of participation within the Sahrawi armed struggle have changed over time as Frente POLISARIO and the international context have evolved since the struggle's origins (Higgs et al., 2015).

The specific significance of the OSPAAAL poster's design, however, is framed within the initial era of the armed struggle, in which women occupied a notably more prominent space than they do today. Despite being created from a drawing, the original photograph that inspired this Ospaaalist poster hides an interesting history behind it. The Canarian cultural association 'Gran Angular,' with deep ties to the Saharawi world, recognizes Pedro Fraile Nande Shein as the author of the image. Nande Shein, a Canarian photographer, covered the armed actions of the POLISARIO Front for eighteen months and published a book of maps and images in 1977 entitled *Sahara will win*, featuring the picture in question as the cover (Nande Shein, 1977). From the platform *Por un Sahara Libre* (PUSL), on the other hand, they point out that the original author of the famous image is the Saharawi photographer Mohamed Moulud, while other specialists like Bahia M.H. Awah allude to Christine Spengler as a possible alternative photographer.¹⁶

The obscurity surrounding the famous picture, along with the POLISARIO's silence on the subject, may be related to the history regarding the woman who is the focus of this immortal portrait. According to the research conducted, the young woman who has become a symbol of the revolutionary cause is Glana Mohamed Mohamed Fadel, daughter of Buhriga, a former Saharawi fighter who now lives in Morocco after marrying a dissident of the POLISARIO Front after leaving the armed struggle.¹⁷ The hitherto anonymous female guerrilla, shown holding a French-made MAS-36 bolt-action rifle probably obtained through Algeria, wears an outfit where the combination of the traditional Saharawi *melhfa* with Converse Chuck Taylor All Star illustrates the early reach of Globalization in the late 1970s. The representation of the female image – in

15 Thanks to Fernando Camacho Padilla for revealing to me this detail that Rafael Enríquez Vega told him in person.

16 Thanks to Agustín Domínguez, Ricardo Aguasca Colomo, Moulud Yesem, Pablo Vázquez Ramírez, Saleh Nafe, Juan Carlos Gimeno Martín and Fito Álvarez Tombo for their collaboration in the search for the photograph.

17 Thanks, in particular, to Fito Álvarez Tombo and his Saharawi companions for sharing the true story behind the photograph, as well as, more importantly, for their unwavering commitment to the just cause of the Saharawi people even today.

this case, a POLISARIO combatant – as the very embodiment of the Homeland – in this case, Western Sahara – raised in arms for its liberation is one of the dominant discursive axes in the models of Arab femininity produced by OSPAAAL's graphics (García Molinero, 2022b). In this regard, renowned Arab feminists such as the Egyptian Nawal El Saadawi or the Palestinian Sahar Khalifeh have delved throughout their respective works into this form of representation of femininity in connection with nationalism within various scenarios of the Arab world over time (El Saadawi, 1980; Khalifeh, 1976).

Along these lines, this recurrent use of the image of women in visual communication, especially employed within the Arab sphere for motifs linked to Palestine and Western Sahara, is not coincidental in the OSPAAAL's graphics. The deep correlation between these unique scenarios and femininity is due to a marked associative approach between national identity and femininity, focused on the representation of oppressed nations committed to the armed struggle for independence and national liberation. As we will see below, throughout Tricontinental graphic art beyond poster design, the recurrent use of female images to embody the Palestinian-Saharan binomial as chained and subjugated Homelands in search of liberation will make this reality especially evident.

In addition to its hidden yet illustrative history, the design of the Sahrawi fighter created and disseminated by the OSPAAAL will have a broad reach globally, being utilised by the women's wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) for the development of a poster on the occasion of International Women's Day (1977), where it will feature Leila Khaled herself along with motifs of Palestinian-Sahrawi solidarity (see Figure 10.3). The same photograph would in turn be used as a postcard by several organizations such as the POLISARIO itself, which accompanied it with the slogan "The war of liberation is guaranteed by the masses" in Arabic, Spanish, French and English and the Saharawi flag with the black band still below.¹⁸ In recent times, the Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM) (2021) and the Arab Institute for Research & Publishing (2020) also echoed contemporary artists imbued with the same Tricontinental spirit. Such is the case, for example, with Mai Albattat, the author of a design published in 2018 by the Palestinian Museum (Bir Zeit), where one can recognize the same image of the Saharawi guerrilla fighter circulated by OSPAAAL, accompanied by another POLISARIO fighter

18 The Saharawis contacted for this research emphasized that the flag of Western Sahara is currently flown with the black band at the top because they are at war. They state that once the territory is liberated, the green band will move to the top and the black band will shift to the bottom.



FIGURE 10.3 Read from top to bottom and from left to right: Rafael Enríquez Vega, *Western Sahara, Independence or Genocide*, OSPAAAL, 1978, retrieved from the official website of the OSPAAAL (<http://www.ospaaal.com/>); postcard with original photograph of Sahrawi fighter, author of the picture unidentified, image uploaded by John Atherton to the Flickr Portal on July 12, 2019, accessed at <https://www.flickr.com/> on January 25, 2023. Mai Albattat, *In the name of the fighter who created a new horizon wearing sneakers*, Palestinian Museum (Bir Zeit), 2018; Women's Organization of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), International Women's Day, 1977. Both accessed at The Palestine Poster Project Archives (<https://www.palestineposterproject.org>) on January 12, 2023

under Albattat's epithet (2018): "In the name of the fighter who created a new horizon wearing sneakers." This slogan, which refers to the combination of Western footwear and traditional costumes as a symbol of the convergence between the past and the future during the struggle for national liberation, highlights the reach that some of the visual codes popularized by the OSPAAAL in its time have had in the present day.

In this complex reality of transoceanic connections and exchanges, it is necessary to highlight that, in contrast to the relative absence of female images in the OSPAAAL posters related to the Arab world, where the aforementioned design by Rafael Enriquez is an (influential) exception, the magazine contains many unexplored examples in which Arab women appear as true protagonists. Throughout the 184 issues produced by *Tricontinental* over its more than fifty years of history, 87 images of women can be found, collected from photographs, photomontages, drawings, and graphic designs, of which 40 feature women from the Arab world. It is important to note, in this regard, that many of these images are often accompanied by exclusive accounts provided by Arab women of immense prestige who maintained deep ties with the OSPAAAL. The voices of women such as the Lebanese intellectual Tabitha Petran, the Algerian Faitha Bettahar (Secretary General of the Pan-African Union of Women), the Palestinians May Sayeb, Salwa Khadia and Jihan El Helon (representatives of the General Union of Palestinian Women), together with many other militants, artists, professors and intellectuals such as Rhanda Nablusi, Bayan Nuwaihed Al Hout, Kanaan Nage or Hannah Ibrahim accompany the images of Arab fighters, helping to build a dual visual-textual story of visibility and struggle within the Arab world from a gender perspective (García Molinero et al., 2023a).

In this sense, despite the notable heterogeneity of the scenarios addressed, it is possible to affirm that Arab women occupied a particularly significant space within the OSPAAAL graphic. Considering the broad time frame encompassed, the transformations in the structure and content of the *Tricontinental* magazine over time make it impossible to study its historical production from a general perspective. Therefore, the analysis in this research is based on a division into three different chronological periods, which account for changes in the main thematic axes, structure, and the historical context surrounding the Ospaaalist publication of female images related to the Arab world throughout its trajectory.

Considering the magazine's structure, the first *Tricontinental* stage, recognized as the period of greatest splendour in the history of the publication, comprises its first 15 years, covering issues 1 (July–August 1967) to 74 (January–February 1981). During this time, the issues related to the Arab world discussed by the newspaper, which include women, occupy 40 sections out of 340, just

over 11% of the total.¹⁹ The Palestinian cause and the struggles arising from the Six-Day War (1967) between the Arab nations of Syria, Egypt, and Lebanon against the State of Israel would be the most significant issues addressed during this period in a general sense, along with the revolutionary processes within Arab countries such as Syria, as well as the challenges faced by Algeria related to its fight for oil nationalization. The attention devoted to Yemen and Oman, as well as to the women involved in these contexts within the pages of *Tricontinental* during these years, serves as a spatially representative element of the magazine's first stage. However, this interest appears to fade over time in the publication's history.

Throughout 1978 – issues 58 (March–April 1978) and 59 (May–June 1978) – the question of Western Sahara and the struggle of the POLISARIO Front emerged for the first time in the magazine,²⁰ becoming the primary focus on the Arab-Islamic world within the publication during its second period of history. From a statistical point of view, in the first 15 years of *Tricontinental*, at least 14 images of Arab women were collected and disseminated around the world by OSPAAAL. In this context, there is a clear predominance of Palestinian women (6 images) over Yemeni, Algerian and Saharawi women (2 images each). Regarding the significance of the Palestinian woman's image within the contexts of struggle, authors such as Hanan Ashrawi (1992) have highlighted the remarkable global projection of this eminent leading role.

Under the predominant representative models, more than half of the images of Arab women during this period depict armed combatants fighting for the national liberation of their respective countries, mainly Palestine, Western Sahara, and Yemen.²¹ The predominance of a model of femininity

19 The data have been obtained following a search of all the issues of *Tricontinental* from its inception until the organization's closure. Mentions of the Arab world in the "Tricontinental en Marcha" section of the magazine have not been considered, as it referenced diverse aspects of the Third World as a whole without acknowledging the specificities of certain Arab contexts.

20 "The Conference expresses its position in favor of the independence and self-determination of the heroic people of Western Sahara fighting under the leadership of the POLISARIO." General Declaration of the International Conference of Addis Ababa in solidarity with the struggle of the African and Arab peoples against Imperialism and reaction, *Tricontinental*, No. 58 (March–April 1978): 120–123.

21 There are seven representations of armed female combatants: two of them Palestinian, two Saharawi, one Yemeni, one Syrian and one Lebanese. The rest of the representations are dominated by models of women working in the fields (Yemen) or carrying out activities such as sewing (Algeria) or reading (Palestine). Also notable in this area are the images of political leaders of Palestinian and Algerian women's organizations such as Faitha Bettahar, May Sayeb and Salwa Khadia, who were also collaborators of the OSPAAAL.

representation associated with the image of women as revolutionary armed subjects within *Tricontinental* represents a unique example in the Arab-Islamic world during the latter half of the twentieth century, possessing its distinctiveness that sets it apart from other publications of the era. In this sense, researchers such as Maryam Said Al-Kharusi (2017) have pointed out the widespread use of militant images of Arab women among various communist and revolutionary leftist groupuscules; however, there was never an organization of the scope of the OSPAAAL that recurrently addressed these motifs on a global scale. Alongside this rupturist representational framework, images of Arab women working in factories and the agricultural field, reading, carrying out political activities and, in some cases, acting as mothers, would accompany the central discursive axis of the OSPAAAL.²² The lesser weight of these thematic axes compared with the armed struggle illustrates a clear intentionality to build a collective imaginary where the feminine presence within the revolutionary vanguard would have a particularly significant weight.

Between 1981 and 1990 – from issue 75 (March–April 1981) to 130 (July–August 1990) –, *Tricontinental* underwent a thematic shift from the Middle East to the Maghreb, with the Saharawi cause and the struggle of the POLISARIO Front becoming the main focus of the Arab-Islamic world within the publication. Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia emerged as representative thematic lines of this second stage, when the defence of the Palestinian cause, Lebanon, and the scenarios in Yemen and Oman did not disappear, but significantly decreased their presence.²³ Despite this thematic shift towards Western Sahara, the female representations during this period by the magazine (25 in total) continued to focus on Palestinian women rather than Saharawi, Libyan, Yemeni, and Omani women. The representation of the Arab woman as the guardian of national identity through her traditional dress became the central discursive axis of *Tricontinental*, complemented by the model of the armed revolutionary fighter, which continued to be fundamental in the graphics of the

22 Throughout the Ospaaalist graphics not all Arab women were represented in the same way, there being important regional differences according to the socio-cultural context and the physical environment that surrounded them in each specific scenario. In the case of the images of combatants, the Saharawi context is marked by the presence of the desert and the refugee camps, with women occupying a representative space with specific characteristics. In Yemen, the harshness of its eastern mountains and the fierceness of the fighters of the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen stands out, while in Lebanon, Syria or Palestine other types of representations with singular characteristics predominate in each case. The construction of a generic analytical framework for women in the Arab world as a whole is not intended to overshadow these particularities, but rather to provide a starting point from which to delve further into the specificity of women from each of these particular scenarios.

23 References to these scenarios from this second stage onwards are scarce.

publication.²⁴ In this context, throughout the Arab world, profound debates and polemics proliferated around female dress and identity, related, among other things, to the use of the veil, as we will see in depth below.

During the last stage of *Tricontinental* (between 1995 and 2018) – from issue 131 (March–April 1995) to 184 (September–October 2018) – the publication radically changed its format and central thematic axes. While it maintained its interest in solidarity among the peoples of the Third World, from the end of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century, the OSPAAAL focused all its efforts on the Ibero-American world, relegating previously central areas of interest to a secondary position. The Arab-Islamic world became of minor interest, limited to being the subject of periodic appeals for solidarity with the Palestinian people, which became the last significant thematic pillar of the Arab-Islamic world to be systematically addressed by the publication.²⁵

The Anglo-American invasion of Iraq (2003) and the civil wars and foreign interventions in Syria (2011) and Libya (2011) were denounced by the OSPAAAL in its magazine, marking a stance against Western interventionism and support for figures such as Muammar Gaddafi and Bashar al-Assad, whom the organization would interview in *Tricontinental* magazine in 2012. During this period, female images from the Arab world nearly vanished, signalling an era change not only in the *Tricontinental* format and graphics but also within the Arab world and globally. The decline of significant secular revolutionary movements that had grown in the latter half of the 20th century would coincide with the emergence of movements rooted in Islamic fundamentalism across various contexts, often relegating Arab women to the margins of political life. In this context, which will be neither homogeneous nor monolithic, some Arab women will continue to nurture ties and networks with the *Tricontinental* world, forming a notably accentuated minority concerning image and visual representation.

24 This new trend did not embrace all Arab causes equally, with notable regional differences persisting. Of the nine representations of combatants in this period, four of them are Palestinian, two Yemeni, one Saharawi, one Libyan (militarized as a member of the army) and one Omani. In the rest of the models, the Palestinian image as guardian of the national identity prevails in six representations, accompanied by minor trends such as Palestinian and Lebanese women occupying the role of victims of Israeli aggression on four occasions, or Libyan women working in manufacturing.

25 The predominance of the Palestinian cause had a particularly significant historical importance in virtually all women's liberation movements within the Arab world during the second half of the twentieth century (Gradska, 2021).

10.4 Between the AK and the *Shatwa*: Arab Women as Armed Guardians of National Identity

Considering the deep connections between the Ibero-American world and the Arab world, as evidenced by the OSPAAAL, where women, as we have seen, occupied various roles that evolved over time, it is essential to explore the representative models of Arab femininity conveyed through *Tricontinental* graphic art beyond poster art. This is a particularly significant reality not only because of the novelty of some of its approaches but also due to the interest in understanding how they perceived and historically reproduced patterns and visual representations related to Arab femininity from an Ospaaalist framework. The main focus of attention lies, however, in grasping the motives that articulated such images and the notable impact and global projection they would have on the configuration of new collective imaginaries regarding Arab women worldwide over time.

In this framework, the central discursive axis in Ospaaalist visual communication related to femininity in the Arab world directly connects with the ideal of women as guardians of national identity in various contexts. The dialectical construction of identity-femininity (Loken et al., 2022), extensively explored by the *Tricontinental* graphic as a whole, reveals several representative trends within the Arab world that possess unique manifestations not found in female samples from other regions.

First, the prominence of combative images featuring Arab women at the forefront of the revolutionary processes of national liberation represents the most notable trend disseminated by OSPAAAL within this sphere. Femininity and national identity appear directly connected through the armed liberation struggle in numerous graphic samples from the organization, which contribute to constructing communicative narratives and impactful visual metaphors in which Arab women occupy a prominent role. In this regard, authors such as Lila Abu-Lughod have emphasized the potential of Arab cultural manifestations produced from a female perspective in works such as *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (2013), where some of these issues have been addressed in depth.

However, the profound implications that this multifaceted representational model disseminated by the OSPAAAL offers conceal important regional particularities that make it impossible to speak of Arab women on a generic or homogenizing level. Palestine and Western Sahara, for example, are scenarios where the struggle for recognition of national identity occurs under the direct threat of colonising powers. As we have seen, these contexts serve as central motifs in which women are depicted as armed guardians of national identity,

finding greater presence.²⁶ Palestinian and Saharawi women are portrayed to the world by OSPAAAL graphic art in a particularly incisive manner as the embodiment of a Homeland rising in arms against Israeli-Moroccan colonialism, thereby contributing to the dissemination of an image that would have an immense impact on contemporary visual communication related to femininity in the whole Arab-Islamic world.

In this sense, among all the images that the OSPAAAL disseminated in this thematic line, the iconic photograph of Leila Khaled hugging her rifle stands out, which travelled around the world and was widely publicized by the magazine *Tricontinental* on the occasion of the days of solidarity with the Palestinian people (Editorial *Tricontinental*, 1987; Editorial *Tricontinental*, 1988a). Along with it, the OSPAAAL promoted many other images of combatants belonging to the scenarios of Palestine, Western Sahara, Yemen, Libya, Oman, Syria or Lebanon, which are usually represented carrying AK assault rifles turned into powerful symbols. In the words of Palestinian militant and teacher Bayan Nuwaihed Al Hout (1983: 64) during an exclusive interview with OSPAAAL: "My identity is my rifle." Hand in hand with this reality, the graphics disseminated by the *Tricontinental* spectrum regarding this field paid special interest to the issue of Arab women's clothing. In this sense, there are notable differences in the Ospaaalist production between the models representing Arab women and the images of armed combatants belonging to Asian, African or Latin American territories.

The use of traditional dress and clothing in the representations of Arab women in the *Tricontinental* graphics is the other major discursive tendency used by the organization to consolidate the ideal of femininity as a guarantor of national identity within the Arab countries (see Figures 10.4 and 10.6). In this sphere, the multiple debates on issues still present today found ample scope in the Ospaaalist image. In a complementary manner to the previous model, the OSPAAAL turned the female attire of the Arab world into a symbol of resistance in the eyes of the entire world, but it did not do so randomly; rather, it paid special attention to specific cases of marked interest. In this regard, the scenario where this trend would gain more prominence was especially planned within Palestine itself. Paying attention to the regional particularities that make up the heterogeneous cultural mosaic of the traditional Palestinian costumes, the organization delved, in the words of Abu-Lushod (1982: 77), into the role

26 The role of the General Union of Palestinian Women and the National Union of Saharawi Women in the armed struggle of their respective peoples, together with the close relations that both organizations maintained with the OSPAAAL, was a decisive factor in their visibility by the magazine *Tricontinental* (García Molinero, 2023a).



FIGURE 10.4 From left to right: Saharawi combatant photographed by Christine Spengler (1978), consulted in *Tricontinental*, No. 59 (March–April 1983), 65–77; Palestinian fighter parading, author unknown, consulted in *Tricontinental*, No. 115 (January–February 1988), 44

of “the national costumes as a manifestation of Palestinian cultural identity,” even turning them into the cover of *Tricontinental* with images of women as protagonists (Palestinian National Council, 1989). In this context, the OSPAAAL did not neglect the various existing regional particularities, alluding to them in a vindictive manner in the following terms: “the Palestinian national costume has variants according to the regions; these nuances are also zealously preserved by the people” (Al Hout, 1983: 59).

In this way, the *shatwa* and *saffa* headdresses, connected with the importance of the hair, as well as the *thawb*, *ghabbani*, *asawri*, and *janah wa nar*, widely used by Palestinian women before the creation of the State of Israel, acquire a symbolic role in the OSPAAAL designs assiduously over time (Abu-Lushod, 1982; back cover *Tricontinental*, 1982; Al Hout, 1983; front cover



FIGURE 10.5 Palestinian activist and diplomat Rhanda Nablusi during an exclusive interview with OSPAAAL. Retrieved from *Tricontinental*, 57, 71–72

Tricontinental 1984; Salim Yusef, 1985; back cover *Tricontinental* 1985; Palestinian National Council, 1989). Besides indicating the social status, age or marital status of Arab women, the use of these garments is connected to an ancestral tradition of the Canaanite peoples, which aims to build a space of convergence between the past, present, and future of the Palestinian people; that Salim Yusef (1985: 32) would express in the following terms: “25 models of local costumes. Each style has its own characteristics, whether geographical (plain or mountain), the mode of production or religious influences, which are reflected in the ornaments.”

The establishment of permanent refugee status among Palestinians, coupled with the loss of prominent weaving centres in Gaza, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem, will lead to the proliferation of the homogeneous *shawal* model



FIGURE 10.6 From left to right: designs by Abdel Rahman Al Muzain, consulted in *Tricontinental*, No. 123 (May–June 1989), 28, and *Tricontinental*, No. 97 (January–February 1985), 31

and six-branch designs, as well as the partial loss of many Palestinian national costumes, which, since 1967, have fallen victim to ongoing cultural appropriation attempts by the State of Israel. The use of the *Tricontinental* image for the preservation of the Palestinian identity sign through women also reached the diaspora where it is reiterated that “the Palestinians, still hurt by the diaspora, have preserved their culture, their love for the land and the homeland for which they fight” (Al Hout, 1983: 56), thus contributing to form a global model of daily resistance of wide scope and route in contemporary imaginaries that reaches the XXI century.

The conversion of the traditional dress of Palestinian women into a political symbol from which to write their history shares space with many other designs and scenarios in the Arab world in which female representations in traditional attire also take on a leading role in the struggle for recognition and preservation of national identity and sovereignty. The images of women of the POLISARIO Front fighting in Western Sahara disseminated by the magazine *Tricontinental* (Fernández Vera, 1983; Somoza, 1980; Editorial *Tricontinental*, 1988b) also travelled around the world, thus contributing to building an

intercontinental dialogue between women of the global South where attire would have a leading role. In this respect, photographs like the one included in the 1978 publication, where a veiled POLISARIO fighter holds her son in one hand and a French-made MAT-49 automatic submachine gun in the other – much used during the Algerian liberation war after being ceded by the revolutionary government of Vietnam in support of the cause – appear prominently, symbolising through a visual metaphor the breadth of the Tricontinental spirit in relation to the armed struggle of Arab women (Fernández Vera, 1983). The anniversaries of national liberation in Yemen (Morante, 1984) and Libya (Editorial Tricontinental, 1989) would be celebrated with images of women wearing traditional attire, often consisting of more covered and simpler dresses than the striking Palestinian motifs (back cover *Tricontinental*, 1995). These choices were frequently influenced by the desert environment and Bedouin customs, rather than a social conservatism associated with Islamic religious fundamentalism.

In this context, throughout the female images disseminated by the OSPAAAL, there is also a notable presence of representations of Arab women in which “Western” attire acquires a significant weight. This tendency does not contradict the search for preserving traditional costumes as a symbol of national identity; rather, it responds to the proliferation of Marxist currents within the pan-Arabist and anti-imperialist movements during the latter half of the twentieth century, a process that would not be consummated within the Arab world until the so-called ‘Tricontinental Era’ of the late sixties. Arab socialist guerrilla women would be depicted smoking like Rhanda Nablusi (Nablusi, 1977), cutting their hair (Editorial Tricontinental, 1989), wearing Parisian hats (Editorial Tricontinental, 1983a) and sneakers (Somoza, 1989), persistently without a veil or hijab, similar to the Palestinian feminist Jihan El Helon (Editorial Tricontinental, 1983b).

The symbolic importance of the hijab in the formation of Islamic feminine identity (Omair, 2009) would come into conflict with some of the more radical revolutionary feminist trends close to Marxism, to which *Tricontinental* would give voice from its own origins. In this framework, it is worth highlighting that some of the aforementioned Arab feminist pioneers involved in the configuration of the Tricontinental movement, such as Aminah al-Sa’id and Bahiyya Karam, were recognised opponents of the imposition of the veil in their own time, thus influencing many of the tendencies that the OSPAAAL would uphold overtime.

This pioneering representative current, however, would disappear as fundamentalist movements advanced within the Islamic world. In this respect, it is worth noting that some specialists, such as Paul Thomas Chamberlain,

have pointed out that Tricontinentalism is indirectly responsible for favouring the emergence of Islamic identity positions aligned with groups like Hamas (Palestine), Hezbollah (Lebanon), or the Muslim Brotherhood (Egypt and other countries in the Arab world) (Parrott 2022).²⁷

10.5 Conclusions

The models of representation of Arab femininity produced by the OSPAAAL through the graphic design samples contained in *Tricontinental* open an epistemological gap around the traditional conceptualization of Arab women and their interconnection with the rest of the world through an Ibero-American scale. The narratives and communicative accounts that inexorably link women to the ideal of Motherhood, the roles of caregivers and victims, as well as notions of fertility and national rebirth, although very present in the Ospaaalist graphic associated with the continents of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Hanna, 2020), do not find a lasting space among Arab women. The predominance of models linked to the representation of the national identity of Arab peoples, through the use of the image of women as revolutionary armed subjects and guardians of national cultural preservation via traditional costumes, constitutes a unique example in the visual communication of the Global South during the second half of the twentieth century.

The channels of cultural exchange that OSPAAAL opened between the Arab-Islamic and Ibero-American worlds became a loudspeaker for Arab women, allowing them to offer an alternative vision, and in some cases an authentic first impression, of femininity in the Arab world as perceived by Latin Americans and Europeans public. The disruptive and revolutionary frameworks introduced by Tricontinental graphics would mark much of the imagery produced around Arab women throughout the second half of the 20th century. The ideal of Arab femininity disseminated by the OSPAAAL was characterised by the combination of rupturist elements linked to currents close to Marxist feminism with traditional models more aligned with Islamic feminism in its paradigms oriented towards the achievement, in the words of Sirri (2021: 36) of “justice within the framework of Islam.”

27 This simplifying and essentialist position, partly arising from a profound lack of understanding of the Tricontinental sphere and the work of the OSPAAAL throughout its history, is not shared by the author of the present chapter, which serves as a fitting example to refute this assertion.

The materialization of concrete forms of solidarity between the peoples of the Arab-Islamic and Ibero-American worlds, however, would be strongly conditioned by the holding of the Tricontinental Conference itself. Aside from the dispute between the Western world and the socialist bloc, the tensions within the socialist framework itself would highlight the main strengths – and weaknesses – of Tricontinentalism. The desire to define a genuinely ‘Third Worldist’ roadmap independent of the Realpolitik shaped by Moscow or Beijing will be one of the most widely celebrated contributions of the Tricontinental. On the other hand, the lack of resources provided by the great socialist superpowers would greatly limit the real possibilities of materializing large transnational projects of international cooperation within the framework of the global South. However, the immense cultural legacy of the OSPAAAL continues to provide a wide range of as yet unexplored lines of interconnection between seemingly distant scenarios such as the Arab-Islamic and Ibero-American worlds. In this regard, contemporary feminist approaches and gender perspectives allow us to rethink a history of women in the Global South, where the Ospaaalist graphic and the space occupied by femininity in the Arab world within the Tricontinental framework represent a significant chapter of a history yet to be written.

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Index

- Abad de Santillán, Diego 90
Abdelkader 49, 53
Abu Lez 234
Abu Lotuf 235*n*20
Abyssinia 39, 77
Adas, Michael 53
Ad-Din Shah Qajar, Mozaffar 143*n*5
Adelante (newspaper) 90
Aden 158, 166–168
Afghanistan 10, 161
Africa 3, 14–15, 17, 19, 26, 28, 31, 39, 41, 49, 53, 59, 141, 146, 151, 154, 160, 162, 164–166, 171, 174, 226–228, 230–231, 233, 237, 241, 243, 261, 277, 279, 299
 African National Congress 233*n*14
African France 48
Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization 157
Afshar, Amir Khosrow 155
Aga Khan Foundation 11
Agrupación Nacionalista (Nationalist Association) 94*n*11
Algeciras Conference 55
Ahumada, Roberto 234
Al-Azhar University 101
al-Bakr, Ahmed Hassan 236
Albala, Elías 137
Albala, Matías 126
Alberti, Chiara Stella Sara 191
Alcalá Zamora, Niceto 94*n*11
Alexander the Great 65, 83
Alexandria 35–36, 66
al-Fassi, Allal 89
Algeria 11, 17, 27, 41, 46–49, 50*n*3, 97, 101, 157, 228, 231, 233–235, 255, 273, 275, 282, 286, 290
 Algerian National Liberation Front 229
 National Union of Algerian Women 234
Al-Ghaydah 169–170
Algiers 97, 151, 276
Alkhas, Hannibal 18, 183–184, 187, 197–201, 203
Al-Khattabi, Abdelkrim 9, 47, 49, 57, 92, 98–99
Allende, Salvador 240*n*27, 250, 252, 264–268
Alliance for Progress 153
Alliot (Jewish immigration to Palestine) 115
Al Said, Sayyid Faysal bin Ali bin Faysal 167–168
Americas 3, 5–6, 11, 14, 88, 94*n*10, 103, 115–117, 122, 151, 190
 Caribbean 1, 17, 62, 85, 152
 Central America 228
 Hispanoamérica 6, 94*n*10
 Latin America 1, 6–16, 19, 45–46, 49–50, 52–54, 56–57, 59, 88, 91–92, 94*n*10, 98, 133–134, 140, 147, 152–154, 156–157, 160, 166, 181–182, 185, 193, 200, 202–205, 226*n*2, 228, 230–231, 239, 242–243, 250–252, 254–257, 259–264, 268, 273–274, 277, 279, 299
 Lusoamérica 6
 Pan-America 6
 Southern Cone 90, 98, 100, 113, 228
Amezcuca, Mario 193–196
Anatolia 2, 250
Andalusia 6, 89, 93
Angola 164–165, 168, 171, 174, 231
Ant (magazine) 254, 256–257, 262, 265
Anglo-boer War 17, 46, 52
anti-colonialism 1, 14, 47, 52–53, 55–56, 96, 147, 229
anti-imperialism 1, 9, 18–19, 53–54, 56, 59, 147, 182, 231, 235, 243, 253, 261, 266, 275–277, 298
Aphrodite 35
Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) 58
Arab diaspora 88, 92, 104–105, 107
 Arab descent 7
 Arab immigrants 89–90, 105
 Arab migration 102*n*18
Arab-Islamic 6, 277, 282
 Arab-Islamic world 7, 275, 277, 290–292, 294, 299–300
Arab League 8, 98, 100
Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party 236
Arab world 1, 6, 9, 19, 88–89, 98, 100, 102, 104–105, 106, 166, 229, 236*n*22, 273–275, 277–278, 280*n*8, 281–283, 285–287, 289, 290*n*19, 291*n*22, 292–294, 297–300

- Árbenz, Jacobo 9
 Arabia 29
 Arabian Peninsula 36, 140–141, 143, 151, 165
 Arabshahi, Massoud 187
 Arafat, Yasser 235, 241, 283
 Araquistáin, Luis de 90n3
 Archetti, Hector Amílcar 239n25
 Archivo General de Administración (General Archive of the Administration) 91
 Argentina 7–8, 9n7, 10, 15–16, 94, 104–105, 116, 120n6, 124–125, 141, 148, 154, 184, 226n2, 229, 231, 232n10, 234n19, 235, 238–239, 240n26, 241, 243
 Anti-Communist Argentine Alliance 226n2
 Comisión Argentina de Solidaridad (Argentine Solidarity Commission) 230
 Comité de Solidaridad con el Pueblo Argentino (Committee of Solidarity with the Argentine People) 229
 Juventud Argentina por la Emancipación Nacional (Argentine Youth for National Emancipation) 234
 Juventud Peronista 226n2
 Arslan, Shakib 89
 art 2, 19, 37, 40, 69, 71, 74, 181–187, 189–193, 195, 197–199, 203–205, 273, 279–280, 287, 293–294
 Accademia di Belle Arti 189, 194
 avant-garde 134, 184, 190–192, 278
 Chicago Institute of Art 197, 199
 First International Art Fair (Iran) 183
 Gilgamesh (art gallery) 198
 Iran's Fine Art Exhibition (*Namāyeshgāh-e Honar-hā-ye Zibā-ye Irān*) 184
 Mehrgam Fine Arts Workshop 196
 Muralism 15, 18, 181–187, 189–193, 197, 199–200, 202–204
 Tālār-e Rudaki (now Tālār-e Vahdat) 187
 Salman group 186
 Scuola di Arti Ornamentali 194
 Showabink Gallery 194
 Zorvan Gallery 195
 Asia 3, 14–15, 19, 28, 52, 59, 146, 154, 185, 226–228, 231–232, 261, 273, 277, 279, 299
 Seventh Asian Games (Iran) 183
 Asociación Hispano Islámica (Hispano-Islamic Association) 89
 Association of Iranian Writers 198
 Atlantic 6, 29, 62, 96, 104
 Atlantic Ocean 7
 Atlantic Charter 96
 Avcıoğlu, Doğan 265
 Aybar, Mehmet Ali 252
 Azaña, Manuel 90n3
 Baalbek 81
 Badia y Leblic, Domingo 16, 27, 29, 40
 Baghdad 105, 150, 265
 Bakhtiar, Teymur 153, 155–156
 Balafrej, Ahmed 89
 Balay, Christophe 204
 Balfour Declaration 79, 113, 115, 119–120, 121n7, 136
 Balkan War 63, 85
 Balkans 18, 85–86, 113n1, 114, 137
 Baltiansky, Mauricio 132
 Bandung 147, 274, 276
 Afro-Asian Conference 147
 Bani Asadi, Mohammad Ali 199
 Banisadr, Abolhassan 237n24
 Baraibar Espondaburu, Carlos de 17, 88, 90–91, 94–101, 103, 105–107
 Barcelona 29
 Barcia Trelles, Augusto 90n3
 Barka, Ben 157, 163n81
 Barreto Milani, Oswaldo 157
 Basque Services of Information and Propaganda 98
 Batista, Fulgencio 143–145, 155, 255
 Battle of Ayacucho (Peru), centenary 57n6
 Bayo, Alberto 257
 Beigbeder, Juan Luis 97
 Beirut 79–82, 84, 105, 144, 162, 165, 283n12, 284
 American University 80
 St Joseph University 80–81
Belle Époque 63
 Ben Bella, Ahmed 101, 275–276
 Benefactress Ladies Society 119
 Bennuna, Abdeslam 89, 94n11, 95–96
 Benumeña 17, 88–91, 93–94, 97–98, 101–102, 104–107
 Berber Dahir 96
 Berlin Conference of 1885 53

- Berman, Natalio (Naum Vital) 129–131, 133–135
- Bethlehem 296
- Biblioteca Centro de Pesquisa América do Sul Países Árabes África (BIBLIASPA) 10
- Blasco Ibáñez, Vicente 65*n*4, 86
- Blettel 130
- Bolívar, Simon 57, 264
- Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (ALBA) 12
- Bombardier, Alice 186–187
- Borojeni, Bahman 187, 199
- Boston Museum of Fine Arts 71
- Boumédiène, Houari 233
- Bourguiba, Habib 99, 106
- Brazil 7–8, 10, 116, 141, 147–148, 154, 184, 250, 254, 267
- Bravo, Douglas 254, 257, 261, 267
- Brigada Sanitaria Adriana Haidar (Adriana Haidar Medical Brigade) 238
- Britain 41
Great Britain 121, 125, 142, 172*n*11
- Broz Tito, Josip 147
- Bucaram, Abdula 7
- Buenos Aires 9*n*7, 50*n*3, 51–52, 57, 90, 105, 122
- Bukele, Nayib 7
- Burton, Richard Francis 40
- Cairo 36, 67–71, 72, 84, 97–101, 105, 146, 150–152, 157, 162–163, 166–168, 274*n*1, 276–277
Spanish Cultural Centre 97
pyramids of Giza 70
- Canada 116, 142, 145, 151, 174
- Caracas 147, 150, 162
- Caras y Cetas* (Argentinean magazine) 52
- Carter, Jimmy 171–172
- Carullo, Juan Carlos 233
- Casa Árabe 10
- Casa Ásia 10
- Casa Sefarad 10
- Casares Quiroga, Santiago 90*n*3
- Castro, Fidel 9, 18, 141–143, 145–152, 154–155, 158*n*62, 161–162, 164, 171–175, 250, 260, 267, 275–276
- Castro, Raúl 151–152
- Çayan, Mahir 260–261, 263–264
- Central Treaty Organization 149*n*23
- Centre for Moroccan Cultural Studies 97
- Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais 10
- Centro de Estudios de África y Asia 10
- Centro de Estudios de África y Medio Oriente 10
- Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica (Documentation Centre of Historical Memory) 89*n*2, 90*n*3, 91
- Ceuta 29, 33, 41
- Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Party of the Revolution) 231
- Chamran, Mostafa 151, 159*n*65
- Charles IV 28, 31*n*8–9, 33, 38
- Chávez, Hugo 9
- Che Guevara, Ernesto 9, 19, 145–146, 150*n*32, 156–157, 173, 175, 249–251, 256–257, 259, 261, 264, 266–267, 276, 278*n*6
- Chile 7–8, 10, 16–18, 51, 90–91, 94, 96, 100–101, 104–105, 113*n*1, 114, 116–118, 120–122, 124–129, 131–137, 140, 162*n*75, 241*n*27, 250, 264–268
Chilean road to socialism 264
Universidad de Chile 10, 122, 133
Unidad Popular 140
Socialist Party of Chile 133
Student Federation of the Universidad de Chile 133
- China, People's Republic of 158
- Chissano, Joaquim 232
- Christianity 3, 5
Catholicism 5
Christians 2, 7, 35, 37, 78, 80, 100, 104
- Cipión, Ernesto 233
- Claret, Santiago 144
- Claret, Pompei 144
- CLASCO, Working Group “Middle East and North Africa” 12
- Cojano, Boris 124
- colonialism 8–9, 13, 16–17, 26–27, 41, 59, 91, 93, 96, 106, 157, 175, 243*n*30, 276, 294
- Cold War 1, 3, 8, 14–15, 18–19, 98–99, 103, 140–142, 149*n*23, 174, 181
- Colombia 7–8, 184, 259
- Compañía de Transportes Eléctricos Hispano-Marroquíes (Spanish-Moroccan Electrical Transport Company) 93
- communism 99, 103, 156, 165, 171, 263
Communist Party in Spain 89*n*2
Leninism 259, 266, 268
Maoism 159, 262–263, 268

- communism (*cont.*)
- Marxism 265–266, 298
 - Partido Comunista de Chile (Communist Party of Chile) 240
 - People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran 170n107, 237
 - Organization of Iranian People's Fedai Guerrilla 173
 - Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman 96
 - Soviet Union 53, 164
 - Tudeh (Iran's Communist Party) 157–159, 164, 199
 - URSS 115
 - Congreso para la Libertad de la Cultura (Congress for Cultural Freedom) 100
 - Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC) (Spanish National Research Council) 98
 - Constantinople 37–39, 67, 82n5, 84
 - Istanbul 82, 84–85, 252n3, 253, 262n6, 263
 - Council of the Islamic Revolution 237
 - Crenovich, Adolfo 131, 133, 135
 - Crítica*, Argentinean newspaper 57
 - Crouzet, Vincent 4
 - crusades 3
 - Cuadernos de Estudios Africanos* 98
 - Cuadernos del Tercer Mundo* 231
 - Cuba 7–10, 15–16, 18–19, 41, 55, 62–64, 79, 85, 94, 140–144, 145n8, 146, 147n18, 148n20, 149–152, 154–168, 172n11, 173–175, 184, 230, 233, 241n27, 254, 259, 266, 273, 275n2, 282–283
 - Partido de los Independientes de Color 64
 - cultural mediators 17, 90–91
 - Cyprus 35–36, 40, 82
 - Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP, Republican People's Party) 252
 - Dabiri, Bahram 199
 - Damascus 30n5, 76, 80–81, 105, 150n33, 238
 - Damour 238
 - Dar es Salaam 231
 - Darfur 39
 - Darín, Ricardo 7
 - Davalou, Amir 152
 - Debray, Régis 257, 261
 - decolonization 1, 8, 102, 181, 229
 - Delegate of Indigenous Affairs 97
 - De Micheli, Mario 18, 189–193, 205
 - Demirtaş, Metin 249
 - Dhofar 140, 164–165, 167–170, 173, 229, 282n10
 - Diba (Pahlavi), Farah 192
 - Dibadj Torkestani, Amir 158
 - Dihigo y Mestre, Juan Miguel 17, 62–65, 70–72, 74–75, 78–83, 85–86
 - Dirección General de Marruecos y Colonias (General Directorate of Morocco and the Colonies) 93
 - Domingo, Marcelino 90n3
 - Dominican Republic 142, 152–155, 156n57, 174, 260
 - Dreyfus, Alfred 115
 - Druzes 79
 - Duno, Pedro 157
 - Eastern Question 3, 62, 86
 - Egypt 2–3, 10–11, 17, 27, 29, 35–36, 42, 46, 54–55, 63, 65–66, 68, 71, 73, 75, 90, 97, 99–102, 150nn32–33, 151, 159n65, 165, 168, 171, 235, 290, 299
 - Egyptology 27, 41–42
 - Ehsaei, Mohammad 188
 - Eisenhower, Dwight David 149, 153
 - el Abbasi, Ali Bey 26–27, 32, 39–41
 - Elfi Bey 36
 - el-Krim, Abd 9
 - Elmalı region 57
 - El Mercurio* (newspaper) 51, 105–106
 - Elnecape, Daniel 134
 - El Ouazzani, Mohammed 96
 - El Salvador 7
 - El Sol* (newspaper) 94
 - empire 8, 16, 26, 28, 54, 63, 77, 82, 86, 91, 120, 255
 - American imperialism 260, 262, 266–267
 - British imperialism 4
 - Byzantine Empire 2, 83–85
 - Roman Empire 2
 - Ottoman Empire 3–4, 7–8, 17–18, 26, 28, 36–38, 41–42, 62–63, 82–83, 85–87, 104, 114, 120–121, 128, 137
 - Portuguese Empire 26
 - Spanish Empire 27

- Eghbal, Manouchehr 155
- England 16, 31n9, 32–33, 42, 53, 65, 87, 121n7
- Ecuador 184
- Epstein, Dr. Ber 119, 122
- Escobar, Andrés 173
- Esfandiar, Iraj 164
- Eskandari, Iraj 188
- Eskandari, Mohamad 188n3
- Estéfano, Habib 102, 104
- Estrada Palma, Tomás 63, 143n5
- Ethiopia 141, 143, 162, 165–167, 171–173, 232
- Europe 1, 3, 14, 17, 28, 32, 37, 53, 57, 62–63, 68, 84–85, 98, 100, 105, 115–116, 118, 120, 122, 124, 133, 183–185, 190, 230, 234–235, 253, 262n6, 280n8
- Eastern Europe 99n15, 113n1, 115, 117, 119
- European Union 3
- Facusséuio, Carlos Flores 7
- Faisal II 153
- Faivovich, Mauricio 131
- Farmanfarmaian, Manucher 141n2
- Fatah 235–236, 238, 241, 254, 260, 275, 282, 283n12
- Fez 30n6, 33
- Firmenich, Mario Eduardo 235n20, 241, 243
- Ford, Gerald 168
- Franco 17, 90, 95, 98, 99n15, 101n17
- Franco's dictatorship 91n6
- Franco regime 10, 89, 99, 102–103
- Francoist Spain 91, 101
- France 2, 7, 16, 27, 29, 31n9, 34, 38, 40–42, 48, 53, 55, 57, 59, 86–87, 102, 115, 121, 125, 142, 148n21, 171, 174, 189, 277
- Franciscans 75, 83
- French Mandate 3, 80
- Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez (Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front) 240
- Frente Polisario (Polisario Front) 286
- Frente Popular (Popular Front) 95
- Galimberti, Rodolfo 234
- Gauna, Adriana 226, 232n11, 236–237
- Gateño, Alejandro 137
- Germany 4, 55, 86, 113n1, 114–115, 136, 185
- German Democratic Party 115
- Gezmiş, Deniz 259–261, 263
- Ghaderinejad, Niloofar 199, 203
- Ghods-Nakhai, Hossein 153
- Gilan 160, 193
- Gibraltar 15, 32, 93
- Gibrán, Jalil 64
- Gil Grimau, Rodolfo 93, 97n14
- Gil Torres Benumeya, Rodolfo 17, 88
- Giral, José 90n3
- Global North 1, 9, 14
- Global South 14, 59, 227n5, 250–251, 276, 278–280, 298–300
- Godoy 28, 31–33, 39, 41–42
- Gómez, José Miguel 63
- González, Adolfo 231, 233, 236–237
- Great Depression 116, 127n8, 129
- Greece 29, 65, 83, 85
- Grigor, Talinn 187, 196, 203n14
- Grimau, Julián 89n2
- Grupo de Combate General San Martín (General San Martín Combat Group) 238
- Guatemala 8–9, 99n15
- guerrilla 145, 151, 156, 157n60, 159, 169, 174, 226n2
- guerrilla warfare
- urban guerrilla 226n2
- Guevara de la Serna, Ernesto. *See* Che Guevara
- Guinea-Bissau 165n87, 231, 233n16
- Haddad, Wadi 168n100
- Hajebi Tabrizi, Vida 157–159
- Hajinuj, Vaad 127
- Hassan II 101
- Hatef, Mahmud 161–162
- Havana 51, 63–64, 67, 83, 147–148, 150–151, 155–158, 160, 162, 163n81, 164n84, 166, 167n93, 168, 170, 172, 274–276, 281
- Centro Asturiano 63
- Centro Gallego 63
- Haya de la Torre, Víctor Raúl 47, 58
- Hayek, Salma 7
- Hayesod, Keren 126
- Heikal, Mohamed 157, 171n109
- Herrera, Mario 234
- Herzl, Theodor 73, 115, 122
- High Commissioner in Morocco 93n9, 97
- Hikmet, Nazım 255
- Hitler, Adolf 114, 136
- Hodgson, Marshall 2
- Holy Land 37

- Hoseyniye-ye Ershād 186
 Humbert I, Italian king 52
 Hussein, Saddam 152*n*38, 236
- Ibáñez del Campo, Carlos 127*n*8, 129
 Iberian cultural heritage 5
 Iberian Peninsula 1–3, 5
 Iberian Romance languages 5
 Spanish 5
 Portuguese 5
 Ibero-American world 1, 6, 13, 15, 101, 103,
 275, 280*n*7, 285, 292, 293, 299–300
 Ibero-American 5, 17, 100, 102, 274, 278, 282,
 299
 Ibero-American Community of
 Nations 5
 India 144, 145*n*8, 146–148, 162*n*75
 Infante, Blas 89
 Ingenieros, José 57
 İnönü, İsmet 252
 Instituto Chileno-Árabe de Cultura (Chilean-
 Arab Institute of Culture) 105
 Instituto de Cultura Hispánica 10
 Instituto de Estudios Africanos (African
 Studies Institute) 98
 Instituto de Estudios Políticos (Political
 Studies Institute) 98
 Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura 10
 İpekçi, Abdi 262–264
 Iran 3, 8–12, 18, 140–147, 148*n*19–20, 149–
 154, 156–166, 169–175, 181–190, 192–193,
 195–200, 202–204, 226–227, 236–237,
 239–240, 241*n*27, 242–243
 Islamic Republic of Iran 181, 195*n*10,
 227*n*3, 237*n*24
 Iraq 10–11, 144*n*7, 147*n*18, 151*n*38, 152*n*38, 153,
 155*n*50, 158, 161, 170*m*02, 236, 292
 Ireland 185
 Islam 2, 39
 Muslim societies 2
 Islamic Modernism 92, 97
 Islamicate 2, 4, 6
 Islamicate World 1–2, 6, 8, 10, 13, 15
 Ismail, Fattah 166
 Israel 2, 7, 9–12, 73, 79, 106, 123, 125–126,
 151–152, 241, 243, 263, 292*n*24
 Israeli State 120
 Kingdom of Israel 125
 Maccabi sport clubs 118
 Mapai (Laborist Party of Israel) 135
 Istanbul University 258–259
 Istiqlal (party) 96
 Italo-Turkish War 63, 82
 Italy 2, 7, 16, 82, 84, 185, 189–191, 193–194,
 202
 Izmir 82, 253
- Jaffa 73–74, 76, 79, 84
 Japan 144*n*7, 185
 Jerusalem 36, 37*n*14, 75–77, 79, 123, 296
 Haram al-Sharif 76
 Holy Sepulchre 76–77
 Palestinian Archaeological School 76
 Weeping Wall 78
 Jesuits 64, 79–80
 Jordan 11, 147*n*18, 254, 260, 280*n*8
 Kingdom of Jordan 121
 Joilim, Bicur 127, 129, 134
 Judaism 18, 117, 119, 124, 130, 132, 137
 American Jewish Congress 121
 anti-Semitic riots 122
 Ashkenazi 113, 119, 126–129, 136–137
 Asociación de Jóvenes Israelitas, AJI
 (Jewish Youth Association) 127
 Conversos 116
 German Jews 117
 Hasidic Orthodox Jews 120
 Hasidism 115
 Jewish Centre 119
 Jewish Circle of Santiago 128
 Jewish diaspora 113*n*1
 Jewish Polyclinic 127
 Jewish Union Society 117, 119
 Judeo-Spanish 117
 National Jewish Committee 119, 123
 rabbis 120*n*6, 124
 Russian/Ashkenazi Youth 127, 129
 Sephardic Jews 113, 114, 126, 127, 128, 137
 Sephardic Jewish Community in
 Santiago 126
 Sephardi Max Nordau Society in
 Valparaíso 119
 synagogue 118, 124, 128–129
 Sociedad Unión Israelita de Chile (Jewish
 Union Society of Chile) 117
 Talmud Torah schools 118
 Yiddish 113*n*1, 117, 119, 127–131, 133–134,
 136–137

- Kamal ol-Molk, Mohammad Gaffari 183
 Kedisha, Jevra 129
 Kemal, Yaşar 264
 Kennedy, John Fitzgerald 142*n*4, 153–154
 Keren Kayemet (Jewish National Fund) 118
 Khalatbari, Abbas Ali 163–164
 Khan, Isaac 143*n*5
 Khan, Sharfudine 232
 Khomeini, Ruhollah 142, 151*n*34, 165, 173,
 198, 201, 203
 Kürkcü, Ertuğrul 261
 Kusnetzoff, Jacobo 126

 Labarca, Santiago 122
 Labor Bund, Jewish 120*n*6
La Nación, Argentinean newspaper 51,
 55–56
La Opinión Nacional, Venezuelan
 newspaper 54
La Reforma publishing 91*n*7
 Largo Caballero, Francisco 17, 89, 95
 Latin Arab Film Festival 10
 Latin East initiative 11
La Vanguardia (newspaper) 94
 League of Nations 104
 Lebanon 3, 7, 11, 17, 63–64, 79–82, 100, 144,
 168, 229–230, 234–236, 238, 242, 254,
 260, 280*n*8, 283, 290–291, 294, 299
 Lechuga, Carlos 166
 Lesseps, Ferdinand de 72
 Levant 2, 74, 104, 106
 Levy, Robert 135, 137
 Leza, Francisco 144
 Libya 11, 34, 82, 162*n*75, 236, 273, 282, 291,
 292, 294, 298
 López, José Dámaso 233
 Louis XVIII 28, 34, 39, 42
Luz (newspaper) 94

 Maalouf, Amin 64, 80
 Maalouf, Gebrayel 64
 Madeira 155*n*49
 Madrid 11, 30–31, 38, 55, 62, 89, 226*n*1, 238
 Maghen David Centre 126
 Mahuad, Jamil 7
 Malmierca, Isidoro 170
 Maputo 232
 Marenches, Alexandre de 171
 Marighella, Carlos 156, 257, 259–263,
 266–267
 Marisy Figuerdo, Luis 161
 Maronites 79
 Martí, José 54–55
 maximalist 118–119
 Mebarak, Shakira 7
 Mecca 16, 32, 34, 36, 39–40, 69
 Medina 36
 Mediterranean Sea 253
 Mediterranean countries 2–3, 16
 Mediterranean perspective 2
 Melilla 29, 33, 41
 MENA region (Middle East + North
 Africa) 2–3
 Mendizábal, Horacio 235
 Menem, Carlos 7
 Mexico 7–8, 18, 29, 94, 116, 141–142, 154*n*48,
 156, 162*n*n74–75, 174, 184–186, 190,
 191*n*6, 192–196, 202, 230*n*7, 238, 260
 Uruapan (Michoacán) 193–196
 Middle East 1–4, 96, 100, 105, 141, 142, 146,
 149*n*23, 151, 154, 156, 162, 190*n*5, 226–
 228, 230–231, 233, 236*n*22, 237–238, 241,
 253, 258, 263, 277, 282, 291
 Medio Oriente 3–4
 Military Junta 228, 237, 243
Milliyet magazine 262
 Minyan 117
 Mizrajistas (Arabs) 135
 Modernity 45, 201, 204*n*15
 Western modernity 115
 Mohammadi, Habib 193
 Mohammadi, Nasser 199
 Mohammed VI Centre for the Dialogue of
 Civilizations 11
 Montazeri, Ali 237
 Montoneros 19, 226–232, 233*n*16, 234–243
 Montoneros 17 de Octubre 233*n*15
 Partido Montonero (Montonero Party)
 230
 Movimiento Peronista Montonero
 (Montonero Peronist Movement)
 226
 Morejón, Eduardo 169
 Morocco 10–11, 16–17, 27–29, 31, 33–34,
 39–42, 46–47, 52, 55*n*5, 56–57, 89–94,
 96–97, 101–102, 104, 106, 171, 286, 291
 National Union of Popular Forces
 157*n*59
 Mosaddegh, Mohammad 9, 142
 Moscow 100, 149, 161, 164, 193, 300

- Moshé Nes-El 114, 134
 Moslemian, Nosratollah 199
 Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MiR, Revolutionary Left Movement) 241n27, 267
 Movimiento Justicialista (Justicialist Movement) 234
 Mozambique 165n87, 166, 228–229, 231–233
 Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Mozambique Liberation Front) 232
 Mueshihange, Peter 232
 Mugabe, Robert 232n13, 233
Mundo Árabe (magazine) 91, 100–101, 105–106
 Muslim world 26, 30, 68, 89, 100
 Muslims 7, 10, 32, 36, 68, 78, 85
 Mzenda, Simon 233

 Nader Zehtab, Rahaman 158
 Nagaika 130
 Namvar, Rahim 158
 Napoleon 27–28, 32, 35, 38, 40, 42, 67
 narratives 63, 89, 171n110, 194, 293, 299
 Nasser, Gamal Abdel 101, 147, 274
 National Council of Euzkadi in London 99n15
 National Iranian Oil Company 150
 nationalism 1, 45, 86, 89, 92, 94, 96–98, 120, 153, 234n18, 240, 287
 Arab 92, 98, 100
 Maghrebi 48, 88, 92, 96, 98–99, 101
 Moroccan 39, 49, 57, 59, 89, 93–99, 101, 103, 104, 107, 157, 275, 281, 294
 Near East 1–4, 7–13, 15–18, 26–27, 36, 41–42, 62–63, 65, 86, 153n44, 228, 234n18–235, 243
 Oriente Próximo 3–4
 Proche-Orient 3
 Vicino Oriente 3
 Negrín, Juan 95
 Nehru, Jawaharlal 147
 Neruda, Pablo 90n74, 100
 New Dehli 148
 Nicaragua 56, 184, 228–229n7, 238–242
 Ejército Popular Sandinista (Sandinista Popular Army) 238
 Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista National Liberation Front) 238

 Niger valley 39
 Nixon, Richard 161, 277
 Nkrumah, Kwame 147
 Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) 8, 147
 North Africa 1–2, 6–7, 10–11, 13, 15–17, 26–27, 31, 38–42, 46–49, 52, 56, 58–59, 82, 96, 99n15, 101, 113n1, 140, 233
 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) 253, 255
 Northern Africa Liberation Committee 99
 Norway 161
 Nosotros 114, 127–135
 Nujoma, Sam 232
 Nzo, Alfred 233n14

 Obregón, Álvaro 185
 Ogaden War 171–173
 Oman 140, 158, 164–165, 167, 169–170, 282, 290–291, 294
 Omayyad 88
 Organización de Solidaridad de los Pueblos de Asia, África y América Latina (OSPAAAL, Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America) 160, 261
 Organización Latinoamericana de Solidaridad (OLAS, Latin American Solidarity Organization) 261
 Organization of American States 154n48
 Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) 8, 141n2, 149–150
 Orientalism 27, 41–42, 121
 Ormuz, Strait of 165, 169
 Orozco, José Clemente 185, 191, 196, 201
 Özgüden-Tuğsavul, İnci 257

 Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza 18, 141, 147, 169n101, 174, 182, 187, 190n5, 226, 236
 Great Civilization 187
 White Revolution 142, 153, 187
 Pakistan 10, 144, 146–148n21, 158, 165
 Palangi, Nasser 185
 Palestine 2, 7, 17, 29, 36, 63, 73–74, 79–80, 98, 105–106, 113, 115, 118–125, 135–137, 229, 235, 273, 275, 280n8, 283–285, 287–288, 290–291n22, 293–294, 299
 British Mandate for Palestine 115
 Palma, Arturo Alessandri 127n8
 Pan-Islamism 89

- Paraguay 8, 185
Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde) 233n16
 Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) 90
Payâm-e Nou (New Message) 184
 Pérez Alfonso, Juan Pablo 150n30
 Perón, Juan Domingo 234
 Peronism 58n7, 226n2, 229, 233n15–234n18, 243n30
 Peronismo Montonero Auténtico (Authentic Montonero Peronism) 233n15
 Peronismo Revolucionario (Revolutionary Peronism) 229
 Revolutionary Peronism 229
 Persian Gulf 4, 140, 151, 169
 Persianate Societies 1
 Port Said 72–73
 Peru 8, 57n6, 184
 Portugal 5–6, 11, 155n49
 Petgar, Jafar 197
 Philadelphia 29, 121
 Philippines 41, 147n18–148n21
 Pilowsky, Jacobo 129
 PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) 228, 283n12
 Popular Unity 228
 Prensa Latina 173n112
 Preuss, Hugo 115
 Proleter Devrimci Aydınlik (Proletarian Revolutionary Light) 262, 266
 Protocols of the Elders of Sion 118
 Puerto Rico 41, 184
 Puiggrós, Rodolfo 230n7, 234n17
 plague 35

 Qaboos, Sultan 140, 167–168, 170
 Quesada, Gonzalo de 85
 Qom 237
 Quartim, Joao 261

 Radical Party 133
 Radical Republican Party 95n12
Radio Noticias del Continente 230, 240
 Rahmani, Faramarz 199
 Rajavi, Massoud 237

 Ramírez, Ilich 168n100
Repertorio Americano (Costa Rican Review) 57
 Rashidov, Sharof 158n62
Resistir es Vencer (magazine) 231–234
 Renacimiento 114, 119, 121–126
 Reuss, Henry Schoellkopf 172
 Reyes Más, Luis 162–163
Revista de Estudios Políticos 98
 Revisionists 135
 revolution
 Cuban Revolution 145, 150–151, 154–155, 157, 159, 173, 175, 250–251, 254, 256, 260, 275–276
 Iranian Revolution 9, 142, 160n70, 171, 174, 186, 193, 201, 227, 240
 Mexican Revolution 134, 185, 192
 October Revolution 267
 revolutionary art 19, 181–182, 186, 203, 205
 revolution as movement 182, 193, 200, 203–204
 revolution as outcome 182, 204
 Russian Revolution 118, 134
 Reynoso, Jorge 233
 Rezvani, Mohsen 140n1, 159
 Rhodesia 141, 166, 243
 Rif 33, 47, 56–58
 Rivera, Diego 185, 192, 196, 200–201
 Roa, Raúl 164n84, 166
 Rodó, José Enrique 5
 Rodríguez Lendían, Evelio 69
 Rosas, Juan Manuel 49
 Rosenberg, Leland 146
 Rothschild, Edmond Adolphe de 150
 Royal Botanical Gardens of Madrid 32n10
 Ruppín, Arthur 115–116
 Russia 41, 120
 Russian Philharmonic
 Tsarist Russia 115
 Russian Social Circle 119

 Sabaj, Jorge 91n7
 Saca, Tony 7
 Sadedin, Masoud 199, 203, 221
 Safari Club 171
 Safarzadeh, Manuchehr (also known as Mash Safar) 199
 Safinia, Reza 145, 149, 153

- Sahabi, Mehdi 18, 183, 189, 205
- Sahara 31, 229, 280n8, 285–288, 290–291, 293–294, 297
- Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic 234
- Saidi, Abolghassem 187, 206
- Samawi, Kasem 236
- San Diego Street 127
- San Martín, José de 57
- Santiago 51, 85, 96, 106, 113n1, 117, 119–121, 123, 125–126, 128, 134, 137, 144
Santiago General Cemetery 119
- Sanz, Susana 233
- Sarmiento, Domingo Faustino 17, 46–49, 58
- Saudi Arabia 11, 163, 166, 171–172
- South–South connections 1, 14, 59, 202
South–South relations 1, 18
South–South migration 1
- Schweitzer, Daniel 133
- Siddel (or Shiddel), Mohammad
Hassan 183–184, 187–188, 193–197, 210–215
- sea 73, 79, 81–82, 253
Caribbean Sea 140
Red Sea 40, 72
Mediterranean Sea 253
- Second Spanish Republic 17, 92, 94
- Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (Foreign Affairs Secretariat) 148n22, 226
- Selassie, Haile 163, 165n87
- Semanario Claridad* 89
- Semanario Israelita de Chile* (Israeli Weekly of Chile) 129
- Senderey, Moisés 114, 118–121, 124–125, 127–129, 135–136
- Senegal 39, 42
- Serguera, Jorge 157
- Service de documentation extérieure et de contre-espionnage (External Documentation and Counter-Espionage Service) 171
- Shamlou, Ahmad 196, 214
- Shell 149
- Shiraz 188
Shiraz Arts Festival 184
University of Shiraz 188
- Siad Barre, Mohammed 172
- Sidon 238
- Silundika, George 233
- Siqueiros, David Alfaro 185, 190, 192–193, 200–201
- Slim, Carlos 7
- Sokolov, Naum 134
- Soler Alonso, Eugenio 147–148
- Soliman (Sultan) 33
- Somalia 141, 171–173
- Somoza dictatorship 241–242
- South West Africa People's Organization 232
- Southeast Asia Treaty Organization 148
- Spain 2–3, 5–7, 10–11, 15–17, 27–32, 36–39n16, 41, 57, 64, 85, 88–92, 94, 97–98, 101–105, 107, 113n1, 141–142, 151n37–152n41, 156, 161, 174, 185, 226n1, 234, 238
- Spanish America 94, 96, 102–106
- Spanish-American War 53
- Spanish-Arab unity 97
- Spanish Civil War 90–91, 101n17, 147n18
- Spanish Protectorate in Morocco 41, 91–92, 106
- Soviet Union 99, 115, 140–141, 147, 149, 151n38, 153–154, 156, 158, 161, 164, 166–168n97, 253
- South Africa 46, 141, 164–166, 174, 243
- Strasbourg (Alsace) 137
- Strategic Counteroffensive 19, 227, 229, 233, 237–239, 241
- Stuttgart's Socialist Conference (1907) 53
- Suárez, Carlos 230n7
- Sublime Porte 37
- Sukarno, Kusno Sosrodihardjo 147
- Sykes-Picot Agreement 87
- Syria 3, 7, 10–11, 27, 29, 36, 39, 74, 150n33, 165, 168, 235–236, 238, 242, 290–292, 294
Syrian Civil War 7
- Summits of South American-Arab countries (Cumbres América del Sur-Países Árabes, ASPA) 8
- Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution (sCCR) 198
- Tadivi, Akbar 183
- Tangier 32, 93, 95, 98
- Tanzania 226, 230–233
- Technical Secretariat of Morocco 94n9

- Tehran 11, 18, 141, 144–154, 156n57, 158, 161–165, 172, 183–184, 186–190, 193–195, 197–203, 205–206, 215–219, 221, 227, 237
- Aryamehr University (now Sharif University) 193
- Azad University 199
- Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Tehran 186, 194, 199, 203, 221
- Iran-Soviet Cultural Society 184
- Iran-USA Association (*Anjām-e Irān-Āmrīkā*) 197
- Iranian-German Cultural Society 193
- Ministry of Agriculture 187, 195–196, 205, 212–215
- SAVAK (*Sāzmān-e Ettelā'āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar*) 196, 141, 146, 155–160
- Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMOCA) 187, 200, 205–206, 209
- University of Decorative Arts (later renamed the University of Arts) 187, 192
- Teitelboim, Volodia 133
- Tel Aviv 73
- Telefónica* 89
- Temer, Michel 7
- Temuco 113n1, 126, 134, 137
- Tétouan 92–94, 97
- Third World a, 8n5, 17, 19, 57, 59, 94, 140, 147, 151n38, 173, 227–228, 234n18–236, 240, 242–243, 251, 255, 273–277, 280–281, 290n19, 292, Third World countries 8, 259 Third Worldism 1, 47, 59, 275
- Timón* (magazine) 90
- Timossi, Jorge 173
- Timbuktu (Mali) 39
- Torre, Eduardo de la 169
- Torres, Abdelkhalek 89, 93, 95–96, 99
- Tragic Week 122
- Transjordan 121
- traveller 17, 29n4–30, 48, 63, 68, 70, 75, 83
- Tricontinental 57, 168, 273–279, 281–282, 284–285, 287, 289–300
- Tricontinental* bulletin 160, 168n98, 276n4, 283–284
- Tricontinental Conference 149, 157–160, 165–166, 168, 273–274, 276, 281–282n11, 300
- Tricontinental Magazine* 15, 19, 160, 163, 168n98, 273, 276, 278, 280, 282–284, 289, 292
- Tripoli 29, 31, 34, 39, 41, 79
- Trujillo, Leónidas 146, 155
- Trumper, Najum 126
- Turbay, César 7
- Türk Solu* (magazine) 256–257
- Turkey 11, 16–17, 19, 29, 37, 63, 84, 86, 144, 249–257, 259–268
- Turkic world 1
- Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi (THKO, People's Liberation Army of Turkey) 260
- Türkiye İşçi Partisi (TİP, Workers Party of Turkey) 267
- Uluer, Bülent 264
- Unión Árabe de Beneficencia (Arabic Charity Union) 105
- Union of South American Nations 8
- United Arab Republic 150, 152
- United Kingdom 4, 7, 39, 148n21, 166
- United Nations 4, 8, 79, 103, 144, 147–148, 162n76
- United States 9, 80, 96, 99n15, 102, 115–116, 120, 124–125, 140–143n15, 148–149, 153–154, 168n97, 171, 174, 197, 250, 253, 280n8
- Assyrian American Civic Club of Turlok (California) 199
- Democratic Party 115, 172
- Monticello College (Illinois) 198–199
- Movimiento Latino* 200
- UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) 198
- United States Navy, Sixth Fleet 253, 256, 259
- University of Berkley 198
- University of California at Berkeley 199
- US Embassy in Tehran (former) 144, 163, 200–202, 215–219
- University of Athens 64
- University's Student Federation 122
- Uruguay 7–8, 116
- Urtubey, Rodolfo 234
- Vaca Narvaja, Fernando 230, 232, 235n20
- Vakili, Ahmad 199

- Valdón, Fernando 233
 Valparaíso 113*n*1, 118–119, 137
 Vasconcelos, José 185
 Versailles 53, 113, 121, 125, 136
via chilena. *See also* Chilean road to
 socialism 250
 Vilna 120*n*6
 Viña del Mar 118
Vencer (magazine) 226–227, 230–234,
 236–237, 239, 243
 Vendrell, Roberto 226, 237
 Venezuela 7–9, 11, 141, 147*n*18, 149–150, 156,
 254, 259, 261
 National Liberation Front 157, 166, 229,
 238, 257, 262, 275
 Vietnam 173, 255, 260, 278*n*6, 298
 Vietnam War 202, 251, 253

 Wailes, Edward Thompson 147
 Walsh, Rodolfo 235
 Washington 63, 140, 143, 147, 149, 153, 155,
 158*n*63, 162*n*74
 Weimar Constitution 115
 Welfare Commercial Centre 119
 West Asia 1–2
 Wilson, Woodrow 120
 Winnipeg 90*n*4
 World Peace Council 100
 World War 99
 First World War 4, 46, 53, 56, 59, 63, 87,
 104, 113, 115–116, 120, 134, 136
 World War I 3, 7, 17, 51
 World War II 9, 17, 96

 Yemen
 People's Democratic Republic of
 Yemen 236
 National Liberation Front 157, 166, 238,
 257, 262
 Yemeni Council for Peace and
 Solidarity 236*n*21
 Yishuv 74
 Young Turks 17, 63
 Yücel, Can 254

 Zanzibar 31
 Ziaodini, Hadi 199
 Zimbabwe 232*n*13–233
 Zimbabwe African National Union 232
 Zimbabwe African People's Union 233
 Zion, Poale 119
 Zionism 18–19, 106, 114, 119–121, 123–126,
 128–129, 131, 133, 135–137, 243
 Chilean Zionist Congress 113, 133
 Halutzim (settlers) 120
 Jewish-Chilean Zionist movement 113
 World Zionist Organization 121*n*7
 Zionist Centre Bene Kedem 126
 Zionist Federation of Chile 125, 127–129,
 131, 134–135

Mapping South–South Connections during the Decolonization Process and Cold War (1810–1990): The Islamicate and Ibero-American Worlds offers a groundbreaking exploration of the period's historical, political, and cultural networks. Through interdisciplinary approaches—from diplomacy and visual culture to women's studies and political science—this volume highlights state and non-state actors who shaped international relations beyond Euro-American paradigms. Rooted in a research project and major international conference, and enriched by additional contributions, it introduces original studies on underexplored connections between Ibero-America and the Islamicate world, often drawing on primary sources difficult to access due to geographic, linguistic, or political barriers.

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The volume offers detailed understandings of the wider transboundary circulation of ideas and people connected through diverse collaborations and codependencies, without relying on distinct categories of 'cultural' Otherness. The capacity of the various contributors to propose and carry out ground-breaking interdisciplinary research is exceptional.

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