

# Latin American Émigrés in Post-Revolutionary Mexican Classrooms: From Exiles to Renowned Academics (1934–1940)

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This article analyzes how Latin American academics and students, in many cases exiled from their countries, interacted with pedagogical concerns during the government of Lázaro Cardenas. Using examples of Chilean, Peruvian, Argentinian, Venezuelan, and other Latin American militants, and placing a focus on socialist education, this paper discusses experiences of individuals who arrived in post-revolutionary Mexico, seeking to engage with the pedagogical changes proposed by Cardenism. Methodologically, this research makes use of autobiographies, archival sources, and secondary bibliography in order to discuss some of the traces left by these émigrés.

**Keywords:** Cardenism, Latin American exiles, pedagogy, publications, socialist education.

El presente artículo analiza cómo académicos y estudiantes latinoamericanos, en muchos casos exiliados de sus países, se relacionaron con los procesos educativos impulsados por el gobierno de Lázaro Cárdenas. Recurriendo a ejemplos de chilenos, peruanos, argentinos, venezolanos y otros militantes latinoamericanos, con un énfasis especial en la educación socialista, el presente texto intenta comprender las experiencias de quienes arribaron al México pos revolucionario buscando vincularse a los cambios educativos propuestos por el Cardenismo. Metodológicamente, esta investigación recurrió a autobiografías, fuentes de archivo y bibliografía secundaria, con el objetivo de analizar las huellas dejadas por estos emigrados.

**Palabras clave:** Cardenismo, educación socialista, exiliados latinoamericanos, pedagogía, publicaciones.

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From a historiographical perspective, connections between teaching practices and exiles in Mexico has primarily been analyzed in relation to the arrival of Spanish republicans at the end of the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, and to asylum seekers coming from South America in the 1970s.<sup>1</sup> Other experiences have not received so much attention. This includes cases of the many Latin American exiles who came to Mexico between 1934 and 1940. Chileans, Argentinians, Peruvians, Bolivians, Venezuelans, and Salvadorians, among others, all arrived in Mexico seeking refuge in the face of political persecution. Many of these militants integrated themselves into Mexican educational centers, which were booming due to the policies of the Cárdenas government. Thus, continental processes converged with local developments. These discussions serve to create analytical networks between teaching practices, political pursuits, cultural diplomacy, and the strengthening of university systems linked with the academic émigrés who arrived in Mexico during the Cárdenas administration.

This meeting of cross-border subjects allows us not only to complicate our understanding of exiles, but also to recognize the need for observing political and cultural processes as steeped in dynamics that transcend national boundaries. As my evidence demonstrates in the following pages, the inclusion of Latin American immigrants in Mexican educational systems had an impact on projects developed by Mexican authorities, while allowing those involved to strengthen and modify their observations about the educational and political pathways they should follow.

These topics are challenging to investigate because of the sparsity and disparateness of the evidence. The individuals left footprints of their time in Mexico in different institutional spaces such as in public media expressions or their own texts. I have therefore examined official sources kept in the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) and the Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada of the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (AHSRE), as well as memoirs and documents written by the individuals themselves, for instance, *Educación y lucha de clases* by Aníbal Ponce and *Nuevo Arte: teorías de la pintura contemporánea* by Felipe Cossio del Pomar of Peru. As this article seeks to explore the role of publications in relation to attempts to intervene in

1. See, for example: Agustín Sánchez Andrés y Silvia Figueroa Zamudio (coords.), *De Madrid a México: el exilio español y su impacto sobre el pensamiento, la ciencia y el sistema educativo mexicano* (Morelia y Madrid: Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo y Comunidad de Madrid, 2002); Pablo Yankelevich (coord.), *México, país refugio. La experiencia de los exilios en el siglo XX* (México: INAH, 2002).

the discussion around Mexican educational processes, these publications are extremely useful.

The presence of these émigrés in Mexico facilitated the critical convergence of processes which have usually been considered separately, namely: the university reform movement (which started in Córdoba, Argentina in 1918 and then influenced the whole continent) and socialist education promoted by Cárdenas administration, starting in 1934.<sup>2</sup> Some of these émigrés were communists; some were members of different aprista (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA)) parties;<sup>3</sup> and others were liberals and social democrats. All of them had political practices which connected anti-imperialism, a new version of nationalism, and educational reform, because almost everyone came from universities or academic spaces. The approach which has maintained a distance between different Latin American processes by focusing on them in national terms, has also prioritized individual experiences over a collective logic displayed during their stay in Mexico. Even though biographical and individualized approaches have deepened this analysis,<sup>4</sup> there has also been a tendency to ignore the impact of individuals in a collective sphere. This group membership allowed the transformation of small local initiatives into alternative political projects for the whole of Latin America, as highlighted by many testimonies.<sup>5</sup>

This article seeks to recover the transnational subject through an examination of certain activities by and insertion into groups, collectives, and networks by some individuals.<sup>6</sup> This requires keeping sight of the interaction between personal processes, structural determinants, institutional frameworks, and the political dynamics that impacted these individuals. Such an approach seems particularly relevant given that current scholarship has highlighted the need to recover the role of specific individuals as agents or articulators of

2. See Martín Bergel (coord.), *Los viajes latinoamericanos de la Reforma Universitaria* (Rosario: Humanidades y Artes Ediciones - HyA ediciones, 2018).

3. The Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) in Mexico had a strong influence on different Latin American organizations, even founding some of them (for instance, Partido Aprista Peruano, Partido Aprista Cubano, and Acción Democrática in Venezuela).

4. For an analysis of these individual experiences see Ricardo Melgar Bao, *Redes e imaginario del exilio en México y América Latina: 1934-1940* (Buenos Aires: Libros en Red, 2003).

5. For example, journals and magazines like *Frente a Frente*, *Futuro*, *UO*, *Tesis*, and *Revista de la Universidad* opened their pages to these émigrés.

6. See John Krige (ed.), *How Knowledge Moves: Writing the Transnational History of Science and Technology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019).

transnational exchanges in the educational field.<sup>7</sup> This approach emphasizes individual and collective connections with State agencies and their capacity to build new institutions or consolidate their specific field and academic plans. I therefore discuss what the collective experience of the émigrés meant both for the critical confluence of continental dynamics and for the strengthening of particular efforts to build the new political and educative revolution that was occurring in Mexico.

This discussion is divided into four sections. Firstly, I briefly explore the elements that explain specific interests of the Latin American émigrés and the processes taking place in Mexico. I place an emphasis on the propaganda elements that attracted scholars coming from the south of the continent, rather than on the specific conditions that the country offered. In the second section I focus on the characterization of the people involved in these processes, who in turn are divided into two groups for analytical purposes: professors and students. It is important to recognize that, in practice, the categories of professor and student were fluid and dynamic. The third section deals with the experiences that pointed to the institutionalization of these exchange processes in various academic entities. Here, some little-known efforts to build research centers, schools, and even Latin American studies institutes are discussed, in order to focus on the importance that émigrés had through their integration into the Mexican academic sphere. Finally, the fourth section analyzes how educational dialogues occurred among and between the newcomers and different individuals in Mexico.

### 1. In Search of the Socialist School

Historian Amelia M. Kiddle has analyzed in detail the impact that Mexican socialist education had on the rest of Latin America during the Cárdenas era. According to Kiddle, the combination of anticlericalism and active diplomacy polarized the continent, mainly due to Mexico's efforts to present its educative programs as an example to be followed by other Latin Americans.<sup>8</sup> As Kiddle recounts, the III Conferencia Interamericana de Educación (CIE) that took place in Mexico City on August 1937 included, as a closing act, an orchestral

7. See Christine von Oertzen, *Science, Gender, and Internationalism: Women's Academic Networks, 1917–1955* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); and Judith Friedlander, *A Light in Dark Times: The New School for Social Research and its University in Exile* (New York: Columbia University, 2019).

8. Amelia M. Kiddle, *Mexico's Relations with Latin America during the Cárdenas Era* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016): 47–79.

interpretation of the communist anthem, “The Internationale.” The Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Education, Gonzalo Vázquez Vela and Luis Chávez Orozco respectively, both joined in the singing of this anthem, which foreign diplomats considered to be an organizational abuse of power. Although this kind of action disturbed governmental representatives in Mexico, leftist movements in the continent observed these changes with curiosity, and a desire began to emerge from some individuals to be personally acquainted with the socialist experience of the Cárdenas era.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, when national processes in various countries in Latin America involved the political exclusion and persecution of communist militants, socialists, nationalist sectors, or even populist groups,<sup>10</sup> the option of settling in Mexico presented itself to some people as the chance to preserve their life and, at the same time, to be in a place where learning would be possible. Some examples of dictatorships during this period include Jorge Ubico in Guatemala (1931–1944); Maximiliano Hernández Martínez in Salvador (1931–1944); Tiburcio Carías in Honduras (1933–1949); Eleazar López Contreras in Venezuela (1935–1941); and Óscar Benavides in Peru (1933–1939).<sup>11</sup> Actually, democratic governments also used certain levels of authoritarianism and almost every Latin American country suffered repressive processes. The list of émigrés is long because this included individual exiles (in the case of Chile and Argentine); small groups of political asylum seekers (Peruvian and Venezuelan cases) and large refugee groups (which included Guatemalans who migrated to Chiapas).<sup>12</sup>

This research focuses on exiles who arrived in Mexico City, most of whom were union leaders, intellectuals, and academics.<sup>13</sup> This enabled the possibility of a closer relationship with the educational processes. It is important to remember that the decision to travel to

9. Kiddle, *Mexico's Relations with Latin America during the Cárdenas Era*, 77–79.

10. See Mario Sznajder and Luis Roniger, *The Politics of Exile in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

11. In general, the Roosevelt Good Neighbor Policy enabled good relationships with all these dictatorships.

12. Many of those exiled arrived with their families, however, it is hard to find information about this. See Sebastián Rivera Mir, *Militantes de la izquierda latinoamericana en México, 1920–1934. Prácticas políticas, redes y conspiraciones* (México: El Colegio de México—Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2018).

13. For differences between intellectuals and academics see Guillermo Palacios, “Intelectuales, poder revolucionario y ciencias sociales en México (1920–1940), in *Historia de los intelectuales en América Latina. II Los avatares de la ciudad letrada en el siglo XX*, Carlos Altamirano (ed.) (Buenos Aires: Katz Editores, 2010): 583–605.

Mexico from South America was not an easy one: the journey was arduous and expensive. In one case, Paraguayan Óscar Creydt managed to get out of Paraguay because of a safe-conduct negotiated by Alfonso Reyes (diplomat and intellectual). The process involved a British flagship taking Creydt from Rio de la Plata to the Island of Trinidad from where he traveled to Panama and then to Havana, finally arriving in Veracruz.<sup>14</sup> This type of difficulty indicates that the journey of an émigré, or even a journalist, was in itself a political decision.

In Mexico, the increasing availability of academic spaces added to political objectives, through increased potential of work. The creation of the Instituto Politécnico Nacional and the Casa de España en México (which later became El Colegio de México) are two examples of new institutions that opened their doors during that period (1936 and 1938, respectively). In addition, new State universities, new specialized centers (such as the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia), and new degrees in already existing colleges also offered a range of possibilities.<sup>15</sup> For émigrés, this meant increased opportunities to find employment in a labor market that was expanding. Thus, Mexico was able to offer what Peruvian exiled student Genaro García Checa called the three Ts: “techo, tarima y trabajo.”<sup>16</sup>

That individuals were attracted by socialist education is demonstrated by the case of Venezuelan teacher Luis Padrino. Writing in 2013, Venezuelan historian Guillermo Luque reflects on the trajectory of this academic, asking: “What other experience—so intense, expansive and deep, derived from the plural manifestation of the individual and collective life—could offer the Venezuelan teacher Luis Padrino such an opportunity for observation, for study, and a comprehensive development other than the Mexican experience in those years?” The answer is decisive: “None.”<sup>17</sup>

14. Andrew Nickson, *Óscar Creydt. Una biografía* (Asunción: El lector, 2011). See “*La solicitud de Óscar Creydt de inmigrar a México*,” 1936, in Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (AHSRE), fondo asuntos diplomáticos, topográficas III- 334–28.

15. Pablo Latapí Sarre (coord.), *Un siglo de educación en México* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica – Conaculta, 1998).

16. Genaro Carnero Checa, *Los peces infernales. Cuentos, relatos, testimonios* (Mexico: Ediciones Felap, 1979). His words seem to have been intended humorously as the everyday use of the three Ts refers to “tortas, tamales and tacos.”

17. Both quotes are from Guillermo Luque, *Luis Padrino: Maestro de la Escuela Nueva y fundador de la Educación Rural en Venezuela* (Caracas: Fondo Editorial de la Facultad de Humanidades y Educación; Universidad Central de Venezuela, 2013), 46. All translations by the author.

It is important to emphasize that socialist education that attracted these exiles, many of whom were militants, corresponded with a kind of yearning and a mediatized mirage that was the result of propaganda.<sup>18</sup> With rare exceptions, those involved did not know beforehand what they would encounter on the ground; therefore, the idea of a “plural manifestation,” as Luque puts it,<sup>19</sup> speaks of the uncertainty about the process. Consequently, in this case, socialist education must be seen as part of an extended imaginary that responded to the subject’s forms of appropriation.<sup>20</sup>

## 2. Professors and Students

My focus in this article is on politically persecuted individuals who entered the educational spaces that Mexico offered. However, other groups also settled in Mexico, such as leisure travelers, journalists, and exchange students. This resulted in a wide range of accumulated experiences that are sometimes hard to disentangle. Some of the exiles became students, left their militancy behind and settled in Mexico as academics or researchers. Meanwhile, other travelers were transformed into exiles because of the changing circumstances. Thus, the boundaries between different kinds of positions when entering the country tended to blur as the individual experiences of each person lead them towards different paths. Moreover, it is relevant that both the authorities, as well as most of the émigrés, considered these processes in terms of mutual learning: those who came for education were also obliged to leave their knowledge.

In one case, a Chilean socialist, Manuel Eduardo Hübner, combined his visits involving various rural educative experiences in Mexico with conferences about the Chilean educative process. In a speech at the Mexican Chamber of Deputies in 1938 he explained that to know Mexico—even superficially—is to understand what is happening in Latin America, particularly “[ . . . ] for a revolutionary

18. In her research on Mexican public diplomacy, Sylvia Dümmer describes how Mexico tried to spread their propaganda among citizens of other countries, with the aim of strengthening their external and internal politics. See Sylvia Dümmer Scheel, “*Verán ustedes las chozas más humildes*. El discurso de pobreza en la diplomacia pública cardenista dirigida a Estados Unidos,” in *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, vol. 35, Issue 2 (Summer 2019): 255–281.

19. Luque, *Luis Padrino: Maestro de la Escuela Nueva y fundador de la Educación Rural en Venezuela*, 46.

20. A reconstruction of the debates surrounding socialist education in Elvia Montes de Oca Navas, “La disputa por la educación socialista en México durante el gobierno Cardenista,” *Educere*, vol. 12, no. 42 (July-September, 2008): 495–504.

who comes with clear eyes and hands to observe the progress of the Mexican Revolution.”<sup>21</sup> The interweaving of Latin Americans into Mexican events was a form of breaking down national borders and of constructing mechanisms of knowledge at a continental level.

From an analytical perspective, and in order to be able to manage a wide range of experiences, it is necessary to acknowledge a few peculiarities of two specific groups. On the one hand, there are those who entered academic activities as teachers. On the other hand, are those who were students.<sup>22</sup> This distinction enables an initial approach for grouping issues that were generally shared, although in some cases, differentiation was important.

### *Professors*

The list of leading academics and intellectuals who were émigrés is extensive and includes individuals from Cuba, Argentina, Peru and Paraguay. For example, two of the leading Latin American intellectuals of the time, Juan Marinello (Cuba) and Aníbal Ponce (Argentina) both settled in Mexico. Two other examples include Luciano Castillo from Peru,<sup>23</sup> and Óscar Credyt from Paraguay (mentioned above), who gave lectures on Political Economics at the Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM).<sup>24</sup> Peruvian Felipe Cossio del Pomar was a professor at the UNAM and in Morelia before founding his own educational institution in San Miguel de Allende.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Berta Castillo Valenzuela of Chile (a principal of the Escuela No.17 of Villarrica province in the rural south of Chile) and Heliodoro Guarín of Colombia (a union leader associated with the Centro Nacional de Cultura Socialista de Colombia) both settled in

21. Manuel Eduardo Hübner and César Martino, *Discursos* (Mexico: Imprenta de la Cámara de Diputados, 1938): 18–19. Martino was a Mexican engineer, founder of Confederación Nacional Campesina, who had close links with Cardenismo.

22. For instance, Calixta Guiteras, Alberto Ruz Lhuillier and Jorge A. Vivó, from Cuba, were part of the first promotions of the Anthropology degree at the *Politécnico*. Once they approved their first courses, they quickly became teachers of the next grades. See *Homenaje a Alberto Ruz Lhuillier (1906–1979)* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1981).

23. “Ficha migratoria de Castillo Colonna, Luciano” (1936), in Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Fondo Departamento de Migración (FDM): peruanos, box 1, exp. 48.

24. *Luciano Castillo: vida y obra al servicio del Perú, 1899–1999* (Lima: Comisión Nacional Conmemorativa del Primer Centenario del Nacimiento del Dr. Luciano Castillo Colonna, 2002).

25. Felipe Cossio del Pomar, *Arte nuevo. Teorías de la pintura contemporánea* (Mexico: Editorial América, 1939).

Mexico. In the case of the latter, he was involved with the Universidad Obrera in Mexico, an institution whose goal was to improve the educational level of the workers.<sup>26</sup>

As part of their work as professors, they engaged in polemics. The ever-present threat of the enforcement of Article 33 of the Constitution (which restricted political activities of foreigners and allowed the President to expel those considered by the government to be inconvenient guests) was not enough to scare them.<sup>27</sup> One example involved Dr. Luciano Castillo, a labor lawyer for the oil industry unions of Peru. In Mexico, he became immersed in a tense debate with Moisés Sáenz. During his expulsion from Peru during the dictatorship of Óscar Benavides, Castillo received a migratory card signed by the Mexican ambassador in Lima while he was on the boat. For this reason, Castillo considered him to be an accomplice of the Peruvian authorities and used the pages of the *Excelsior* newspaper to air his accusations.<sup>28</sup> His case demonstrates how the presence of such exiles in Mexico extended their analytic repertoires. Castillo's initial texts focused exclusively on the conditions of Peru's dictatorship, including the aforementioned controversy.<sup>29</sup> However, months later his writings provide evidence of his willingness to compare Peru with other Mexican processes, finally ending in a path that connected Latin American problems as a whole.<sup>30</sup> In his article titled "La tragedia de Santo Domingo" he displays an extensive knowledge of the Caribbean reality, its intellectuals, and

26. I am especially interested in mentioning Berta Castillo Valenzuela's name because her process can lead us to the experience of another rural teacher in Mexico, Gabriela Mistral, at the start of the 1920s. Here, I am interested in highlighting that these processes draw on similar situations developed by previous administrations.

27. See, Pablo Yankelevich, "Extranjeros indeseables en México (1911–1940). Una aproximación cuantitativa a la aplicación del artículo 33 constitucional," *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 53, no. 3 (January-March, 2004): 693–744.

28. Melgar Bao, *Redes e imaginario del exilio en México y América Latina: 1934–1940*. See also "Graves cargos a un diplomático mexicano," *Excelsior*, January 1, 1937, 1. See also personal correspondence between Moisés Sáenz and Rafael Heliodoro Valle for a reconstruction of the ambassador's concerns.

29. Luciano Castillo, "El problema político peruano," *Frente a Frente*, no. 10 (July 1937): 18. This review was edited by Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios. Created in 1935 its purpose was to open a journal for left-wing artists, and it gave a special space to Latin American problems. See John Lear, *Picturing the Proletariat: Artists and Labor in Revolutionary Mexico, 1908–1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017).

30. Luciano Castillo, "La revolución de liberación latinoamericana," *Frente a Frente*, no. 13 (January 1938): 3.

especially the political processes that Dominican émigrés were going through in Mexico.<sup>31</sup>

This thematic and political broadening affected most of the professors who settled in Mexico. Maybe one of the most analyzed and relevant examples is that of Aníbal Ponce. Ponce was a racist and somewhat xenophobic individual, as he himself acknowledged.<sup>32</sup> Once he arrived in Mexico he became intimately involved with the Cuban communist community in Mexico.<sup>33</sup> One of its members was Nicolás Guillén, a writer of African descent, who became one of Ponce's best friends. This personal change has not only been associated with his friendship with Guillén, but has also been associated with changes in his theoretical and political proposals. Óscar Terán, one of the foremost biographers of Ponce, has delved into this transformation of Ponce's thinking, noting that he integrated the dynamics associated with Indigenous matters regarding the construction of Latin American nations into his reflections.<sup>34</sup> Ponce was a prolific writer and the turning point in his thinking manifested itself with the publication of a series of articles entitled "La cuestión nacional y la cuestión indígena" in the newspaper *El Nacional*.<sup>35</sup> With regards to this issue, Ponce started by saying: "Configured by the entire course of social development, [the national question] has appeared at a certain time of history, it has suffered various transformations and, therefore, it demands an varied approach according to the period, the social environment, the character of the established power in each country, and the correlation of forces between social classes that confront each other."<sup>36</sup> These nuances, which emphasize the historic nature of this problem, can largely be attributed to the impact that becoming acquainted with the Mexican experience had on Ponce.

31. Luciano Castillo, "La tragedia de Santo Domingo," *Frente a Frente*, no. 12 (November 1937): 15.

32. See Ponce's letters to his sister, Clara, specially Carta a Clara Ponce, 29 de junio de 1937, quoted by *Expresión*, n. 1, December 1946: 113–114.

33. Cuban communists and some militants of Joven Cuba were living in Mexico due to a short period of repression triggered by the new president of Cuba, Federico Laredo Brú, and Colonel Fulgencio Batista, the Army Chief of Staff.

34. Óscar Terán, *Aníbal Ponce: ¿El marxismo sin nación?* (Mexico: Ediciones pasado y presente, 1983).

35. This series of articles is recovered in Terán, *Aníbal Ponce: ¿El marxismo sin nación?*

36. Aníbal Ponce, "La cuestión nacional y la cuestión indígena. Evolución del problema nacional," *El Nacional*, November 17, 1937, 1, second section.

The case of Ponce is deeply relevant to this discussion because, in the year and a half that he stayed in Mexico, he published extensively. His output included five books, more than twenty articles (in journals such as *Futuro*, *UO*, *Nuevo Continente Universidad*, *Mensual de Cultura Popular*, *Frente a Frente*, *CEN. Órgano mensual del Consejo Estudiantil Nicolaita*), and a permanent literary column in *El Nacional*. He taught classes at UNAM, the Universidad Obrera, and at the Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo. He also gave multiple interviews and participated in numerous conferences, particularly those organized by the *Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios* (LEAR).<sup>37</sup> His book *Educación y lucha de clases* became one of the leading best-sellers in social sciences, with three editions before the end of 1938. Years later it was included in the list of “most sold titles” in the whole publishing history of Mexico.<sup>38</sup>

Although Ponce’s production was exceptionally vast, the relationship to academic activism, as practiced by most professors who settled in Mexico, is particularly important.<sup>39</sup> The cases of two other individuals provide evidence of a similar story. Felipe Cossio del Pomar produced publications tirelessly and Óscar Creydt collaborated with *El Machete*, as well as other journals, publishing his work in specialized education agencies and, finally, publishing his book *América Latina ante la nueva guerra mundial*.<sup>40</sup>

However, as I have suggested, these individual efforts must be understood as part of collective processes. The debates, dialogues, reproaches, and suspicions that developed among the participants were the result of their interactions and not an isolated set of political and pedagogical practices.

37. Ponce’s books include: *Educación y lucha de clases* (Mexico: Editorial América, 1937); *Dos hombres: Marx y Fourier* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1938); *Humanismo burgués y humanismo proletario* (Mexico: Editorial América, 1938); *Diario íntimo de una adolescente* (Morelia: Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, 1938); and *Domingo F. Sarmiento* (Mexico: Departamento de Acción Social - Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1937).

38. Fernando Peñalosa, *The Mexican Book Industry* (New York: The Scarecrow Press, 1957).

39. For more information on this notion see Charles R. Hale, *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship* (California: University of California Press, 2008).

40. Óscar Creydt, *América Latina ante la nueva guerra mundial* (Mexico: Editorial Popular, 1939).

### *Students*

If professors were able absorb the tensions of their new context—or, rather, were pushed to do so—by tracing the graduation theses of some of their students, it is possible to further understand the impact their presence had in Mexico during the Cárdenas era. For example, by taking all the theses on Marxism written by Latin Americans at UNAM, a gradual increase is evident, starting at the beginning of the decade.<sup>41</sup> A comparison between the theses of two Salvadorian exiles—both communist militants with similar educational trajectories, who were involved in the editorial processes of the *Partido Comunista de México* (PCM)—communicates the speed at which Marxism penetrated in the late 1930s. Pedro Geoffroy Rivas presented his thesis *Teoría marxista del Estado* in 1937, for a bachelor's degree in Law. Rivas includes eight books in his bibliography, most of which came from *Editorial Cenit*, a publishing house in Barcelona, or *Claridad*, in Buenos Aires. None of the texts were published in Mexico, although by this point a certain circulation of those materials is evident.<sup>42</sup>

Two years later, Julio Fernández Padilla presented his thesis *Concepto del materialismo dialéctico* at the same institution. Although it had almost the same number of pages as the thesis of Geoffroy Rivas—and both claimed a lack of time to reach an optimal result—the bibliographic references are very different. Fernández Padilla included a wide range of mentions of books on Marxism translated in Mexico. Some of the publishing houses were connected to the PCM, and others came from individual initiatives, such as Narciso Bassols' *Editorial Revolucionaria*. Likewise, journal articles or speeches by leaders of the International, which appeared in the local press, are referenced. Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Dimitrov are all utilized, with quotations from their main works and from discussions of their works. Although the absence of Stalin is interesting, Fernández Padilla's thesis seems to be the result of the vitality of the Mexican left's editorial world.<sup>43</sup>

In these cases, the educational impact on both their backgrounds was not directly linked to becoming acquainted with

41. One of the first theses I encountered is from the Cuban national Heliodoro Gurrion, titled *El marxismo ortodoxo en la nación del Estado*, presented in 1931 to obtain a bachelor's degree in Law at UNAM.

42. Pedro Geoffroy Rivas, "Teoría marxista del Estado," thesis for a bachelor's degree in Law, UNAM, Facultad de Derecho (Mexico, 1937).

43. Julio Fernández Padilla, "Concepto del materialismo dialéctico," thesis for a bachelor's degree in Law, UNAM, Facultad de Derecho (Mexico, 1939).

pedagogical processes on the ground, but rather with one of the main variables that socialist education promoted: the editorial boom of Marxism.

Other students were closely involved with the changes in the educational sector, especially those who settled outside the capital and in regional schools. For example, the Escuela Nacional de Agricultura was important for foreign students, while, in other cases, rural schools were a privileged space for the presence of some of these students, as Marco Vinicio Calderón has demonstrated.<sup>44</sup> Again, the theses that were presented provide evidence of these experiences. One example of this type of academic exercise is *La enseñanza primaria rural y la agricultura en México* by Alejandro Quesada Ramírez.<sup>45</sup> These academic theses indicated a systematic effort to comprehend what was happening in post-revolutionary Mexico.

### 3. Efforts to Institutionalize

The cases described above help us to understand the impact of Mexican processes on a wide range of opportunities, from political scenarios to personal decisions. The presence of numerous émigrés in Mexico City led to the creation of organizations that sought to unite the disparate efforts. This was chiefly connected to the work of local labor unions and political organizations, who were seeking to intensify their influence on the educational sector by strengthening their pedagogical plans, as well as increasing their union membership.<sup>46</sup>

One of the critical points of this process was the 1937 Pedagogical Conference of the Communist Party, whose texts and resolutions were published a year later in *Hacia una educación al servicio del pueblo*.<sup>47</sup> According to this book, most émigrés connected to educational issues participated in the discussions. For

44. Marco Vinicio Calderón, "Soy muy pobre y aquí no hay universidad: los flujos educativos internacionales entre Costa Rica y México (1921–1940)," in *Historias entrelazadas: el intercambio académico en el siglo XX. México, Estados Unidos, América Latina.*, Sebastián Rivera Mir (coord.) (Mexico: El Colegio Mexiquense). In press.

45. Alejandro Quesada Ramírez, "La enseñanza primaria rural y la agricultura en México," bachelor's degree thesis in Economy, Escuela Nacional de Agricultura de Chapingo (Mexico, 1949).

46. It is interesting to note texts published in the journal *Tesis*, an entity of the *Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Enseñanza de la República Mexicana*. These texts are permeated by the importance of Latin American influences as a mechanism for institutional growth.

47. *Hacia una educación al servicio del pueblo*, Partido Comunista de México (Mexico: Ediciones Sociales Internacionales, 1938).

example, a prominent Mexican union leader, Gaudencio Peraza, began his analysis of the educational conditions in Mexico by citing Aníbal Ponce's ideas on education and class struggle.<sup>48</sup> This same resolution established one of the key guidelines for opening spaces destined for new professors and, particularly, for émigrés:

We are also pro the State supporting cultural and scientific research centers outside universities; their concrete goals should be different. With them, the gaps that the university cannot fill will be filled, but behind their creation there shall not be any hidden purpose of replacing the University.<sup>49</sup>

This approach, which was shared by the government, has been extensively explored in relation to initiatives connected to Spanish exiles.<sup>50</sup> However, this approach also drew on initiatives started by Latin American émigrés at that time.

One of these initiatives was the Casa de la América Latina, which came out of the Unión Revolucionaria Latinoamericana (URLA). This group was founded in 1937 and eventually included émigrés from most of the continent, including representatives from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panamá, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, Uruguay and Venezuela.<sup>51</sup> Its main leaders were the communist militants Miguel Otero Silva and Gustavo Machado (from Venezuela), Luciano Castillo (from Peru), and Américo Dias Leite (from Brazil). The purpose was to establish an intellectual cooperative entity that would facilitate academic relations between the different agencies of the receiving country and the newly arrived émigrés.

The case of Américo Dias Leite of Brazil provides a good example.<sup>52</sup> Dias Leite completed his initial studies in Brazil, devoting

48. Gaudencio Peraza, "La reforma escolar en México," in *Hacia una educación al servicio del pueblo*, Partido Comunista de México (Mexico: Ediciones Sociales Internacionales, 1938): 21.

49. Peraza, "La reforma escolar en México", 34.

50. See, for example, Francisco de Luis Martín, "El exilio de la Federación Española de Trabajadores de la Enseñanza en México (1939–1949)," *Tzintzun. Revista de estudios históricos*, no. 63 (January-June 2016): 207–241; Sandra García de Fez, "Una escuela desconocida del exilio: La polémica en torno al Instituto Hispano Mexicano Ruiz de Alarcón," *Educació i Història: Revista d'Història de l'Educació*, no. 17 (January-June, 2011): 213–235. This last case is compelling because it centers on the possibility that the new institution could replace the university and, according to the author, that was one of the reasons for its failure.

51. The URLA headquarters were located at Bucareli 80, letter o.

52. For a alternative view, see, for example, Carmen Becerra Suárez, "Cartografía sociopolítica de Venezuela: las novelas de Miguel Otero Silva," *Letras de Hoje*, vol. 52,

himself to industrial chemistry. He was a very close colleague of Luis Carlos Prestes, a leader of communism in Brazil. After studying in Europe and visiting the URSS, he then migrated to Montevideo due to anticommunist prosecution. He then migrated to Mexico, with his arrival in 1937 taking place thanks to the support of ambassador Enrique González Martínez (the poet).<sup>53</sup>

The example of Dias Leite is typical, with cross-border connections, constant traveling, diplomatic contacts, and relations with intellectualism as common threads among all these militants. The networks and education that all of them brought with them frequently pushed them to deem these types of academic initiatives positive. In addition, a further detail of Dias Leite's case is crucial: on his migratory form he was allowed entrance as a political exile, "being prohibited from employing himself as a working element of this Republic."<sup>54</sup> Given this restriction, militants could occupy themselves giving conferences and organizing study groups, as well as doing other kinds of activism. Teaching a class, writing texts for some magazine or journal, even submitting books to a publishing house, were activities that could be tolerated by migratory authorities, inasmuch that they were not a full-time job.

The URLA project was also involved in the creation of the Instituto de Investigaciones Latino Americanas, with its corresponding library and journal. Significantly, the journal was distributed throughout the whole continent. The first of its objectives was "[s]cientific research and dissemination of cultural, social, historical,

no. 4 (October-December, 2017): 414–421; Lino Morán Beltrán, Lorena Velásquez and Vileana Meleán, "Gustavo Machado y los orígenes del marxismo en Venezuela," *Revista de Filosofía*, vol. 23, no. 49 (January 2005): 28–46.

53. "Ficha migratoria de Dias Leite, Américo" (1938) in AGN, FDM: brasileños, box 1, exp. 55. This militant was close to the mother and sister of Prestes, Leocádia, and Lígia were both living in Mexico to avoid the repression of Getulio Vargas. For information about this experience see Luiz Carlos Prestes, *Años tormentosos: Luiz Carlos Prestes. Correspondência da prisão*, Anita Leocadia Prestes and Lygia Prestes, ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Público do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, 2000).

54. "Ficha migratoria de Dias Leite, Américo" (1938) in AGN, FDM: brasileños, box 1, exp. 55, f. 1. This was a common situation in Mexico's policy of exiled reception. In Felipe Cossio del Pomar's case he was granted a permit to direct an artistic center in San Miguel de Allende. In other words, he did not report any remunerated job. "Ficha migratoria de Cossio del Pomar, Felipe" (1937), in AGN, FDM: peruanos, box 1, exp. 67. See Sebastián Rivera Mir, "El otro exilio chileno en México y Guatemala, 1948–1951. Militancia transnacional en los orígenes de la guerra fría," *Historia*, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, no. 50, vol. 1 (2017): 209–240.

economic and politic problems of Latin American countries.”<sup>55</sup> To meet its guidelines, it not only asked the government and the Confederación de Trabajadores de México for support, but it also promoted the need to closely connect with Mexican society. A council formed of renowned intellectuals and local politicians was in charge of acquiring the necessary resources for both the Casa de la América Latina and for the proposed institute.

These efforts began to lose their impact for two reasons: the émigrés and leaders of the URLA changed with the political events in their countries of origin; and the Mexican authorities showed a lack of interest because they were concerned with strengthening other types of initiatives.<sup>56</sup> The cultural and academic activities associated with the URLA lasted until the end of the Cárdenas administration and were echoed in other proposals, such as the Unión Democrática Centroamericana, which grouped exiles from that particular region.

In this discussion, I have emphasized Latin American fraternity. However, these émigrés were concerned with distinguishing themselves from the networks and proposals of the émigrés linked to the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA).<sup>57</sup> This group also gathered a wide range of Latin American émigrés, and developed an almost identical effort to build academic connections.<sup>58</sup> But their strategy certainly did not stop at building specialized institutions in this sector, but rather they chose to insert their militants into Mexican educational spaces. It was therefore possible to find them working in various universities, including the university of Guadalajara and the Michoacana, and also those newly inaugurated in Mexico City.

Another initiative related to the institutionalization of educational efforts developed by Latin American scholars surfaced on

55. “Proyecto de la URLA para establecer la Casa de la América Latina,” February 20, 1939, in Fondo Histórico Vicente Lombardo Toledano (FHVLT) – Universidad Obrera, id. 19529, leg. 347, f. 1.

56. For instance, Américo Dias Leite started to work in a governmental agency, changing his migratory condition from asylee and separating himself from URLA activities. For modifications in Mexican diplomacy, see Andreu Espasa, “Confluencia geopolítica entre Cárdenas y Roosevelt: afinidades ideológicas, Guerra Civil Española y expansión fascista en América Latina,” in *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, vol. 35, Issue 2 (Summer 2019): 231–254.

57. For more information on these confrontations, see, for example, “Memorándum de la URLA sobre el Primer Congreso Juvenil Americano convocado por la sección juvenil del PRM,” November 26, 1938, in FHVLT – Universidad Obrera, id. 19091, leg. 334.

58. Melgar Bao, *Redes e imaginario del exilio en México y América Latina: 1934–1940*.

September 6, 1937, in the form of the Centro de Estudios Pedagógicos e Hispanoamericanos de México. This entity was promoted by a group of diplomats, professors, and intellectuals. The group included: Gilberto Bosques, Alfonso Reyes, Martín Luis Guzmán, Silvio Zavala; Salomón de la Selva (Nicaragua); Alfredo Saco (Peru); and Felipe Cossio del Pomar.<sup>59</sup> Their declaration of principles stated:

The Center of Higher Studies has the purpose of assembling in its bosom those who study History and the American continent's problems, as well preparing university teachers to teach Hispanic American History, United States History, Hispanic American Literature, and North American Literature in institutions in the country and abroad.<sup>60</sup>

The political goals of this Mexican institution sought to transform it into a space for training professionals committed to social changes. It had the potential to extend university degrees and impart college-level courses. Among the programs proposed for its first run were English, French, Literature, History of Hispanic America, Sociology, History of the Mexican Revolution, History of the United States, Political Economics, and Archeology. Its functioning structure was similar to that of the Escuela Karl Marx of the Universidad Obrera and the UNAM's school for foreigners: three cycles per year, the first of which would be from February to June 1938. Given that prospective students could access scholarships, they were expecting to receive students from the popular classes.<sup>61</sup> The program not only had the support of the Secretaría de Educación Pública, which committed to providing resources, but it also had the support of Miguel Alemán, the governor of Veracruz; Gildardo Magaña, the governor of Michoacán; and Adolfo Cienfuegos y Camus, a Mexican diplomat and professor of Pedagogical Sociology.

These institutionalization processes of alternative educative spaces promoted by the Latin American leftist movement in Mexico require further analysis. For now, in this article, I bring them to the

59. See Sebastián Rivera Mir, "El intercambio académico entre México y América Latina durante el cardenismo. Problemas, debates y actores," *Revista Mexicana de Historia de la Educación*, vol. 6, no. 11, (June 2018): 79–103.

60. "Subsidio a nuevo centro de estudios," *El Nacional*, January 22th, 1938, 3. The similarities with the Colegio Libre de Estudios Superiores founded by Aníbal Ponce in Buenos Aires were many. See Nicolás Arata and Pablo Gentili, "Aníbal Ponce, o las vetas del pensamiento pedagógico marxista en Argentina," (Introduction) in *Educación y lucha de clases*, Aníbal Ponce (Buenos Aires: UNIPE. Editorial Universitaria, 2015).

61. "Subsidio a nuevo centro de estudios," *El Nacional*, January 22, 1938, 3.

foreground and demonstrate that the arrival of leftist émigrés in post-revolutionary classrooms was not a random event. Using their intellectual and educational expertise, they contributed to the educational projects of the Cárdenas era and to the consolidation of an education system.

#### 4. Pedagogical Proposals

Through the writings of specific professors and intellectuals, it is possible to get a sense of key elements of the pedagogical frameworks and ideals. Returning to Venezuelan exile Luis Padrino, his publication provides key details:

The teacher no longer imposes, but rather gives suggestions; the student is not a passive entity, but rather the one who, guided by these suggestions, arrives at a result [...] It is the student who, with full use of their spontaneity, puts their own activity into play.<sup>62</sup>

Padrino wrote a detailed description of the main pedagogical advances of the socialist school, particularly in rural spaces. In order to showcase specific education experiences, visits to certain institutions were frequent (applying what has been called hospitality techniques).<sup>63</sup> One of these institutions was the Escuela Francisco I. Madero, which applied a radical model based on cooperativism and which became the subject of analysis for various émigrés. For example, Julio Antonio Mella from Cuba wrote about this school at the end of the 1920s, noting that, “In one of the most remote neighborhoods of the federal capital, in the midst of a misery and vice hell, one apostle, a true apostle, began an anonymous labor several years ago, as all great works are in their beginnings.”<sup>64</sup>

After Mella, visits by other pedagogues took place. In one instance, Salvador de la Plaza and Eduardo Machado, both from Venezuela, visited the classrooms and found not only a very dynamic professor, but also students who supported the active

62. Luis Padrino, *Ayotzinapa, ayer y hoy. Escuelas normales rurales mexicanas* (Venezuela: Editorial Latorre, 1938): 102. Quoted in *Desde las trincheras de AYOTZINAPA: la defensa por la educación y la vida de los hijos del pueblo. XXI Informe de actividades - junio 2014/junio 2015* (Guerrero: Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña. Tlachinollan, 2015): 57.

63. See Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Western Intellectuals in Search of the Good Society* (New Brunswick y London: Transaction Publishers, 2009). This was an important mechanism of the public diplomacy held by Mexican government. See Dümmer, “Véran ustedes las chozas más humildes.”

64. Julio Antonio Mella, “La Escuela Francisco I. Madero”, in *Mella. Textos Escogidos*, V. I (Havana: Ediciones La Memoria, 2017): 97.

school.<sup>65</sup> These pedagogues therefore started to describe which mechanisms were useful for application both in post-revolutionary Mexico, and also in other Latin American countries.

With the emergence of socialist education, schools in rural Mexico were a privileged place for foreigners to see the Cardenist achievements on the ground. Thus, both concepts—socialist education and rural schools—became synonymous, even in the most complex views of the Mexican educational sector that were developed by Latin American militants. An important document of these issues appeared in *México en marcha*, by Manuel Eduardo Hübner.<sup>66</sup> Published in Chile by Editorial Ercilla—a very well-connected publishing house—this book is an early analysis of the Cárdenas policies, which, at the time, had not entirely broken away from the influence of Calles. The book provides an in-depth presentation of the main topics of educational development. In the almost 60 pages devoted to this problem, the author analyses not only the sexennial plan and government discourse, but also the daily practices of teachers, students, and others. In addition to rejecting the idea of a mnemonic education, the book also conveys a vivid description of rural schools:

They are built in many styles: sometimes they look like a hut and sometimes like a small palace. Generally, they are built by the very students or residents of the town—the local natives. Building materials vary according to the area: adobe, sand, many types of rocks, and even leaves or braided lianas.<sup>67</sup>

Although the book was signed by Manuel Eduardo Hübner, some accused him of never having visited Mexico or even alleged that his work had actually been written by Alberto Cienfuegos y Campos, the Mexican ambassador in Chile.<sup>68</sup> There is no evidence that Hübner visited the country before 1937 and, many years later, his biographer

65. See José Ávila Garibay, *La Escuela Francisco I. Madero y la educación en México* (Mexico: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1940). Notably, this school was also visited by Gabriela Mistral and John Dewey, among other educators. Fabio Moraga Valle, “¿Una escuela tolstoiana para la Revolución mexicana? La escuela-granja Francisco I. Madero de la colonia La Bolsa, 1921–1940,” in *Pacarina del Sur* [Online], 8, No. 32 (July–September, 2017).

66. Manuel Eduardo Hübner, *México en marcha* (Santiago: Editorial Zig Zag, 1935).

67. Hübner, *México en Marcha*, 348.

68. See Alberto Rembao, “El concepto de rebeldía,” *El Informador*, March 14, 1937, 5 and 8. The close relationship between the diplomat Cienfuegos y Campos and Hübner explains the arrival of the Chilean national in Mexico. As already noted, Cienfuegos y Campos supported the Centro de Estudios Pedagógicos e Hispanoamericanos de México.

argued that the Chilean professor wrote the book without ever traveling to Mexico:

He is able to write the entire editorial page of a newspaper with different signatures, with varied styles, and while he is talking to someone. [I]nspired by the Mexican Revolution, he wrote his book *México en marcha* without seeing Mexico. He practically wrote it from hearsay.<sup>69</sup>

Hübner's main informant was probably Cienfuegos y Campos and, given its wide distribution in the continent, it is likely that the book was supported by the Mexican government. This example demonstrates the intersection between the interests of different Latin American actors and the Mexican authorities. It is notable that the book's discourse combines a mixture of what Latin American militants were interested in knowing and what the Mexican government was interested in divulging.

After Hübner arrived in Mexico in 1937, his route can be tracked via the debates and questioning that followed his progress throughout the country. The allegations thrown at him ranged from the accusation of being an intermediary of the Communist International to being a pernicious foreign agitator. Despite all of this, he carried out intense activity in the country, visiting all kinds of educational institutions—including elementary, technical and higher education centers. Likewise, he met with professors, union members, and scholars, with the purpose of both listening to their observations and sharing his own experiences of the Chilean pedagogical field. Indeed, his 1937 text frequently compares these two contexts. For example, Hübner argued that the Mexican educational practices had the advantage that schools were located in natural spaces that provided gardens, meadows, fruit orchards, and cereal plantations, among others. The basis of teaching, according to Hübner, was nature itself. For him, the teacher was nothing more than an interpreter, and pedagogy ought to be as simple as reading, writing, counting and drawing.<sup>70</sup>

The flattering view of this educational process was not something particular to this scholar but was rather commonplace in the

69. Julio Barrenechea, *Frutos del país* (Santiago: Editorial Andrés Bello, 1984): 183.

70. See "Hübner entrega el mensaje de la Unión de Profesores de Chile al profesorado mexicano," *El Nacional*, November 12, 1937, 10 and 12. His speech coincided with diplomatic uses of the poverty by the Mexican government. He describes a redeemable and hygienic poverty, and discusses the efforts of the government for improving living conditions of poor Mexican inhabitants (see, Dümmer Scheel for an analysis).

publications of the leftist militants who arrived in Mexico—whether or not they were on the government’s payroll.<sup>71</sup> What varies, however, is the depth of the experience of those involved. Whereas Hübner traveled the country, Padrino, for example, settled at the teacher training college of Ayotzinapa and was able to address the processes from another perspective. That is why, in *Ayotzinapa, ayer y hoy. Escuelas normales rurales mexicanas*, he emphasizes the elements associated with the organization of the very students in the boarding school:

The training of Teachers provides the organization of the Government Boarding School by the same students, the organization of student Councils and Assemblies, and the promotion of discipline controls by themselves (. . .) That is the ideal of this autonomous government: ‘self-government,’ independence of thought, speech and action: the development of a free personality and consciousness of their functions before their social group.<sup>72</sup>

Even though it is a closer perspective, this description still praises the processes developed in this sector.<sup>73</sup>

In general, the participation of émigrés and visitors did not translate to an adherence to a particular pedagogic line. On the contrary, looking at Hübner’s plans—or even analyzing relatively uniform texts like Aníbal Ponce’s *Educación y lucha de clases*—there is an eclectic application of different models. This was precisely one of the criticisms of the educational policy of Cárdenas era that appeared in some dissident leftist circles. However, the features of anti-fanaticism and anticlericalism with a strong social component remained and appeared forcefully at the start of the next decade.

In this context, while the classrooms of rural or primary schools were seen with unconditional optimism, the university started to develop a significant lack of definition for some. For instance, Hübner, who was forthcoming in his praise for basic educational

71. In the case of texts paid for by the State, Lázaro Cárdenas himself intervened directly on several occasions, establishing what should be said; how it should be done; and even what kind of typography should be used. See “Carta de Lázaro Cárdenas a Luciano Kubli,” February 27, 1935, in AGN, Fondo presidente Lázaro Cárdenas, box 1301, exp. 704.1/73, without number.

72. Padrino, *Ayotzinapa, ayer y hoy. Escuelas normales rurales mexicanas*, 132–133.

73. From a historiographical perspective, it is suitable to contrast these views with recent works on the matter. See Alicia Civera, *La escuela como opción de vida. La formación de maestros normalistas rurales en México, 1921–1945* (Zinacantepec: El Colegio Mexiquense, 2008). See also Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution. Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930–1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997).

institutions, presented a different view when writing about universities. He thought that, in the short or long term, the only role left for UNAM would be that of a large research center or a laboratory for high culture. The conflict between the private and catholic Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara (UAG) and the public and secular Universidad de Guadalajara—a conflict that was on-going when Hübner visited the area—covered all sorts of social problems. As Hübner observed, “While one [institution] makes an effort to improve social culture and train professionals with social notions of science, the other [...] is a hotbed of privileged students.”<sup>74</sup> With these words, Hübner also seemed to be asking for the creation of universities that projected the ideas of the revolution and the continental leftist movement, given that the current system was very far from achieving that function. His entreaty clearly matched perfectly with the plans of the Cardenist government for this sector.

These themes were replicated by several émigrés, who, even though they had found a place to work or study in these institutions, did not cease their criticism. In fact, Julio Antonio Mella’s experience several years earlier in the classrooms of the Universidad Nacional had pushed him to stop considering students as revolutionary actors. However, even if these observations affected the Universidad Nacional or the UAG, they did not implicate all universities. The Universidad Socialista de Michoacán, for example, was frequently mentioned as part of the consolidation of these processes. In one instance Óscar Creydt (from Paraguay), in a text discussing Mexico’s education system, emphasized the fact that, in the Universidad Socialista de Michoacán, the ideals presented by reformist students were actually realized. He himself had participated in this process and was therefore recognized as an authoritative voice when analyzing this situation.<sup>75</sup> Creydt referred to socialist education as a tool in debates about the meaning of the Latin American university reform; reforms that had taken place at the heart of the continental leftist movements practically since the start in 1918.<sup>76</sup>

74. “Manuel Eduardo Hübner cuenta sus impresiones de una gira al interior,” *El Nacional*, January 1st, 1938, 5.

75. Some of Creydt’s writings during his years as a reformist student leader are collected in Gabriel Del Mazo (comp.), *La reforma universitaria. Propagación americana*, V. II (Lima: Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 1968).

76. For details of distinct processes concerning the different facets of leftists movements, see Horacio Tarcus, “Revistas, intelectuales y formaciones culturales izquierdistas en la Argentina de los veinte,” *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. LXX, no. 208–209 (July–December 2004): 749–772.

Creydt also recognized that Mexico had enabled him to clarify many of his observations. In fact, an important element in increasing the cohesion of the émigrés was the pedagogical travels they undertook across Mexican territory. However, it is important to consider Mexico as one of the many locations that contributed to the constitution of educational thought by continental leftist movements.

Perhaps one of the most studied cases is that of Aníbal Ponce, whose experience in Mexico seems to have pushed him to firmly embrace a kind of Marxism, which regarded formal education as a tool in the hands of the bourgeois class.<sup>77</sup> Recent researchers have introduced some nuance into Ponce's initial observations, which sought to explain why a text, such as *Educación y lucha de clases*, written during the inertia of the third communist period,<sup>78</sup> became a publication success in Mexico, even though the country was engaged in a very different context from that discussed in the book.<sup>79</sup> Ponce reiterated the idea that no fundamental pedagogical reform can be fruitful prior to the triumph of the revolutionary class.<sup>80</sup> In Mexico, Ponce spent time in Mexico City and Morelia. He taught "Psychology of Adolescence" and "Marxist State Theory" at UNAM; "Ethics" at the Escuela Normal de Maestros; and "Philosophical Bases of Socialism" at the Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Morelia. Ponce focused his observations even more on the concrete social relations established by faculty and students. He considered his historical turn to be a way of qualifying the development of political processes, and a path to understanding that the spaces of resistance make it impossible for an educational program to match exactly the interests of those in power.<sup>81</sup>

77. In contrast, socialists and marxists in Mexico considered formal education to be a tool in proletarian hands, at least during the Cárdenas government.

78. According to the guidelines of the Communist International from the late 1920s, during an economic crisis, a third period of capitalist development started, which was marked by the final debacle of this system. Therefore, the proletariat needed to be strengthened; the links to bourgeois sectors needed to be severed; and the final assault needed to be prepared. For many, this meant sectarianism, anti-intellectualism and the refusal to build broad coalitions. This policy ended in 1934 with a turn towards building popular coalitions. See Rivera Mir, *Militantes de la izquierda latinoamericana en México*.

79. Ricardo Pasolini, "Entre antifascismo y comunismo: Aníbal Ponce como ícono de una generación intelectual," *Iberoamericana*, vol. XIII, no. 52 (2013): 83–97.

80. Ponce, *Educación y lucha de clases* (Mexico: Editorial América, 1938).

81. Arata and Gentili, "Aníbal Ponce, o las vetas del pensamiento pedagógico marxista en Argentina," 13–40.

Still, Ponce's experience in Mexican classrooms seems to have left him with some dissatisfaction, since, from his perspective, the students did not commit to the changes promoted by the authorities. This explains the publication of some texts about this topic in several university journals. In these he recalls how Marx and Lenin undertook their studies, highlighting their perseverance and commitment to the surrounding world,<sup>82</sup> something that, according to Ponce, the students at Mexican universities did not seem to understand, given the ease with which they could access education. This was demonstrated through a disinterest in graduating and a lack of attending seminars.<sup>83</sup> According to Ponce, a commitment to the changes was crucial for undertaking any educative reform.

A case that converges with that of Ponce is that of Juan Marinello (from Cuba), who met Ponce on more than one occasion. Researchers who have studied Marinello's proposals have given an account of the radicalization of his pedagogical thinking in those years. He shifted from Positivism and Irrationalism to Marxism precisely in the 1930s, the years marked by his two periods of exile in Mexico.<sup>84</sup> Writing of Marinello, Mexican scholar Niurka Palmarola-Gómez has noted that: "In this country, he became acquainted with the scope of the educational reform promoted by the Mexican Revolution, and he internalized his labor as a teacher by working with Mexican and North American students."<sup>85</sup> Ultimately, according to Palmarola-Gómez, at the end of the decade, Marinello had a clear, classist, and historical conception of education.<sup>86</sup> Evidence of Marinello's experience in Mexican classrooms can also be gleaned from letters he wrote to his wife, in which he described how his time

82. Aníbal Ponce, "Cómo trabajaba Carlos Marx," *Universidad Socialista*, no. 3 (March 1938). He also published "Una aventura de Platón," in the newspaper *Prisma*, no. 1 (March 1938); "Lenin, escolar," *Universidad Socialista*, no. 4 (April 1938); and "El doctor Samaniego perdió su libro," *CE: órgano del Consejo Estudiantil Nicolaita*, no. 1 (May 1938).

83. In the case of the course "Psychology of Adolescence" that he taught at the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la UNAM, none of the students failed the course during the two semesters in which he held his position. See "Listas de calificaciones," in Archivo Histórico de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Serie Actas. Alumnos y listas de calificación, box 59, exp. 934.

84. From March to September 1933, and from November 1936 to June 1937.

85. Niurka Palmarola-Gómez, "El pensamiento pedagógico de Juan Marinello Vidaurreta en la República Neocolonial," *VARONA, Revista Científico-Metodológica*, no. 55 (July-December 2012): 5.

86. Palmarola-Gómez, "El pensamiento pedagógico de Juan Marinello Vidaurreta en la República Neocolonial," 11.

was centered around daily subsistence rather than in the search for pedagogical alternatives.<sup>87</sup> He began teaching in a worker's secondary school in Tacubaya, and later taught "Hispanic-American Literature" at UNAM and "Art History" at the Escuela Normal de Maestros. This allowed him to have a broad outlook on Mexican educational processes and deepen his idea that any pedagogical change had to entail a radical political modification in society (bearing in mind that this was before the conception of active learning schools or Montessori-type experiments).<sup>88</sup> Indeed, returning to the words of Ponce, it was about centering the discussion within in the classroom itself on the notion of class struggle.<sup>89</sup>

Marinello expands this view of class struggle out towards the main elements in Latin American educational discussions. In an interview with Honduran writer Rafael Heliodoro Valle, he highlighted the possibilities that the Mexican experience enabled the introduction of similar processes in other places. For Marinello, the autonomy of universities and academic freedom occupied a very important position in this discussion. He stated that it was important to consider the political context in which these ideas and proposals were developed before taking them up as the guiding principles of the work of universities. He recalled a speech he gave in Guadalajara in 1936 at the Congreso de Estudiantes Socialistas. In it, he warned participants that autonomy was not the same in different countries. For example, in Cuba processes of autonomy sought to disentangle the university from the dictatorship, whereas in Mexico it was used by the reactionary sector to oppose the progressive processes promoted by the Cárdenas administration.<sup>90</sup>

It is clear that the arguments and proposals of émigré academics such as Ponce, Marinello and others were deliberate and

87. See Ana Suárez Díaz, *Cada tiempo trae una faena... Selección de correspondencia de Juan Marinello Vidaurreta* (Havana: Centro de Investigaciones y de Desarrollo de la Cultura Cubana Juan Marinello, 2004). In another example of an academic being required to change their career focus, Ofelia Domínguez Navarro, another important Cuban academic residing in Mexico, had to teach Physics and Mathematics in a middle school even though her specialty was Law.

88. Palmarola-Gómez, "El pensamiento pedagógico de Juan Marinello Vidaurreta en la República Neocolonial," 4–11.

89. Ponce, *Educación y lucha de clases*, 189–206.

90. Rafael Heliodoro Valle, "Diálogo con Juan Marinello," *Universidad*, no. 8, September 1936, 24–29. Publishing these observations in the UNAM journal was permitted at this time and relations between the university authorities and the executive branch had begun to soften.

purposeful.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, an effort was made to generate collective processes that transformed visitors and others through dialogue, observation, and practice. Yet, as is to be expected in any changing context, such proposals and pedagogical ideologies encompassed complexities and tensions.

### Conclusions

In 1941, Cuban writer Graciela Garbalosa published a book subtitled *Los estudiantes revolucionarios*.<sup>92</sup> She described experiences of professors and students hailing from different Latin American countries, all of who had joined different organizations in Mexico with the goal of overthrowing their dictatorial governments.<sup>93</sup> Two sojourns in Mexico enabled Garbalosa to develop her observations about these academic and political spaces. The first stay occurred during the second half of the 1920s, and the second took place during the last years of the Cárdenas administration.<sup>94</sup> As a palimpsest, both experiences were read through an optic that tended to blur paths, people, and arguments.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, Garbalosa acknowledged that her writing and pages, both in form and content, were the result of collective processes:

91. See, for instance, the brief proposal by Cuban national Jorge A. Vivó, *El método conexivo-dialéctico en la investigación de la antropogeografía* (Mexico: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1939).

92. There are two editions of this book: the first is self-published with title *Los estudiantes revolucionarios*; the second is an identical text under the title of *Carmencho o los estudiantes revolucionarios*, published by Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, the official publisher of the Mexican government. See Catharina Vallejo, "La gozadora del dolor y otras novelas de Graziella Garbalosa: erotismo, naturalismo y vanguardismo en la narrativa femenina cubana de los años veinte," *Revista Iberoamericana*, Vol. LXXV, No. 226 (January-March 2009): 153–166; (note that Garbalosa used the name Graciela and also Graziella).

93. Garbalosa refers to Chileans, Venezuelans, Cubans, and Central Americans; see Garbalosa, *Los estudiantes revolucionarios*, 11.

94. Her first stay in Mexico was in the 1920s, exiled by the regime of Gerardo Machado because she published a satirical chronicle about the Cuban government. During her exile, she published *Una mujer que sabe mirar* (1927) and she wrote *Más arriba está el sol* (1931). Both books are journalistic works about the Cuban dictatorship. The second stay was at the end of the Cárdenas government.

95. For instance, the main character in *Los estudiantes revolucionarios*, named Pedro Pablo, was based on Julio Antonio Mella, a Cuban student killed in México in 1929. Interestingly, the name Pedro Pablo also refers to another Cuban student killed in Mexico: Pedro Pablo Torrado who was murdered in 1936. This kind of literary element is very common in the book.

Over the course of eight years, the book that I am writing has passed in front of hundreds of eyes of students who leafed through and read the manuscript. It is now open to the public so that its copies may run as a river through all of America.<sup>96</sup>

As Garbalosa elegantly proposed, pedagogical experiences were articulated in two ways. Firstly, they were articulated horizontally among militants, professors, academics, and students who shared the same time and spaces. Secondly, they also related directly to the past, recognizing in past experiences an absolute precedent for the construction of pedagogical and political projects.<sup>97</sup> This double articulation is a feature that émigrés tended to reinforce, since it largely conditioned their successful incorporation into the hosting context of Mexico. In this article, the discussion has demonstrated how the transmission of these experiences operated via different mechanisms, from the orality of personal relationships to the institutionalization of collective academic spaces. Writings of these émigrés appeared constantly in newspapers and other printed sources, highlighting the importance of these forms of dissemination as a method for generating these connections.

These complicated pedagogical contexts raise many questions which center around the extent to which local educational processes were affected by this wave of émigrés. Responses vary depending on the area and the discipline. In the case of Anthropology or Pedagogy, for example, the impact seems to be significant. In other spheres, the traces are less noticeable. Nevertheless, one aspect is salient: the presence of these Latin American individuals, both professors and students, instilled in the Mexican authorities an awareness that their own national political, cultural, and educational projects required involvement in continental processes.

96. Garbalosa, *Los estudiantes revolucionarios*, 11–12. Given the importance of the Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, she had every reason to hope that “copies may run as a river through all of America.” It seems she wrote part of the manuscript during her first stay in Mexico, and then, during the next ten years, many people read it. She was part of cultural mainstream in Cuba and in Mexico and had links with the most relevant intellectuals in both countries.

97. Garbalosa, *Los estudiantes revolucionarios*, 9–12.

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