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The Mexican Link in Spanish Communism. Michael Borodin's Mission to the Western Hemisphere 1919-1920 and the Creation of the Communist Party of Spain.

Abstract: En seguida de una primera contribución de carácter más general (ver: Lazar and Victor Kheifetz: Michel Borodin. The First Comintern-emissary to Latin America. In: The International Newsletter of Historical Studies on Comintern, Communism and Stalinism II (1994/95), no 5/6, p. 145-149; III (1996), p. 184-188), el texto presente retraza, sobre la base de nuevos documentos de los archivos de Moscú, algunos aspectos concretos de la actividad del emisario Michail Markovich Borodin (de nombre original Gruzenberg) a cargo de la Internacional Comunista y del gobierno de la Unión Soviética. Las nuevas aportaciones se refieren particularmente a su actividad en España en 1919 y 1920. Así, la creación del movimiento comunista en España se revela como resultante de una historia cruzada con el nacimiento del movimiento comunista en México, debido en primer lugar a las múltiples actividades de Borodin con la ayuda del comunista estadounidense Richard Francis Phillips ("Manuel Ramírez").

The general outline of the history of mutual relations between Moscow and the Spanish working-class movement is well known, and it does not differ essentially from the scheme applied to the majority of European countries (formation of a left wing within the Socialist party, split of the Socialist party, creation of a Communist party, its subsequent joining the Comintern). But the devil, as we know, is in the details. And the details are as follows: Moscow's contacts with the Spanish working-class movement had begun earlier than assumed by a number of publications; they were of a casual, semi-adventurous character. Moreover, these contacts were not triggered by Moscow, but were initiated in the Western Hemisphere – during the mission carried out by Soviet diplomat and emissary of the 3rd International, Michael Borodin.¹

His trip was connected to a wide range of tasks: an attempt to achieve the signing of a trade and economic agreement between Soviet Russia and Mexico, a cash transport for Ludwig Martens' mission in the USA, the formation of communist parties and groups in Latin America and the coordination of their activities. This first transatlantic trip by an emissary of the Comintern and the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of Soviet Russia was preceded by serious preparations. On April 17th, 1919, Vladimir Lenin signed papers appointing Borodin as the consul general of the RSFSR at the government of the Mexican Republic. He was entrusted to enter negotiations "for the purpose of an establishment of relations between the Governments of both Republics concerning the maintenance of friendship between them, the establishment of trade relations...", to conclude and sign a preliminary trading agreement on behalf of the RSFSR. On March 24, Lenin met Borodin and afterwards sent a note to the People's Commissar for Foreign Trade, Leonid Krasin, requesting a meeting with the future

¹ Borodin's real name was Gruzenberg, but he became famous in the international communist movement under the alias Borodin, which became his second name. For details, see: Dan N. Jacobs: Borodin. Stalin's Man in China, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1981; Lydia Holubnuchy: Michael Borodin and the Chinese Revolution. 1923-1925, Ann Arbor, Columbia University Press, 1981; Lazar JEIFETS, Víctor JEIFETS, Peter Huber: La Internacional Comunista y América Latina. 1919-1943. Diccionario Biográfico, Ginebra-Moscú, Instituto de Latinoamerica, Institut pour l'histoire du communisme, 2004, pp. 59-61; Siegfried Bahne (ed.): Origines et débuts des Partis Communistes des pays latins 1919-1923. Archives de Jules Humber-Droz I, Dordrecht, Reidel, 1970, pp. XXVIff.

consul general.² During the same month, the leadership of the Comintern and the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs established contact with the Mexican honorary consulate in Moscow in order to receive the documents for Borodin's trip to the Western Hemisphere.³

The joint plan of the Comintern and the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs was carried out neglecting "skepticism from the Bureau of the [Third] International". It was an attempt to exploit American-Mexican contradictions and to use the existence of non-broken (but only suspended) official relations between Mexico and the Bolshevik government.⁴ "Studying local conditions" was actually the main task of the Soviet emissary even if he could become the ambassador in Mexico, and that was just Aesopian language: studying of conditions meant financing and coordination of the Communist movement in Latin America, with Mexico as its centre.

Even though the mission appeared to be well organized and prepared as measured by the conditions of 1919, it initially suffered obvious defects. Emissaries of the 3rd International who were sent to European countries in order to establish contacts with leaders of the socialist parties' left fractions were quite often familiar with them from the Zimmerwald movement and were well informed of the complicated interrelations between various currents of the working-class movement, as well as of the political situation in the countries of their destination. Borodin, however, was sent to Latin America with knowledge not exceeding that of any US citizen interested in political affairs (and the Moscow emissary had lived in the USA for eleven years). The Bolsheviks had no contacts in Mexico and there had never been any indirect communication through the American Socialist Party. Borodin didn't speak Spanish and, consequently, could not work on his own.

Nevertheless, Borodin's energy and his organizing experience allowed him to reach the impossible. Having arrived in Mexico and having found out the presence of English-speaking socialists of American origin, namely Charles Phillips and Irwin Granich,⁵ he established, with their help, contacts with one of the small local Socialist Party's leaders – the Indian Manabendra Nath Roy. Borodin effectively convinced his interlocutors and quickly enough achieved the goal to transform the Mexican Socialist party into a Communist one and to affiliate with the 3rd International (on November, 24th, 1919). The *Partido Comunista Mexicano* was not numerous (only a dozen people), and only in 1920 the first party cells outside of Mexico City were created – in Veracruz, Orizaba, Tampico, Guanajuato, Zacatecas and Sonora – which were practically isolated and had no relations between each other. However, Borodin was satisfied with the fact of a prompt birth of the Communist Party.

Certainly, the foundation of the PCM was not an exclusive result of the Comintern emissary's efforts. In the early autumn of 1919 a radical wing within the Mexican left movement had

² Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (RGASPI), Moscow, fond 2, opis' 1, delo 9324, listy 1-1oborot; Georgij N. Golikov (ed.): V. I. Lenin. Biograficheskaia khronika. VII. Mokva, Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1976, p. 16; Sovetsko-meksikanskii otnosheniia. 1917-1980. Sbornik dokumentov, Moskva, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1981, pp. 9-10.

³ State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), Moscow, fond 5881, opis 1, delo 170, listy 6-8, 10-11. According to the Comintern's correspondence with the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, in 1919 Borodin received 50 thousands roubles (in foreign currency) and jewels to the amount of about half a million roubles (RGASPI, 495/18/6, 20; RGASPI, 2/2/220, 1-1ob).

⁴ The ECCI secretary Angelica Balabanova wrote about it in her message to Lenin. For the details of Mexican-Soviet relations, see: Héctor Cárdenas: Las relaciones mexicano-soviéticas. Antecedentes y primeros contactos diplomáticos. 1789-1927, Tlatelolco, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1974, p.40; Héctor Cárdenas: Historia de las relaciones diplomáticas entre México y Rusia, México, 1993, p. 148.

⁵ Later Granich was known in the USA as the writer Michael Gold. See details in Jelfets/Jelfets/Huber, Op. cit., p. 131.

expressed its sympathies for the Bolsheviks. However, these revolutionary groups had rather vague ideas about the proletarian revolution, the events in Soviet Russia and the essence of the Soviet power; the overwhelming majority of the Mexican leftists were strongly influenced by anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism. The revolutionary events in Russia were frequently interpreted according to anarchist and syndicalist beliefs and stereotypes, and the Mexican socialists perceived it as an example of direct action which had been carried out by an active minority under libertarian slogans. Borodin's arrival and his influence on some socialist leaders were the essential factors which accelerated the developments within the left movement of Mexico. The authority of the emissary from Moscow was probably quite significant, as he allowed himself to write a message to the PCM on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Comintern and to speak confidently about the future admission of the party as soon as its delegation would arrive in Moscow and as soon as he (Borodin) would have raised the question before the ECCI.⁶ The main "value" of the new Communist party was Manabendra Nath Roy, as he would be very useful in the Eastern sphere of Comintern activity, considered a priority at the moment. While Borodin was still on the way to the Western Hemisphere, Lev Trotskii wrote on August 5, 1919: "The road to India may prove at the given moment to be more readily passable and shorter for us than the road to Soviet Hungary. The sort of army which at the moment can be of no great significance in the European scales can upset the unstable balance of Asian relationships of colonial dependence, give a direct push to an uprising on the part of the oppressed masses and assure the triumph of such a rising in Asia. [...] [T]he international situation is evidently shaping in such a way that the road to Paris and London lies via the towns of Afghanistan, the Punjab and Bengal."⁷

At the same time Borodin's "Mexican plans" also appeared rather ambitious. He had suggested that the leaders of the PCM should create a Latin American bureau of the 3rd International with the purpose to carry out propaganda all over the continent and to strengthen relations between Communist organizations and groups.⁸ The bureau's Provisional Committee published a Manifesto with an appeal to the workers of Latin America to take part in the Communist Congress which would unite the proletarian forces on the principles of class struggle and would create a permanent Executive Committee of the Latin American bureau of the 3rd International.⁹ The idea of a bureau was also offered to the Mexican President Venustiano Carranza during the informal interview he gave to Borodin, and this fact is quite indicative. Moscow and the Mexican left wing movement strongly believed that the bureau's activities would not spoil relations between the two revolutionary governments; quite the opposite, they were sure that the bureau's anti-imperialist attitude would coincide with the Mexican authorities' anti-American orientation. Actually, the Mexican radical left wingers and their Comintern supervisor tried to find a semblance of semi-official patronage by the government. However, the reaction of the president was also characteristic: he evaded from a direct answer and limited himself to sending warm regards to Lenin. The Mexican authorities perfectly knew that there were numerous foreigners among the leaders of the newly born Communist movement, and that this directly contradicted Article 33 of the Constitution which forbade participation of foreign citizens in Mexican home affairs. They were well informed, but at the same time limited themselves to passive monitoring of

⁶ RGASPI, 495/108/1, 9-10.

⁷ Jan M. Meijer (ed.): *The Trotsky Papers 1917-1922. I: 1917-1919*, London-The Hague-Paris, Mouton & Co., 1964, pp. 623-625.

⁸ Borodin to PCM, n/d. RGASPI, 495/108/1, 6.

⁹ *Manifiesto del Buro Latinoamericano de la III Internacional a los trabajadores de América Latina*. In: *Oposición*, 23-28.8.1979.

Communists' activities as the left wingers actually had not yet entered into some sharp confrontation with the ruling elites, limiting themselves to verbal declarations.

In December 1919 the Soviet emissary left Mexico heading for Europe accompanied by Charles Phillips who went with him as an interpreter under the alias of Jesús Ramírez.¹⁰ Havana became the first stop on their way to Spain, as we know from Borodin's diary which is kept in the Amsterdam Bureau collection of the RGASPI.¹¹ The Soviet emissary was giving a characteristic to "Left-Wing Communism" using Cuba's militants as an example: "... It was therefore that my steamer stopped for some five hours and as they would not let me go onshore I sent my assistant, a comrade from Mexico, to the town to look up the well known leader of the Cuban working class Salinas and get material on the movement and what prospects there were for organization of the workers on the principle of the Third [International]. My Mexican comrade returned in several hours in the state of high glee and extreme happiness. He said that there were not only good prospects for organization but that in a couple of hours a Communist section would actually be organized with Salinas himself at the head and a resolution of affiliation with the Third [International] adopted, dictatorship [of the proletariat] etc. To my question why "section" and not party he answered: Because they do not believe in such things. For them 'Party' is a forbidden word."¹²

The case of the foundation of Cuba's "Communist Section" was quite indicative. As in a curved mirror, it reflected the events which had taken place some weeks earlier within the Mexican left-wing movement. While Borodin needed only several days or weeks in Mexico to bewitch the minds of the Socialist leaders and to convince them to transform their party into a Communist one, Phillips (newly converted into the Communist faith by Borodin) managed to do the same with the Cuban working class militants in several hours only.

Borodin arrived in Spain either in late December of 1919 or in early January of 1920. The assumption that Borodin "helped to organize workers on unsuccessful revolt against general Miguel Primo de Rivera"¹³ is not supported by any proofs, and it is enough to say that Primo de Rivera came to power on September 13, 1923. However, the Soviet emissary was quite preoccupied with the organization of the Spanish left wing movement.

Borodin, as far as one can conclude, had rather poor information on the development of local Socialism and did not have any idea whom he could trust. Neither the strong strike movement which shook Spain in 1916-1917, nor the political crises of 1917 were known to the Comintern agent. In fact, he could have got some fragmentary information only from Mexican socialists, and those, in turn, were informed by Spanish anarcho-syndicalists exiled to Latin America. No need to wonder that Moscow's emissary decided to use methods already well-proven in Mexico: he asked Phillips to look through the Spanish newspapers. Some names were mentioned in a context considered "significant" by Borodin and, consequently, his interpreter established contacts with different people and later presented some of them to his superior. Among these "Spanish contacts" were Professor Fernando de

¹⁰ Manabendra Nath Roy: *Memoirs*, Bombay, Allied Publishers, 1964, p. 341-347, 533-539; M. Gomez: *From Mexico to Moscow*. In: *Survey* (London) (1955), N° 55, p. 40. Some authors mention different personas who supposedly accompanied Borodin – such as Roy (see: Eduardo Comín Colomer: *Historia del Partido Comunista de España. Abril 1920 - febrero 1936*, Madrid, Editorial Nacional, 1967², p. 36) or Manuel Díaz Ramírez (see: Víctor Alba: *El marxismo en España. 1919-1939*, México, Costa-Amic, 1973, p. 12; Branko Lazitch, Milorad M. Drachkovitch: *Lenin and the Comintern. I*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1972, p. 153). The last error was caused, most probably, by two different aliases used by Phillips – "Manuel Gómez" and "Jesús Ramírez".

¹¹ „Notes of M. Borodin about meetings with party representatives“, RGASPI, 497/2/7.

¹² RGASPI, 497/2/7, 92.

¹³ *The New York Times*, September 3, 1953.

los Rios as well as the trade union leaders Daniel Anguiano (a socialist) and Angel Pestaña (an anarchist).¹⁴ The socialist and anarchist forces in the organized trade unions were more or less equal. Both groups were supported by important regions: while the socialists dominated the workers movement of Basque Country, Asturias and Madrid, the anarchists had their “fortresses” in Catalonia. This balance of power might be the main reason for Borodin’s unwillingness to make a decision in favor of one side.

There existed no communist nucleus in Spain at that moment, and Borodin’s goal was to create such a nucleus. He started some negotiations with the militants of the Partido Socialista Obrero de España (PSOE) in Madrid who wished to affiliate with the 3rd International, and promised them to grant “fraternal aid” as soon as the Communist Party has been founded.¹⁵ However, the archive documents show that Borodin did not expect the CP to appear immediately.

On January 4, 1920, the Soviet emissary sent a report on the activities he had carried out to the head of the Amsterdam Bureau of the Comintern. “Things look very bright indeed”, he wrote: “The Mexican Socialist Party, now the Communist Party, has declared for the Third International. In Cuba a Communist Section has been organized. In both these places great enthusiasm is displayed. Also, in Mexico a bureau has been formed for the purpose of calling a Latin American Congress, delegates to come from North, Central and South America and from the West Indies”.¹⁶

In the same report Borodin began to describe the situation in Spain as he saw it: The congress of the “Federation of Socialist Youths, [...] by an overwhelming majority has declared for the Third [International]. As to the Spanish Socialist Labor Party the situation is different. At the congress of the party the Old Guard succeeded [...] in creating a fiction, which, like all fictions is very attractive to children. – We are not going to join the second [International], was the tenor of it. [...] We shall tell the ‘revolutionary elements’ of the Second [International] to follow us to the Third [International], and if they refuse we shall tell them what we think of them and depart for Moscow. Very dramatic, is it not?”¹⁷

The Soviet emissary observed many militants of the Socialist Youth who believed this story, although they had voted for the affiliation with the Comintern. He was quite sure that the underlying motive for such thoughts was “the desire of the Left Wingers to maintain unity of the party at all costs” together with the left wingers’ isolation from international connections: they “have not heard anything from the Bureau of the Third [International]. All they ever received (and that came indirectly) was the Manifesto [of the First Congress of the Comintern], which they published and which gave them some ground to stand on”. Borodin saw the lack of material resources as the left wingers had no press of their own and “no organization of any sort to defend their policy”. The PSOE newspaper was restricting the access for the left opposition to publish their opinions and information. Another newspaper (“Nuestra Palabra”) was, in fact, dedicated exclusively to the defense of Bolshevism, but it was in no way connected with the Socialist party.¹⁸

In such a situation Borodin started to organize a bureau (or a news agency) with the purpose of “keeping in constant touch with the international situation”, and his conviction was that the

¹⁴ Angel Pestaña attended the Second congress of the Comintern in 1920.

¹⁵ Joaquín Maurín: *Sur le communisme en Espagne*. As cited in: Lazitch/Drachkovitch, *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

¹⁶ M. Borodin to S.J. Rutgers, January 4, 1920. RGASPI, 497/2/1, 1.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, I. 1-2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, I. 2.

bureau should have delegates from Spain, Holland, Italy, France, Great Britain and Latin America “so that the mutuality of information may be real”. Meanwhile, Borodin himself took part in the work of this institution without any mandate given by the ECCI, but he hoped “that the comrades in Russia will approve of it” and was sure that such a bureau would be of great benefit for all who would participate in it. He deemed its work necessary since the Bureau of the Third International in Moscow was not in the position to keep in constant touch with many countries.¹⁹ For the moment, the creation of the bureau appeared to Borodin more important and significant than the foundation of a few Communist Parties. Such a structure would be a channel of providing Moscow with information about different countries and, at the same time, it would become (together with the Latin American Bureau of the 3rd International) a connecting chain between the communists of the Western and Eastern Hemispheres and, possibly, the coordination center for the left wingers in various regions.

Thus, the answer given by the Soviet emissary to some left wingers during a conversation in Madrid should not be surprising. Some time after the PSOE congress (which took place in Madrid in November 7 to 14, 1921) was over,²⁰ young Spanish socialists told Borodin that if he had arrived before the congress, the delegates would have voted for the Third International by an overwhelming majority.²¹ But the first words of Borodin must have shocked his Spanish vis-à-vis: “I am glad that I came too late”.²² He explained his attitude in the following simple words: if the congress had affiliated the PSOE with Moscow, the Comintern would receive “another opportunist party” which did not realize “the meaning of the proletarian revolution” and would be full of “undesirable” elements. Borodin did not believe in the probability of the conquest of the party machinery and apparatus by the left wingers, moreover, he was sure that such a victory would pose a real threat to the Comintern as the PSOE machinery was “saturated with reformism, social patriotism, temporizing, and so forth” and all these sicknesses would destroy the World Communist Party as it had happened before with the Second International.²³

Instructions received by Phillips from Borodin fully coincided with this attitude: the crucial point of them was to work among the young socialist militants who accepted cordially the Comintern envoy.²⁴ The goal was clear and precise: to split the Socialist Party and to create a party which would be entirely loyal to the Comintern although less numerous than the PSOE. The result was finally achieved, and after the left wing splitted from the Socialist Party in 1921, the *Partido Comunista de España* (PCE) was founded, also supported by some anarcho-syndicalist groups.²⁵ The conversations of Spanish militants with Borodin and Phillips turned out to be fruitful. The young Mexican-American communists followed the general outline already used in Mexico: the alliance with young and vigorous supporters of the 3rd International and the formation of a revolutionary left wing nucleus which would join the Comintern without applying for a special status.

¹⁹ Ibid., I. 3.

²⁰ Congreso Extraordinario del PSOE, 1921. Nacimiento del Partido Comunista Español, Bilbao, Zero, 1974, p. 33; The document of fusion of the Partido Comunista Español and the Partido Comunista Obrero de España, signed by in the name of the Executive Committee of the 3rd International, Antonio Grazia Dei, has been published in Bahne, Op. cit., pp. 92-97.

²¹ RGASPI, 497/2/7, 59.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Gomez, Op. cit., p. 41.

²⁵ G.V.: Kompartiiia Ispanii. In: D. Petrovskii (ed.): Partii Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala. Spravochnik propagandista, Moskva-Leningrad, Gosizdat, 1928, p. 65.

The foundation process of the Spanish Communist Party had started before 1921. As Phillips wrote several decades later in his memoirs, at Borodin's insistence, "the group undertook to break in time to be represented at the approaching Second Congress in Moscow".²⁶ The "Provisional Committee for the Third International" was created with the participation of some PSOE militants, Borodin and "Ramírez", and the new structure started negotiations with the left wingers aiming to affiliate the party or a fraction with Moscow. The main basis for such an activity was the Socialist Youth Federation which had declared its immediate and unconditional alignment with the Comintern.

The Spanish adherents of the 3rd International faced a dilemma – either to develop the left wing within the PSOE and later conquer the leadership and to convert the party into a communist one, or to split it with the aim of creating a Communist organization.²⁷ "Ramírez", who was left by Borodin in Madrid as his plenipotentiary representative, rather opted for the first way. But, as the Comintern adepts met with the reluctance of the main part of the socialists to become communists, they spitted the PSOE and founded the Communist Party of Spain on the basis of the Socialist Youth Federation in April 15, 1920, which later joined the Comintern. Doubtlessly this did not happen due to the status of Borodin as Comintern representative (as we know, the alias "Borodin" was used for the first time in Spain), but thanks to the personality of this Communist emissary, his knowledge, vast energy and capacity to convince different people. He really managed to make an impression on the Spaniards so greedy for emotions.

In the second half of January, 1920, Borodin left Spain for the Dutch capital where the Amsterdam bureau of the Comintern had been established by Sebald Justinus Rutgers. The bureau was preparing an international conference, had developed propaganda in favour of Bolsheviks and Soviet Russia, and was looking for adherents of the 3rd International in different countries. The Spanish issues were discussed several times in conversations between Borodin and the Bureau members such as Rutgers, Henriette Roland Holst, David Wynkoop and others. The Comintern emissary insisted on the necessity to cooperate with the Partido Comunista Mexicano and the left wing of the PSOE in order "to maintain relations with Spain and through Spain with Mexico and the Pan American Bureau [the reference is made to the Latin American Bureau of the 3rd International] for the purpose of distributing news and information and forming a connecting link between Russia and these countries." Furthermore, "[t]hey are to receive our Bulletin²⁸ and the news items from our Press-bureau and to give in exchange new pertaining to their countries[,] [...] to support and maintain the paper *El Soviet*²⁹ and also it would be desirable to start a communist weekly in Spain."³⁰ However, given the dissolution of the Amsterdam bureau by the Comintern leadership by spring of 1920, the Spanish question was "suspended" and transferred to Moscow in order to achieve a decision.

However, it was the 3rd International that decided to bring the rapidly developing Spanish affairs to a halt for some time. On the one hand, Charles Phillips, who arrived at the Comintern's 2nd World Congress under the new pseudonym "Frank Seaman", entered into a narrow circle of international Communist functionaries and got acquainted with the leaders of

²⁶ Charles Shipman: *It Had to Be a Revolution. Memoirs of an American Radical*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1992, pp. 93-95.

²⁷ Rapport sur l'origine et fondation du Parti Communiste Espagnol présenté par le secrétaire de ce parti camarade R. Merino Gracia au bureau de la III Internationale Communiste. RGASPI, 495/120/204, 56-59a.

²⁸ The Bulletin issued by the Amsterdam Bureau.

²⁹ *El Soviet* was the newspaper published by the PCM and the Latin American Bureau of the 3rd International in Mexico.

³⁰ G.L. Trotter to Borodin, February 15, 1920. RGASPI, 497/2/1, 12-12ob.

the world communist movement. Seaman critically described his own place at the congress as that of a “beginner among veterans of working-class movement”,³¹ but nevertheless he did not presume to forget neither himself nor the surrounding persons that had taken part in the foundation of three (!) Communist Parties in only half a year. It was the record achieved by Phillips together with his “guru” – Michael Borodin. And the Mexican-American-Spanish Communist was demonstrating his enormous activity in Moscow; he called himself a delegate of the recently formed Cuban Communist Section and a delegate of the Communist Party of Spain (which was still in the process of creation). However, the leaders of the Comintern stopped all his ambitions and intentions.

Despite the Comintern’s desire to exert its influence over different regions and to widen the Communist ranks, and despite the importance for Moscow to demonstrate an increase in the number of its adherents outside Europe (the “Cuban delegate” would be the second representative of Latin American nations at the congress; the first one was Mexico’s delegation), on July 17, 1920, the credentials commission decided to restrain Phillips’ ardour and the issue was delayed until the real credentials would be shown.³² The American-Mexican Communist neophyte was deprived of the status of a Spanish Communist Party’s delegate. Had Borodin intervened, it would doubtlessly have helped Phillips; however, the Comintern emissary did not consider the issue important enough while he himself was sent to another field of Comintern work.

A paradoxical situation had formed. Phillips was sent to the Congress by all three Communist Parties in whose foundation he had played an active part. However, he had only one official credential issued by the Communist Party of Spain, but Moscow refused to consider this document a serious one. The Spanish Communist Party did not yet exist for Moscow, as the Comintern was examining its structure and leadership composition and analyzing the cooperation perspectives.

Finally, the American had to go “back to his roots”, and received the status of a Mexican Communist Party representative (Roy’s wife, Evelyn Trent, had subcontracted her credentials to him).³³ And it was Phillips who had to carry the main responsibility of representing the interests of the Spanish-speaking countries while his friend and colleague Manabendra Nath Roy was concentrated in the Asian direction of the Comintern’s anti-colonialist strategy.³⁴ In fact, Phillips appeared to be the only real representative of Latin American communism at the Congress, and he concentrated his efforts in this field of revolutionary activity. He presented a draft of the Comintern’s tasks in the Western hemisphere (as seen by him) and concluded that the “overthrow of capitalism in America”

³¹ Shipman, Op. cit., p. 115. The Mexican Communists met Lenin during the 2nd World Congress of the Comintern, or immediately after it. On July 19, 1920, they had a breakfast with Lenin, Zinov’ev, Bucharin, Radek and Gorkii; after the breakfast the Congress delegates were pictured by a photographer on the steps near the entrance of the Tavricheskii Palace. Later on, in Stalin’s time, the picture was forged and converted into the picture showing Lenin and Gorkii. The Communist historiography considered Manuel Díaz Ramírez (the Mexican delegate to the Third Congress of the Comintern) the first Mexican Communist to meet Lenin. This error has been even penetrated into the pages of some volumes published by the Institute of Marxism and Leninism of the CC of the CPSU where Jesús Ramírez’ letter to Lenin was published; however, the commentaries identified Manuel Díaz Ramírez and Jesús Ramírez as the same person. There is no doubt that Manuel Díaz Ramírez was the first native Mexican who had a chance to talk with Lenin, but the first Mexican Communists (even not really Mexican by origin) to meet the Soviet leader were the Hindu Manabendra Nath Roy and the American Phillips (Shipman, Op. cit., pp. 116-119; K. F. Bogdanova, A. P. Jakushina (eds.): *Pis'ma V.I.Leninu iz-za rubezha*, Moskva, Mysl', 1966, p. 146; *Leninskii sbornik XXXVII*, Mokvsa, 1970, p. 239.

³² *Vtoroi kongress Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala*. Iyul'-avgust 1920 g., Moskva, 1934, p. 617; RGASPI, 489/1/27, 1-10b, 3; RGASPI, 489/1/65, 7ob; RGASPI, 495/1/6, 110.

³³ RGASPI, 489/1/27, 1-2; RGASPI, 489/1/30, 90; *Vtoroi kongress Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala*. Stenograficheskii otchet. Petrograd, 1921, p. 354.

³⁴ B.N. Das Gupta: *M.N.Roy. Quest for freedom*, Calcutta, K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1970; V.L. Kheifets, L.S. Kheifets: *Psevdonim Borodine. And the real name? La Fayette! // Latinskaia Amerika* (1993), 3, pp. 107-115.

required a highly co-ordinated all-American movement, and it seemed “ridiculous” to him to work individually with different Central and South American countries. As to Phillips, the essential unity of the all-American working class movements was supposed to be pointed out.³⁵ This narrative coincided with the proposals made by the delegates of both Communist Parties of the USA outlined in the CEIC declaration and published under the slogan of a forthcoming “American Revolution”.

Even while being sure that it was almost impossible to spare a minute in the Soviet leader’s busy schedule, Phillips insisted on the necessity to meet Lenin personally with the aim to discuss some problems of Latin American Communism. His insistency turned out fruitful as he was invited to the Kremlin.³⁶ It was the last and desperate effort made by the Mexican-American communist to play a prominent role in the development of the Spanish Communist movement, as he planned to talk not only about Mexico, but also about Spain. However, Lenin was more interested in the issues of the left wing movement in the Western Hemisphere. And it was this direction where Phillips was sent soon to become part of the apparatus of the Pan-American Bureau of the Comintern and the Red Trade Unions International. Borodin’s recommendations and commentaries about all the future activity of the Panamerican bureau were taken seriously while this structure was formed. Phillips was the only Spanish-speaking person and he had some acquaintance with Mexico, which was the main reason to appoint him as general advisor and assistant of the Bureau’s chairman Sen Katayama.³⁷

Meanwhile, Borodin had had a meeting with Lenin where he presented the report on his long journey. In summer 1920 he was in constant touch with the Soviet leaders during the preparation of the 2nd Congress of the Comintern. Was the issue of a new journey to Spain or Latin America in the Kremlin’s agenda in those days? Most likely this was not the case. At that moment, Michael Borodin became one of the central figures of Moscow’s “big game” – uncoiling far-reaching activities with the aim to organize an anti-British rebellion in India.³⁸ However, the lack of experienced organizers obliged the Comintern leaders to shuffle the constellation of personnel. Finally, Borodin did not leave for Kabul (despite the decision to make him a Soviet *polpred* [plenipotentiary representative] in Afghanistan) where he would have to work together with Roy, coordinating the anti-colonial efforts.

Borodin (being member of the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs) was included into the Soviet delegation at the conference of the World Post Office Union to be held in Madrid in October, 1920. This diplomatic status was given to him with an obvious aim to camouflage his main task to organize the adherents of Bolshevik revolution. Exactly the same strategy was used during his trip to Mexico. However, he never succeeded to return to the Pyrenees: the Spanish government refused to grant visas to the Soviet representatives. Soon after, the Small Bureau of the ECCI sent Borodin to Berlin to work in the Western European Secretariat of the Comintern.

The Spanish neophytes of communism nevertheless insisted on an illegal visit to their country by Borodin, and offered to accelerate the journey, as the congress of the PSOE was

³⁵ RGASPI, 489/1/24, 43.

³⁶ He wrote in his small note: “Dear Comrade Lenin! The next week I should leave for home, but before my departure I would like to discuss with you about the situation in Mexico and Spain. Will it be possible? Jesús Ramírez. Delegate of the Communist Party of Mexico to the Second Congress of the Communist International.” (J. Ramírez to Lenin, September 11, 1920. RGASPI, 5/1/828, 1).

³⁷ RGASPI, 5/2/3, 97-97ob; Shipman, Op. cit., pp. 123-124.

³⁸ See details in: Yu.N. Tichonov: *Politika velikikh derzhav v Afganistane i pushtunskie plemena. 1919-1945*, Moskva-Lipeck, Inform, 2007, pp. 42-50.

closing and the issue of its affiliation with the 3rd International was on the agenda. The Spanish issues, naturally, were a priority for them and they unsuccessfully tried to remind the ECCI of the fact that Spain was the original destination of Borodin's new trip to Europe. All other issues could be postponed, according to the Spanish left wingers.³⁹ However, Moscow's emissary did not consider it possible to leave for Madrid without any new and precise instructions by the Comintern leadership. Meanwhile, he was aware of the importance of Spain in his planned networks of European and Latin American communists, and he had no intentions to stand aside of Spanish affairs. It was Borodin who financed the activities of Spanish Communists as instructed by the ECCI Presidium.⁴⁰

He realized the impossibility to accomplish all his duties being the sole responsible person in this field of Comintern work (the Soviet emissary in Berlin had to supervise the activity of various Communist parties), and hence Borodin recommended to the ECCI to resolve the problem by sending another representative to Spain who would help local Communists to "carry out the campaign in favour of Socialist Party left wingers affiliation with the Communist International and their unification with the Communist Party of Spain if the Socialist Party would vote against the 21 conditions [of the Comintern] at the Congress".⁴¹ He also asked to think about the creation of a "technical link between Spain and Moscow" and to start Spanish language publications (which also would serve the Latin American Communists).

The destiny of the Communist functionary was constantly depending on the changing plans of the Comintern leaders, and neither Michael Borodin nor Charlie Phillips were given the possibility to take part in the formal proclamation of the Communist Party of Spain.⁴² However, their important role in the foundation of Spanish Communism is now quite visible, and it is also obvious that there existed a strong Latin American connection relevant for the formation of the Communist Party beyond the Pyrenees.

³⁹ The report on Borodin's work in Berlin sent to Comintern secretary Kobetskii, [1920]. RGASPI, 495/293/7, 86.

⁴⁰ Anonymous author to Kobetskii, Berlin, January 27, 1921. RGASPI, 495/293/7, 160; The report on Borodin's work in Berlin ..., l. 83.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² For the proclamation of the Communist Party of Spain, see Bahne, *Op. cit.*, pp. 113-131.